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Racial Prejudice

By Yareli Martinez

It remains embarrassing to admit that the land of freedom and opportunities has had to witness racial prejudice. The founders spoke about equality, and still there are citizens that lose sight of that because of their malignant thoughts and feelings of superiority when presented beside another race. Even though there are countless effects that surface because of racial prejudice, the most important effect is the increase in violence due to an individual's upbringing, lack of correction, and ignorance.

A huge cause of racial prejudice is the atmosphere that an individual was raised in as a child. I think that this is the saddest cause. It is dealing with being accepted by family or being different and shunned. We are born with a clean slate, and it is sad that people have their minds ruined so quickly. The best example I can think of is in *To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee. Lee's book is taught in all, if not most, educational facilities. Students spend some of their high school education looking into a book that has themes like justice and judgment, youth, mortality and ethics, and racial prejudice. During this lesson, it is probably not the first time that students have encountered stories and lessons concerning racial prejudice. I think that this factor is just another that is added to the list of things that have to be taught but do not have to be absorbed. Students are expected to remember certain things for certain classes for a certain test, and then it becomes okay to just forget it all together. This mindset is what is destroying America. It ties back to the upbringing of an individual. We are taught to just hear about things and not do anything to change them because things like racial prejudice were just in the past and no longer happens. This cause needs to stop being an excuse for why nothing is being done.

The lack of correction is also a huge cause to the violence that will spur racial prejudice. There is not enough being done to those that are racially prejudiced, and another effect is that the race being hated feels degraded. For things like beating and all abuse, we have law enforcement officers in place to take

(Continued on page 15)

charge of those things and correct them. The laws that have been implemented over equality do exist, but we know that law is nothing if it is not being enforced. The most current event we have to look at is the Michael Brown case. According to CNN, “A police officer fatally shot Michael Brown.” Michael Brown was an eighteen-year-old teenager that was killed by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, while being unarmed. This case has aroused violence in Ferguson. African Americans in this area feel like their race was degraded. Their race was looked down on to the point that a young man could not walk home with a friend without being shot at and unfortunately murdered. It is important to sit back and think about the law enforcement officials that are in place right now. This case proves that there needs to be training implemented to ensure officials are against prejudice and are not prejudiced.

The last cause of racial prejudice, out of the many that still remained unsaid, is ignorance. There are a lot of individuals who possess this prejudice simply because of a negative experience that they had with one individual of a certain race, and they feel like they can judge everyone in that race because of that one action. There is always that individual that holds her purse just a little bit tighter whenever she sees that a black man is walking towards her cart at Wal-Mart. The ignorance ties in with the idea that one group is better than another. It might be because of the idea that all of them are lazy, or all of them are dumb, or none of them are capable. Ignorance is the worst disease. Personally, there was an instance when I was placed under these uncomfortable and infuriating situations. I previously lived in Georgia, where I attended high school up to my sophomore year. In those two years, I went through a phase of wanting to become a law enforcement officer, and I enrolled into my high school’s law enforcement elective class. I took the class and the instructor began to portray how small minded he actually was by pointing out the fact that I am Mexican. His ingenious stance on the matter of my being in his class was that I would learn the ways around getting caught by any police officer so that my continued trafficking of drugs and weapons would be facilitated. Either that, or that I would allow my cartel husband to use my authority to his advantage. Although I was unquestionably irritated, I just felt so much compassion for him because he was so close minded. To have the nerve to even voice those idiotic thoughts was truly heartbreaking.

Often, things like racism and racial prejudice are configured into one. Racial prejudice, according to *The Free Dictionary*, is the belief that race accounts for differences in human character or ability and that a particular race is superior to others. Going into that same site and searching for racism, it is the exact same definition word for word. Races are getting offended. Their tolerance level has reached its potential, and violence will spur because that is exactly what we are witnessing today. Retaliation inside of the higher courts is the upcoming effect.

