

Prejudice AND HOW IT GROWS



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Who Is Prejudiced?

According to Webster's Dictionary, anyone is prejudiced who forms an opinion without just grounds or sufficient knowledge. A good illustration showing how opinions are formed without sufficient knowledge is given in the following story:

One of Ann's little eight-year old schoolmates spent the night with her. Ann wanted something special for breakfast and since liver pudding is one of her favorite foods, she asked Jane if she didn't want to have liver pudding for breakfast. Jane asked, "What is that—does it have liver in it?" Ann explained that it had pig's liver in it. Jane said, "No, I don't like it because Ellen doesn't like anything with liver in it and I like the same things Ellen likes." (Ellen is Jane's older sister.) Ann seemed so disappointed that her mother decided to fix the liver pudding anyway and she made it out in patties resembling sausage and fixed an egg for Jane. In serving breakfast, the mother didn't call the liver pudding by name—she merely served the children's plates, giving Jane the egg. Jane said, "Please, may I have a sausage to go with my egg?" And she ate two of the liver pudding patties, not realizing what they were.

We Have Different Kinds of Prejudices

When we hear people talking about prejudices we usually think they are talking about prejudices against people, but we can have different kinds of prejudices. Many of us are prejudiced against certain kinds of clothing, or against certain kinds of foods. Horse meat is preferred to beef in some countries, though it probably makes us shudder to think about eating a colt instead of a calf. We, however, are prejudiced against these foods. We have made up our minds that we don't like them, although we don't know how they taste or even how they look when they are prepared. How many of us would eat fried grasshoppers, or rattlesnakes,

or horse meat, or snails? These foods are considered delicacies in some countries.

Making up our minds about food does not hurt anybody except ourselves, but sometimes we make up our minds about people. Different things cause us to be prejudiced against different people. Sometimes we are prejudiced against people who do not belong to the same political party we do, or who belong to a church which is different from ours. Sometimes we say that certain people are "not nice," simply because they have different manners from what we have been brought up to think is nice. Take, for instance, the habit of belching. We have been taught that it is impolite to belch in public, but in China belching is a person's way of paying the hostess a compliment for the meal served. Belching is supposed to indicate that one has eaten heartily and enjoyed his meal. Or take the simple matter of how we eat. We probably feel that all of the "nice" people in the world eat with knives and forks, yet one-third of the world eat with chop sticks, another third eat with their fingers, and only one-third eat with knives and forks. But even the third who eat with knives and forks do not use them in the same way. The custom of what is right varies from country to country, yet, we are very apt to be prejudiced against anyone who holds his fork "the wrong way."

We are even prejudiced toward people who look different from us. We are very prone to feel that anyone who looks different is peculiar, forgetting that we also look queer to other people. Someone at State College asked a Chinese student what first struck him as a most peculiar characteristic of the American people and he replied, "The thing I cannot get used to is the peculiar slant of the eyes." How many of us have ever thought that our eyes look peculiar to other people?

We Show Our Prejudices In Different Ways

We show our prejudices by our tone of voice, by our facial expression, by the way we act, and the way we talk. We show our prejudices when we jump at conclusions—like judging a whole group of people by something one member of the group has done, or judging a whole family by something one member of the family has done.

We show our prejudices when we don't invite people to join our clubs and other community organizations merely because they don't dress as we do, or because they don't live in homes like ours.

We show our prejudices when we want the best of everything for our children, but aren't concerned about the living conditions, or the schools, or the social centers for the children in other groups or other races.

We show our prejudices when we think people belonging to other churches, or other political parties, or other social groups are not so good as we are.

We show our prejudices when we spread rumors or gossip about other groups of people—such as other political parties, other churches, or other races. We even show our prejudices by the jokes we tell.

We may be prejudiced without realizing it. We may have gotten into the habit of taking short cuts in our thinking. We have often taken the easiest and quickest way to form our opinions.

Of course we all take short cuts in everything—in our work, in our fun and in our thinking. Just as the paths around our home show the short cuts we take in walking, so our conversation in the home shows the short cuts we take in thinking—particularly our thinking about people. For example, we see a stranger; we watch the way she walks; we notice how she's dressed; we find where she lives; we listen to her tone of voice; and decide that we like her or don't like her without really knowing anything important about her.

Prejudices Are Dangerous

The greatest danger of prejudices is that people make up their minds without thinking and without knowing—just as little Jane made up her mind about liver pudding when she decided she didn't like it because someone else didn't like it. Prejudices toward people work the same way. We decide we don't like certain people because someone else doesn't like them. This is especially true of children. They are very easily influenced. They listen to what we say about other people; they listen to our tone of voice; and they watch our facial expression. Then at an early age they take short cuts to their own opinions about people. Take for example, little Jimmy Turner, who was eight years old. His father owned a small ready-to-wear business. He was making good money in his business until a Jewish man started a similar business across the street. Mr. Turner's profits started dropping off. When he came home in the evenings, he frequently talked about his Jewish com-

petitor. He remarked that he couldn't hope to succeed when he had Jews to compete with—that they would always get the best of you. From his father's conversation little Jimmy formed his own opinion about Jewish people.

It so happened that Jimmy went to a private school. There was one little Jewish boy in his class whose name was Julius. One morning during recess, when the children were playing ball, Jimmy was selected to choose the team for one side. Julius and Gracie were the last to be chosen. Gracie couldn't hit a ball, so she was **always** the last to be chosen; but Julius played a good game. Yet when it came Jimmy's turn to choose between Gracie and Julius, he chose Gracie, saying "She can't hit the ball, but at least she's not a Jew." Jimmy had once **liked** Julius. But after his father gave him the idea that Jews were not to be trusted, he got the boys in his class to team up against Julius.

Prejudice works a hardship both ways. Let's see what happened to Julius.

He started feeling badly. In the mornings when time came to leave school he didn't want to go. He said his stomach hurt. At school, when play-time came, he began to tell his teacher that he didn't feel like playing. The doctor couldn't find any physical cause for his stomach ache. Finally, after having a long talk with Julius, the doctor decided his trouble was caused by worry. He was worried because the other children in his class were not kind to him.

This year Julius is attending another school and his mother says "He hasn't missed a day. He loves it. The children at the new school make him feel like he is one of them."

Prejudices are dangerous. They cause deep hurts; they build resentment; they create hatred; they even cause fights and wars. Today when the world is so in need of people who can get along peacefully together, we can't afford to let our children grow up harbouring prejudices.

We have all heard that wars begin in the minds of men. If this is true, peace must begin in the minds of children. For little children are the only unprejudiced people in the world.

Our little children are like live clay in our hands. We can shape their thinking. Perhaps it is within our power to raise a generation which is different—a generation free from hate.

How Can We Help Them Prevent Prejudices

THE HOME CLIMATE IS IMPORTANT We can create a happy home climate for them to grow up in. Prejudices don't thrive in a home where parents and children feel safe and loved and wanted. (Refer to Bulletin, **Character and How it Grows**).

We can set examples we want our children to follow. We can watch not only what we say but **how** we sound when we say it. Children catch our feelings and our attitudes—just like they catch measles and mumps. They get over measles and mumps, but it is hard for them to get over the attitudes they catch. Sometimes they never get over them.

There are times when we all are careless in the way we speak about other people. We may say "you can't trust a Jap" or "he is just a Nigger" or "Jews will always get the best of you." Experiences like these are cruel—they cause people hurts which go deeper and last longer than body wounds. Children aren't aware of the effect of ill-chosen words, but we can guide them and help them leave unkind things unsaid.

Praising them when we know they have controlled their tongues will help, for "Not only to say the right thing is difficult in the right place, but far more difficult is it, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment."—Sala.

GUIDING THEIR THINKING IS IMPORTANT Watching children in their play and encouraging them to talk things over with us gives us opportunities to guide their thinking. Sometimes we find them judging a whole group of people by something they have heard someone else say—just like Jimmy judged Julius.

There is another story showing how Mrs. Bradley guided her child's thinking. She was sitting in her back yard reading and nearby her small son, Billy, was playing with a group of other children. They had sticks for guns, and they were trying to decide whether or not they would fight the Japs or the Germans. Billy said that he had rather fight the Germans because they were the meanest people in the world, and he wanted to kill every one of them. Mrs. Bradley called to him saying, "Billy, I heard what you just said about the Germans, and I wondered if you knew that you have German blood in you. You know your name is William Weimer. You have the same name your Daddy and your

Granddaddy have. It's a German name, and a name that we are very proud of, because it has always stood for good. Your Grandfather used to live in Germany when he was a little boy. He loved Germany, but he didn't like all the things that they did in Germany. We don't like all the things people do here in America, and there are some people here that we like better than others, but we wouldn't say that all Americans are bad, would we? Billy said, "But **some** Germans are bad, aren't they?" Mrs. Bradley replied, "Yes, son, and some Americans are bad, too."

LOOKING FOR THE CAUSE IS IMPORTANT We can help our children understand other people by teaching them to look for the cause back of people's behavior, and by helping them to picture themselves in the other person's place. That is, we can if we watch for chances as well as Mrs. Johnson did. Driving through a Negro settlement, they noticed a nice looking Negro girl walking with a decided strut. Nine-year-old Betty remarked, "I don't see what **she** has to strut about, living in one of these ugly old houses."

Mrs. Johnson said, "You know, dear, we see a lot of people trying to impress other people. Sometimes they talk big; sometimes they walk big; sometimes they strut. When do **you** strut, Betty? When everything's all right?"

"No, I guess it's when somep'n goes wrong, like when I get left out and I want Helen to think I don't care."

"Well, suppose we got left out of nice houses, and had to live in a house like one of these. How would you walk when you started over to Helen's?"

"Wel-l-l, I guess I'd have to strut some—and maybe talk big, too."

Children who are helped to understand people usually grow up to be sympathetic, tolerant, and understanding grown-ups.

Edwin Laughing Fox, who is a Sioux Indian employed in Washington to help our government understand the Sioux Indians, tells us that his people have a prayer which he recommends to everyone: "Oh, Great Spirit, help me never to judge another until I have walked two weeks in his moccasins."

GUARDING AGAINST FALSE PRIDE Sometimes false pride causes us to judge people unfairly. There are times when some of us are inclined to put ourselves on pedestals—feeling that our ways of thinking and acting and dressing are the best ways. Sometimes we may feel that peo-

ple who have come from other countries to America within recent years aren't as good as we are. We forget that all of our ancestors came over from some other country—that the Indians are the only one-hundred-percent Americans.

Someone told the story of a rather prominent American woman boasting of her background to an elderly Scotch carpenter who had recently come over to America. She said very proudly, "I am one hundred percent American. My ancestors came over on the Mayflower and every drop of my blood has been on American soil for more than two centuries." The old gentleman listened politely and replied, "Tell me this, how many nights sat ye up deciding ye'd not be born Chinese?"

We want our children to grow up with a feeling of family loyalty and family pride, but we don't want them to develop false pride. We want them to like people because of **what** they are and not because of **who** they are.

We must help children get away from the habit of asking "Where did this person come from?" "Who were his parents?" or "Where does he live?" Instead let's encourage them to ask "Where is this person going?" "What are his goals in life?" "Haven't we something in common so that we can enjoy going along together?"

KNOWING PEOPLE WITH DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS IS IMPORTANT

American life. We must help children know him better through visits to native shops. Then there are special movies and radio programs to watch for, public festivals to attend. All the time, however, there must be complete sincerity in our contacts, not superficial curiosity or a condescending interest. We must do more than just rub shoulders; we must rub hearts, too.*

THE SCHOOLS CAN HELP

The schools can help to build understanding and good will. "It is possible for many schools to plan programs through which the children may learn about their community. Small groups visiting stores, churches, restaurants, recreation centers, laundries, and bakeries will be properly introduced to the neighborhood in which they

* From PARENTS' MAGAZINE—Goodwill Toward Men—by Alma Denny.

live. They can talk together about what they explore, and come to understand how very much alike all people really are.”**

THE COMMUNITY CAN HELP

Community projects can help uncover common interests and build friendliness across group lines. We understand our communities better when we work and play together—when we come together for community picnics, community sings and community fairs; or when we pool our efforts on some worthwhile project which calls for the help of **everybody**. Perhaps the project could be one for improved housing, or a recreation center, or play grounds, or school and community libraries, or better hospital facilities. Working together is a wonderful way to know and appreciate people.

READING WILL HELP

We can help still further to build understanding and appreciation by reading. Our N. C. State Library Commission recommends the following books for the different age groups in the family.

For The Youngest

Jones, E. O., illus. **SMALL RAIN** Viking 1943 \$2.00

Bits of Bible verse dear to children are given with enchanting illustrations that show children of all races and creeds listening together and playing together.

Leaf, Munro **FAIR PLAY** Lippincott 1939 \$2.00

The principles of democratic social living are effectively told in text and pictures for the very youngest.

Leaf, Munro **LET'S DO BETTER** Lippincott 1945 \$2.00

Expresses for small children the author's sensible idea that all people of all nations can and must be unselfish and learn to live together and work together peaceably.

Sharpe, S. G. **TOBE** Univ. of N. C. Press 1939 \$2.00

A natural story, with photographs, of the life of a little Negro boy on his North Carolina farm.

For The In-Betweens

SUBJECT BOOKS

Benedict, Ruth **IN HENRY'S BACKYARD**

Schuman 1948 \$2.00

When in his dream, the world grows so small that it fits into his backyard, Henry starts to greet the different

** Taken from the leaflet *America's Future . . . Its Children—Rearing Children of GOODWILL*—by Mrs. Wilhelmina Hall.

people but is stopped by his doubts of the suitability of such friendships. A series of pictures, with brief text, show him the essential samenesses of mankind.

Evans, E. K. ALL ABOUT US Capitol 1947 \$2.00

The story of people: their beginnings and their wanderings over the earth and the changes in skin color, customs and languages that resulted from separation and environment.

Fitch, F. M. ONE GOD, THE WAYS WE WORSHIP HIM

Lathrop 1944 \$2.50

Designed to help children understand ways of worship other than their own. This book tells in photograph and text the ways of worship and religious observances among Jews, Catholics and Protestants.

STORIES

Angelo, Valenti BELLS OF BLEECKER STREET

Viking 1949 \$2.50

This story of growing boys on city streets relates the daily adventures of Joey Enrico and his friends, from many lands, but all Americans.

Bryant, Bernice TRUDY TERRILL, HIGH SCHOOL

FRESHMAN Bobbs 1948 \$2.00

In her freshman year in high school Trudy meets the problems of intolerance right among her own classmates and sets out to do something about it with all the enthusiasm and idealism of one of her age.

Evans, E. K. KEY CORNER Putnam 1938 \$2.25

Key Corner is a small Negro Community in Georgia, and this is the story of its new teacher and its boys and girls.

Jackson, Jesse CALL ME CHARLEY Harper 1947 \$2.00

The story of the ups and downs of the only Negro boy in the community of Arlington Heights is related with sincerity and honesty.

Means, F. C. CHILDREN OF PROMISE

Friendship 1941 \$1.25

The children of Grade Six of the Elmwood School form a Young America League, help out in the maintenance of a nursery school and welcome two refugee Jewish families into the neighborhood.

Young Adults and Adults

SUBJECT BOOKS

Baruch, D. W. GLASS HOUSE OF PREJUDICE
Morrow 1946 \$2.50

The author shows how the problems of prejudices are rooted in conditions we must face—insecurities, false attitudes, ignorance. Much of her material she has used successfully with High School students.

Du Bois, R. D. BUILD TOGETHER, AMERICANS
Hinds 1945 \$2.00

An authority in the field of cultural democracy relates how teachers have acted to promote tolerance among their students and the communities they represented through a better understanding of the inheritance and cultures of all peoples, and suggests methods as to how this can be done on a broad scale.

Du Bois, R. D. GET TOGETHER AMERICANS
Harper 1943 \$1.75

Suggested methods for bringing people of various groups together in an atmosphere of friendly understanding in P.T.A., church, home and school groups.

Fineberg, S. A. PUNISHMENT WITHOUT CRIME
Doubleday 1949 \$3.50

Amplified by actual incidents this book discusses the intricacies of racial and religious group prejudice and suggests the ways of handling them.

Paulmier, Hilah DEMOCRACY DAYS Dodd 1942 \$2.75
GOODWILL DAYS Dodd 1942 \$2.75

Prose and poetry on democracy, liberty and tolerance for use in programs for "I am an American Day," Brotherhood Week, Bill of Rights Week, Race Relations Sunday, and other days and occasions designed to promote better understanding.

Stegner, Wallace ONE NATION Houghton 1945 \$4.00

Indicates in text and pictures the economic, social and religious reasons behind discrimination and the possible means of bettering the situation and creating the true tolerance on which the future of our country depends.

Taylor, Eva MEN ARE BROTHERS Viking 1937 \$1.00

Using the various fields of human endeavor—science, art and literature—the author points out how the great minds of the various races and creeds have served all mankind

and have found a common language and a common goal that moves and unites them all.

STORIES

Allee, Marjorie THE HOUSE Houghton 1944 \$2.50

A story of an experiment in social living among a group of young people attending the University of Chicago.

Emery, Anne TRADITION Vanguard 1946 \$2.50

A high school story of two young Japanese-Americans in a stuffy small-town school, and their struggle to win acceptance by their contemporaries.

Gollomb, Joseph UP AT CITY HIGH Harcourt 1946 \$2.50

A typical American boy arriving friendly and eager to live in New York and to attend high school there finds the city and the school torn with the conflicts engendered by a wartime world. How some of the problems are solved makes a good story in understanding.

Knight, R. A. IT MIGHT BE YOU Doubleday 1949 \$2.00

A book of short stories, designed for high school students, with the basic theme of intolerance as it has been suffered in all ages from early Christian times to the present; in many countries from Rome to Mexico.

Means, F. C. SHUTTERED WINDOWS

Houghton 1938 \$2.50

How a Negro girl who comes from the North to a South Carolina island to live with her grandmother adjusts to the very different ways of living she finds here and decides to remain and work among her own people.

Whitney, P. A. WILLOW HILL McKay 1947 \$2.50

When Willow Hill is faced with a government housing project which brings a Negro population there is violently unfavorable reaction from practically all community groups. How some of the people including a group of high school students, fight it through with democracy and constitutional ideals forms the basis of this story.

Two magazines that make a policy of having, at frequent intervals, articles on the problems of intolerance and how to cope with them are **Scholastic Magazine** (for high school age) and **Parents Magazine** (for adults).

January, 1950

Misc. Pamphlet No. 124

N. C. State College of Agriculture and Engineering of the University of North Carolina and U. S. Department of Agriculture, Co-operating

N. C. AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

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