

GENERALIZATION

That doesn't sound like such an evil word, but it is, in fact, what leads to many of the most harmful attitudes that are openly expressed all too often: racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamaphobia, xenophobia.

Why the “phobia” words? Because people often hate what they fear, and fear what they don't understand, perhaps knowledge is the antidote to hate. Those who coined those words have a point, but all prejudices by any name are negative generalizations about groups of people.

If you hear the label black, Mexican, immigrant, man, woman, gay, lesbian, Muslim, Jew, Christian, Hindu, transgender, alien, foreigner, etc., and you think that tells you something about an individual's character, you are wrong.

You are wrong because it is an error of logic. And when that “something” is negative, it is also morally wrong because human beings are individuals and deserve to be evaluated as such, not as part of a labeled group.

Consider yourself. Consider your race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, sexual preference; any label that applies. Are you the same as everyone else in each of those categories?

The more we learn about others, by actually paying attention to how they feel, think, experience their lives, express their point of view, the less we will be able to assume, and the more we can feel empathy, despite superficial differences, despite the labels and types that designate them. Here are some examples.

Henry Rollins: White America Couldn't Handle What Black America Deals With Every Day

<http://www.laweekly.com/music/henry-rollins-white-america-couldnt-handle-what-black-america-deals-with-every-day-7134994>

Reflections By An ARAB JEW by Ella Habiba Shohat

“I am an Arab Jew. Or, more specifically, an Iraqi Israeli woman living, writing and teaching in the U.S. Most members of my family were born and raised in Baghdad, and now live in Iraq, Israel, the U.S., England, and Holland. When my grandmother first encountered Israeli society in the '50s, she was convinced that the people who looked, spoke and ate so differently--the European Jews--were actually European Christians.

Jewishness for her generation was inextricably associated with Middle Easternness. My grandmother, who still lives in Israel and still communicates largely in Arabic, had to be taught to speak of “us” as Jews and “them” as Arabs. For Middle Easterners, the operating distinction had always been “Muslim,” “Jew,” and “Christian,” not Arab versus Jew. The assumption was that “Arabness” referred to a common shared culture and language, albeit with religious differences. “

One who is able to understand those whose life experiences are not like his own, and a woman whose identity transcends the stereotypes of cultural and religious identity. These are only a start in broadening perspectives, dropping assumptions about others you do not know.

--cosmic rat August 23 2016