Course

Human Rights 2 To not be discriminated

What do you think about discrimination? Why does it exist? How can the word overcome it?

In the world we live and for many people I included, discrimination is an everyday reality. Discrimination is the unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age or sexual orientation. This topic to some of us arouse the past memories and experiences of yester years. It is the topic one would not want to venture in because of vivid memories of what happened to one of our country man while in South African.

It strikes at the very heart of being human. It is harming someone’s rights simply because of who they are or what they believe. Discrimination is harmful and perpetrates inequality. We all have the right to be treated equally, regardless of our race, ethnicity, nationality, class, caste, religion, belief, sex, gender, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics, age, health or other status. Yet we hear heartbreaking stories of people who suffer cruelty simply for belonging to a different group from those in positions of privilege or power. An example is a gruesome murder witnessed recently in South Africa of a Zimbabwean man. Was recently interred in one of cities cemetery known as Bulawayo

Discrimination is the unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, age or sexual orientation. To "discriminate" against someone means to treat that person differently, or less favourably, for some reason. Discrimination can occur while you are at school, at work, or in a public place, such as a mall or subway station. You can be discriminated against by school friends, teachers, coaches, co-workers, managers, or business owners. Discrimination occurs when a person is unable to enjoy his or her human rights or other legal rights on an equal basis with others because of an unjustified distinction made in policy, law or treatment. Amnesty International’s work is rooted in the principle of non-discrimination. It works with communities across the world challenging discriminatory laws and practices to ensure all people enjoy their rights on an equal basis.

Discrimination is in various forms:

There is what we call, Direct discrimination which is when an explicit distinction is made between groups of people that results in individual from some groups being less able than others to exercise their rights. For example a law that requires women and not men to provide proof of education as a prerequisite for voting.

Indirect discrimination is when a law, policy or practice is presented in neutral terms but it disproportionately disadvantages a specific group or groups. For example a law that, indirectly discriminatory effect on any group that is less likely to have achieved that level of education (such as disadvantage ethnic groups or women).

Intersectional discrimination is a combination of several forms of discrimination to leave a particular group or groups at an even greater disadvantage. For example discrimination against women frequently means that they are less paid than men for the same work. Discrimination against an ethnic minority members of that group being paid less than others for the same work. Where women from a minority group are paid less than other women and less than men from the same minority group, this is due to their sex, gender and ethnicity.

There is also what is known as toxic rhetoric and discrimination where politics of demonization is widely seen across many parts of the world today. Political leaders on every continent are advocating hatred

The discrimination notion emanates from the brain of an individual due complex of superiority, where someone feels or thinks is superior to another race, tribe, nation or gender. When one has been subjected to discrimination for quite a long time is bound to develop complex of inferiority and accepts that status as normal.

What feeds discrimination?

The root cause of all forms of discrimination is prejudice based on concept of identity, and the need to identify with a certain group. This has led to division, hatred and even dehumanization of their people because they have a different identity.

Research shows that the attitudes of people who discriminate are a reflection of a complex set of factors including their history, sociocultural practices, economic forces, sociological trends and the influence of community and family beliefs.

Other thoughts suggest that the human brain naturally puts things in categories to make sense of the world. Very young children quickly learn the difference between boys and girls, for instance. But the values we place on different categories are learned from our parents, our peers and the observations we make about how the world works. In other words the trend is passed on from parents to children, generations to generations. Often, discrimination stems from fear and misunderstanding.

If it is true that fear and misunderstanding are causes of discrimination therefore, the fearful and misunderstanding should be assisted in the counter and removal of discrimination. First thing first the perpetrators of discrimination must be conscientised so that come to senses that what they are doing is wrong to themselves and to others too and not forgetting the world at large, remember we live in a global village.

In many parts of the world, the politics of blame and fear is on the rise. Intolerance, hatred and discrimination is causing an ever-widening rift in society. The politics of fear is driving apart as leaders peddle toxic rhetoric blaming certain group of people for social or economic problems.

Some governments reinforce their power and status quo by openly justifying discrimination in the name of morality, religion or ideology. Certain groups are viewed by authorities as more likely to be “criminal” simply for being poor, indigenous or black.

Racial and ethnic discrimination. Racism (colour bar) affects virtually every country in the world. It systematically denies people of their full human rights because of their colour, race, and ethnicity decent or national origin. If racism remained unchecked led to the large scale atrocity, for example 1994 genocide in Rwanda and apartheid and ethnic cleansing of Rohingya people in Myanmar.

In India members of Dality community are targeted by dominant caste members for human right abuses. Crimes including gang rapes, killing and destruction of their homes which are never investigated by the police because of discriminatory attitudes police have.

Discrimination against non-nationals called Xenophobia. Discrimination against non-national is frequently based on racism or notions of superiority often fueled by politicians looking for scapegoats for social or economic problems in a country. This has been witnessed in South Africa which experienced several outbreaks of violence against refugees, asylum seekers and migrants from other countries, killing and looting or burning of shops and businesses. Some immature politicians have labelled these foreign nationals “criminals” and accused them of burdening the health system.

Hungary passed a package of punitive laws in 2018 aimed to target groups government has identified as supportive to refugees and migrants. There is banishing of girls because of menstruation and taboo around it in Nepal. Samikshya Koirala became an outcast for 11 days because of menstruation at age of 11. This mindset around superstition surrounding menstruation must be changed.

Discrimination against disabilities in Kyrgyzstan, Somalia etc. Way forward according to Gulzar Duishenova is “We are told that we are not allowed to talk – but we still do. I still talk”.

Gender discrimination; in many countries, in all regions of the world, laws, policies, customs and beliefs exist that deny women and girls their rights.

In Saudi Arabia, Iran there laws that prohibit women to dress as they like or work at night in Madagascar or take out a loan without their husband’s signature in Equatorial Guinea.

In many countries, discriminatory laws place limits on a woman’s right to divorce, own property, exercise control over her own body and enjoy protection from harassment.

Protests are ongoing in USA, Europe and Japan against misogyny and abuse. Women and girls including other groups discriminated must take to the streets to claim their human rights and demand gender equality. Despite the rise of women’s activism, many governments around the world openly support policies, laws and customs that subjugate and suppress women.

The way forward on discrimination or ways of how to deal with discrimination; one should focus on own strengths. Focusing on your own core values, beliefs and perceived strengths can motivate people to succeed and may even buffer the negative effects of bias. Should seek support system, get involved help yourself think clearly, do not dwell and lastly seek professional help.

According to Novice, Voice of Youth “it’s naïve to think that you aren’t affected by this issue. If you think so, you are probably benefitting from this systemic oppression. Unknowingly”.

United States of America has enacted the laws, this why the EEOC is responsible for protecting you from one type of discrimination - employment discrimination because of your race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, disability, age (age 40 or older), or genetic information. There are other laws that protect anyone from other types of discrimination, such as discrimination at school.

The laws enforced by EEOC are there to protect employees from employment discrimination when it involves:

1. **Unfair treatment** because of your race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, disability, age (age 40 or older), or genetic information.
2. **Harassment** by managers, co-workers, or others in your workplace, because of your race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, disability, age (age 40 or older), or genetic information.
3. **Denial of a reasonable workplace change** that you need because of your religious beliefs or disability.
4. **Improper questions about or disclosure of** your genetic information or medical information.
5. **Retaliation** because you complained about job discrimination or assisted with a job discrimination proceeding, such as an investigation or lawsuit.

Discrimination is a public health issue. According to the 2015 Stress in America Survey, people who say they have faced discrimination rate their stress levels higher, on average, than those who say they have not experienced discrimination. That’s true across racial and ethnic groups.

Chronic stress can lead to a wide variety of physical and mental health problems. Indeed, perceived discrimination has been linked to issues including anxiety, depression, obesity, high blood pressure and substance abuse.

Discrimination can be damaging even if you haven’t been the target of overt acts of bias. Regardless of your personal experiences, it can be stressful just being a member of a group that is often discriminated against, such as racial minorities or individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT).

The anticipation of discrimination creates its own chronic stress. People might even avoid situations where they expect they could be treated poorly, possibly missing out on educational and job opportunities.

In my country Zimbabwe during the colonial era one white Baptist Pastor from the black community to his choir to the white Baptist church so that they could sing to them. The service was delayed for 30 minutes the whites were debating where the choir composed of blacks were to seat, and who was going to seat next Sunday on the benches the black church members had sat. The white congregants settled on this compromise that they would allow this white Pastor and his choir composed of black to enter, sing and leave thereafter never to come again. The iron is this the white pastor came from America.

The good news of hope is that laws have been put in place to protect people from discrimination in housing and employment. This is according to the USA laws;

The Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental and financing of dwellings on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status and disability.

The Civil Rights Act, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act prohibit discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, sex, ethnic origin, age and disabilities.

According to Stress in America Survey results, issues related to employment are the most commonly reported experiences of major discrimination across ethnic groups.

Yet experts say that smaller, less obvious examples of day-to-day discrimination receiving poorer service at stores or restaurants, being treated with less courtesy and respect, or being treated as less intelligent or less trustworthy may be more common than major discrimination.

Such day-to-day discrimination frequently comes in the form of “microagressions” such as snubs, slights and misguided comments that suggest a person doesn’t belong or invalidates his or her experiences.

Though microagressions are often subtle, they can be just as harmful to health and well-being as more overt episodes of major bias. People on the receiving end of day-to-day discrimination often feel they’re in a state of constant vigilance, on the lookout for being a target of discrimination. That heightened watchfulness is a recipe for chronic stress.

Finding healthy ways to deal with discrimination is important, for physical health and your mental well-being of every individual.

The six ways are;

1. **Focus on your strengths**

 Focusing on your core values, beliefs and perceived strengths can motivate people to succeed, and may even buffer the negative effects of bias. Overcoming hardship can also make people more resilient and better able to face future challenges.

1. **Seek support systems**

One problem with discrimination is that people can internalize others’ negative beliefs, even when they’re false. You may start to believe you’re not good enough. But family and friends can remind you of your worth and help you reframe those faulty beliefs.

Family and friends can also help counteract the toll that

microagressions and other examples of daily discrimination can take. In

a world that regularly invalidates your experiences and feelings,

members of your support network can reassure you that you’re not

imagining those experiences of discrimination. Still, it’s sometimes

painful to talk about discrimination. It can be helpful to ask friends and

family how they handle such events. Your family and friends can also

be helpful if you feel you’ve been the victim of discrimination in areas

such as housing, employment or education. Often, people don’t report

such experiences to agencies or supervisors. One reason for that lack

of reporting is that people often doubt themselves: *Was I actually*

*discriminated against, or am I being oversensitive? Will I be judged*

*negatively if I push the issue?* Your support network can provide a

reality check and a sounding board to help you decide if your claims are

valid and worth pursuing.

1. **Get involved**

Support doesn’t have to come from people in your family or circle of friends. You can get involved with like-minded groups and organizations, whether locally or online. It can help to know there are other people who have had similar experiences to yours. And connecting with those people might help you figure out how to address situations and respond to experiences of discrimination in ways you haven’t thought of.

1. **Help yourself think clearly**

Being the target of discrimination can stir up a lot of strong emotions including anger, sadness and embarrassment. Such experiences often trigger a physiological response, too; they can increase your blood pressure, heart rate and body temperature.

Try to check in with your body before reacting. Slow your breathing or

use other relaxation exercises to calm your body’s stress response.

Then you’ll be able to think more clearly about how you want to

respond.

1. **Don’t dwell**

When you’ve experienced discrimination, it can be really hard to just shake it off. People often get stuck on episodes of discrimination, in part because they’re not sure how to handle those experiences. You might want to speak out or complain, but you’re not sure how to go about it, or are afraid of the backlash. So instead, you end up ruminating, or thinking over and over about what you should have done. But rumination can make things worse. According to researchers traumatic experiences are a significant cause of anxiety and depression, people who ruminate, or dwell on, those negative thoughts and experiences report more stress and anxiety. In a calmer moment, it might be helpful to talk over the ways you can cope with similar experiences in the future. Try to come up with a plan for how you might respond or what you could do differently next time. Once you’ve determined how to respond, try to leave the incident behind you as you go on with your day. There are always the reminders in our daily lives which we have to fight day and night.

1. **Seek professional help**

 Discrimination is difficult to deal with, and is often associated with symptoms of depression. Psychologists are experts in helping people manage symptoms of stress and depression, and can help you find healthy ways to cope.

In conclusion this is a sort of a warfare which everyone should rise be counted and rise to the occasion, or else these systems put in places by different governments around the world will consume us. This should be the work of everyone of use regardless of sex, gender, ethnicity, nationality etc. is the duty of each citizen of this global village to fight against this vice which is crippling the values and ethos of humanity. Unfortunately this scourge cannot be eradicated in a day it has to be done bit by bit, discrimination still occurs. Know he therefore that it is a process and will take sometimes in order to do away with this practice.

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