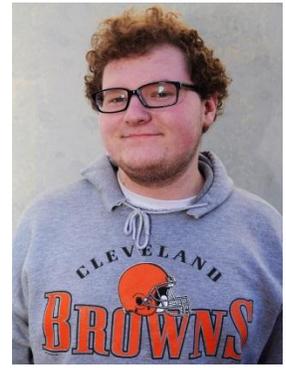


Unfair: Living in Today's Society

By Kenyon Grandee



Kenyon Grandee was born a pale white boy into a family that was lower middle class. He grew to the age of three in the state of Utah, only to move to Florida soon before reaching four. His dysfunctional family consisted of an older, hardened step-father, who would nurture him and toughen him up, and his loving and dedicated mother, who would nurture and protect him. Kenyon's real father did not have anything to do with him until he was already in junior high school. This is only part of the story of his dysfunctional life that was filled with many obstacles, including barriers caused by society and societal expectations. In this essay Kenyon will focus on the societal norms in today's culture and how society affects people, even at young ages.

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Throughout my life I have experienced racial inequality and gender stereotypes and prejudice; I have seen blacks wanting special treatment over whites, whites repressing blacks and other races, men stereotyping women, and men and women judging people based on their sex. My father was a racist and sexist. From the moment I could understand words, I was able to understand my father's opinion against blacks and Hispanics, as well as females and homosexuals. He judged every person equally and stereotyped their roles and actions in society. He told me that blacks tried to cheat everything, Mexicans were lazy, and that women were only good for dishwashing, cleaning, laundry, and cooking (and sex). At about the age of five, he taught me how to spot an attractive woman (or a "hottie" as he said) and how to pick up girls. Because of him, I looked at girls, and created my own thoughts about looks at a young age; that stuck with me for a long time. I thought that women were weaker, and that they were all dumb blondes with no ability to drive and no pain tolerance; they didn't have "balls." Because of my mom, however, I

discovered that this was in no way correct. My mom is a person who believes in equality among races and genders; she does not follow the labels that society sometimes creates for anyone. She taught me that everything my dad said was his opinion, and in no way a fact. In those two ways, I have found that I make my own opinions based on my mindset, and that I should not follow judgments by others without having a judgment of my own to follow.

Sociologist *Louis Wirth* (1945) defined a minority group as “people who are singled out for unequal treatment and who regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination.” With society and my peers, I have found that judgments are created based on minority groups (such as a small portion of Chinese who are intelligent) which end up being turned into generalizations and stereotypes. Because of my mom, though, I never truly followed the stereotypes or generalizations because they were not factual and only cause issues. I instead use my Sociological Imagination –the idea created by *C. Wright Mills* (1959), declaring the ability of individuals to see the relationship between events in their personal lives and events in their society- (*Sociology and You, Shepard Greene*) to surpass the conflicts and understand others. I have seen groups of kids in school who say that another certain group of kids are different than most kids and are weird. They have nothing to back up what they say other than what they have seen from a far. I do not agree with what the kids say, but because of them I do label the other group as weird. I do this with several other things such as with race. If someone aggravates me or does something that is incorrect, I immediately comment on their “race” if they are not white and do the same for their “ethnicity” if they are not my ethnicity. I do not do this because I am a racist or hateful person, but instead because of the society around me. I see people around me judging one another and labeling each other because of a small characteristic or mistake on a daily basis, causing me to follow them and do the same. It is a reaction that I have no control over; society today instilled this in me and controls this part of me.

In my life time, I have seen many judgments towards others. A major one that offends me is sexist judgments. To base something all on gender is absurd to me; a person's gender does not limit them from certain things. Teachers and adults in my life like to discriminate against girls and say that they are incapable of doing things that men can do. They say that girls are too weak, too wimpy, not tall enough, and not big enough. I have never agreed and never will agree with the ideas followed with sexism. Because of sexism I try to fight for equality among all people; the gender you are (or identify with) does not limit you. Yes, only women can bear children and yes only men can produce sperm, but that is the only limits that men and women have. In this society, sexists believe that one sex is greater than the other, and I do not agree in any way with the ideals of sexism; all sexes and genders are equal and deserve equal opportunities. In workplaces women are not paid as much and are not expected to have the strength and stamina of a man. I know plenty of women who are strong and can work hard for as long as they want.

Women were (and still are in some people's minds) expected to be in the kitchen and expected to stay home with the children while men are expected to go to work and be lazy at home. These roles for men and women are not equal and because of this I try my best to give women and men around me all of the opportunities I can, whether it is to relax, to do work, or to go out. It is said in the book "*Sociology: a Down to Earth Approach*," written by *James Henslin*, that "social factors are the reasons we behave the way we do" and that "our visible differences of sex do not come with meanings built into them," but instead "each human group makes its own interpretation of these physical differences and on this basis assigns males and females to separate groups." This is all because "gender is a social characteristic." According to Anthropologist *George Murdock* (1937), every society associates activities with one sex or the other. I try my best, because of the roles in society, to give women equal chances, while at the same time trying to disprove the stereotypes for males and trying not to follow the role that a man is expected

to play in life. These gender roles aggravate me because I am a male, but I am not a testosterone filled, idiotic, arrogant, rude, lazy, womanizer who generalizes everyone and does not have a heart. I know plenty of other people like me as well. When people classify all men under the same category for actions and emotions, it irritates me because I am not like all men and neither are a lot of the men around me. To limit a gender with a role and to stereotype someone based on gender is insane to me, and I try my best to rebel against the ideals and change the way others think; I try to improve society with the way I think is right and that is to be equal and kind.

Society is judgmental and hateful. Although I am surrounded by society and surrounded by these ideas, I do not succumb to the norms, but instead revolt and follow my own beliefs. Blacks, whites, and other races are equal, and I try to show that with my interactions with other races; although I may jump to race and other characteristics when criticizing, I am not doing this for hateful reasons, but instead I am doing it because society has instilled that inside of me. Overall, I am a fair person who believes in equality for everyone, although society has not and will not allow it.

References

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