

The Road To Cultural Harmony

Variation surrounds us for a reason. Everyone is uniquely shaped throughout life by many factors, and it is impossible for two people to be identical by experience or genetics. Yet, many belittle others when they find them unusual, grouping themselves together by their similarities and excluding all others. Even in academic and work settings, there are cases where people are barred from opportunities because of differences, and others who know they are different will avoid needed services out of fear of mistreatment. For example, 1 in 5 Latinos have stated that they avoided medical care due to fear of being discriminated against. In a place like the United States, where diversity increases yearly, cultural discrimination should not be tolerated. For the health of this nation and its citizens, practices of cultural disharmony should be discouraged from the beginning of the formation of habits in school-age children through adulthood so that the vastly different cultures that make up the general population do not continue to suffer because of harmless cultural details or practices.

To achieve cultural harmony, one must remove discrimination from its roots. Habits and opinions form in childhood, with children as young as 9 years old and younger already forming habits and opinions. Habits are hard to break, and to prevent such habits from being harmful or offensive to others, respectful habits and open minds should be encouraged and taught about in schools. From pre-kindergarten, teachers should inform children that differences are bound to be abundant in their peers, and they should embrace them and respectfully ask any questions they

have when they encounter others with such differences. Additionally, during the year, events like get-togethers, cultural appreciation events, and pen pal projects between schools should be organized to allow students and parents of different cultures to interact. Children should begin to form these healthy habits under the influence of schools so that, as the next generation, the society they build is culturally harmonic and not prone to discrimination and prejudice.

Children learn from and mimic their parents and environment. Thus, to further instill values of respect in the next generation and achieve cultural harmony, it is imperative that discrimination be eliminated in other settings such as communities and workplaces. For this, all communities and people should learn to respect and value each other's qualities rather than holding prejudices against them or trying to convince others to change or hide them. Past and current stereotypes and divisive ideas should be set aside and not be used to judge individuals. Everyone should be given the space and respect needed while practicing their beliefs so long as they are not harming others. In settings such as workplaces and when providing services, prejudice and mistreatment based on an employee or patient's origin, culture, or beliefs should be treated and punished just as any other type of social discrimination to prevent such treatment as well as any avoidance of needed services that may result from it.