

As ordinary citizens, it is our responsibility to treat each other with kindness. This kindness should come without judgment of gender, race, sexual orientation, and age among many other things that people are judged for on a daily basis.

We are often told that we are a product of our parents, but it is no longer acceptable to use this as an excuse for our actions. As individuals we need be able to recognize the unjust actions of others, but more importantly we need to analyze our own actions. I am extremely grateful to be a part of the Education program at the University of Regina for many reasons. I have learnt so much about anti-bias education, but the common denominator in it all is confronting our own bias's because we all have them. It is difficult to admit, and even more difficult to change. We need to understand where our negative thoughts come from and work to overcome them. I have been on a three-year journey to change my views for the better, and this has shaped me into the person I am today who is much more kind and accepting of others.

Surrounding myself with people who have the same views as me has been very important because we are much stronger as a whole. We have learnt that the simplest thing we can do is speak up, and it is also one of the most effective. We have too many bystanders in society. Too many people who are afraid to speak out and stand up against racism, homophobia, agism and sexism. Speaking up doesn't mean starting an argument, it simply means standing up for another person with the same kindness that you expect others to be treated with. Many times, the culprit of the "isms" is privilege, another difficult thing to own up to. It is a privilege to be white, it is a privilege to be male, it is a privilege to be heterosexual, and it is a privilege to be a younger age. All things that we have absolutely no control over. Still, these things are our shield. They are either our shield we hide behind without even knowing it, or they are the shield that people believe gives them the power to say and act however they want without consequences.

An experience that has shaped my views is both personal, and from recent news. CBC marketplace did an episode titled 'Are We Racist?', and a clip of it happened to pop up on my Facebook newsfeed. The video is titled 'Shopping while Brown.' I was intrigued based on what I

had been learning in school. Seconds into the video of a man being followed around a store I realized that I know him. I have numerous classes with him, and we had become classmates who could rely on each other for advice. I was deeply disturbed by what I had watched. This is something I would most likely never have to experience, and it happens on a daily basis for others.

After watching this video, I mentioned it to my friends, one of whom is First Nations. She told me that she is constantly followed in stores if she is not with her partner (who is white). I was utterly dumbfounded by what I was hearing. It was baffling that this still happens in society. However, it assisted me in being much more aware of what is going on around me. In these types of situations, I could be there with her in order for her not to be followed, however, that doesn't solve any problem. It only masks it for a brief period of time.

As someone who has worked in retail I would try to make a difference among my coworkers by correcting them if they made a racist or homophobic slur or statement. This was very effective, and my attitude changed the actions of others. I believe it is important to politely correct another individual when they say such things. They need to be reminded that in our society that attitude is no longer acceptable. The same attitude goes with my peers.

As a future teacher I believe that education is the most powerful tool, and it can move mountains. It is the best way to help anyone targeted by their race, sexual orientation, gender, or age. Often times when people choose to be prejudice it is because they were not educated on the facts.

Negativity can spread like wildfire, where positivity takes time. Even though it is much harder to spread positivity, it is much more worthwhile. My beliefs on this topic seem very strong, but I believe in people. Every person has a story. Yes, there may be good and some not so good people in this world. However, they are all individuals and deserve to be treated as such. Not based off of a fact about themselves that they cannot control. If more people thought this way I strongly believe it would improve our society, and how we treat one another.

Video: <http://www.cbc.ca/marketplace/episodes/2015-2016/are-we-racist>