

PLEASE DON'T SWALLOW THE STEREOTYPES!

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WHAT??????

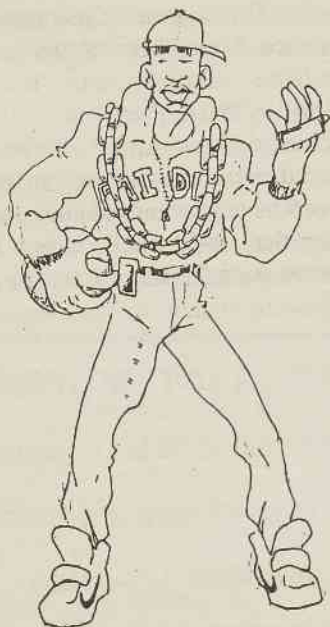
Racial stereotypes are a significant barrier in the process of eliminating racism in humanity. Racial stereotypes validate those simplistic images we use to frame our perceptions of people. They represent our inability



to view people outside the boundaries of race, implying an exaggerated importance to the implications of race and defying the distinct difference between race and culture. In order to combat the poison stereotypes infuse in our vision, we must (1) know stereotypes when we see/hear them, (2) cease their perpetuation by education, and (3) live by this example and appreciate the variety we are fortunate to experience.

Racial stereotyping is:

- * the attributing of too many varied characteristics to race alone.
- * formulaic, highly simplified opinions and beliefs about a particular race.
- * "the oversimplified generalization



about a class of individuals, one based on a presumption that every member of the class has some set of properties that is (probably erroneously) identified with the class." *Critical Thinking*, Moore & Parker, 1989.

Moore & Parker, in the beginning of their all too short section on stereotyping, state, when someone "lumps a group of individuals together under one name or description, especially one that begins with the word *the* (*the liberals, the communists, the Jews...*). chances are that a stereotype is being offered." And, when this is added to races of people, the venom is particularly lethal because "stereotyping becomes easier (to perpetrate) when there are racial differences to exploit."



- * The Orientals are so smart, especially in math and science
- * The Jews are stingy, shrewd and conniving
- * Black men are well-endowed
- * The people on welfare are single black mothers who pump out more babies to get more welfare
- * Indians like to get drunk and crazy
- * Latin men are so jealous about their women
- * The Italians have Mafia connections everywhere
- * White people always side with their own and you can't trust them

All of the above are common racial stereotypes. None are statistically proven and all are often used to harm or discriminate against the particular group addressed.

The power of racial stereotypes is immense. Subscription to any particular one has the ability to cloud one's logic or hinder one from seeing the humanity of an individual. The 'welfare mothers' example presents a perfect case. Think of every visual depiction you've seen concerning the 'welfare mother.' What do you see? Probably a black woman, hair unkempt, in house dress and pregnant with little black kids surrounding her. And she's probably 17 or 18 years old. This is the common depiction - seen on the news,



on TV specials and in magazine articles. The power behind the image is its ability to strip the 'welfare mother' of any individuality. The inherent racism and sexism in the stereotype is overwhelming - so much so that legislation to sterilize 'welfare mothers' has been taken seriously - all due to this pervasive stereotype based on racist ideology. Never mind that statistically it's been documented time and again that the predominant number of people on welfare are white. The stereotype has grown stronger and larger than the facts.

Debunking racial stereotypes demands dedication to its eradication and self-examination. One of the ironies of the pervasiveness and power of racial stereotypes is its ability to find



adherents in the population it damages the most.

How many black readers have heard these lines before?:

- "Black people are never on time"
- "Black people are not organized"
- "You know how loud we are"
- "Black people can't keep nothing nice"

The forced swallowing and subsequent repeating of these stereotypes from blacks creates one of those contradictions that so paralyzes the mind - if whites or anyone from a non-black race utter any of the above, it is considered racist. When spoken by blacks, it is assumed the truth (not a pathetic stereotype). Surely, the truth is the truth regardless of who utters it. The problem is that these are stereotypes and



therefore not truths when applied to a whole race.

Racial stereotypes are prominent examples - specific exaggerations - that are attributed to an entire race or ethnic group. Obviously there is no particular personality characteristic or trait that can be attributed to anyone due to race.

RACE V. CULTURE

There is an unfortunate tendency to regard cultural or environmental characteristics as indicative of the behavior of a race. The "orientals are smart" stereotype is a perfect example of this curiosity. Chinese and Japanese cultures both place significant emphasis on

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