

## Unconscious Discrimination

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First of all I'd like to tell you one thing. That is I am gay. How do you feel? If I said this over ten years ago almost all of you would have stared at me with prejudiced eyes, looked down at me and behaved violently towards me. However now, you may have a very different reaction such as 'Oh, really' or 'I see' and show little surprise. Do you discriminate against gay people? Most of you will answer 'No'. But in fact, you may be well unconsciously against gay people. Today, I've come here to make you aware of unconscious discrimination and to ask you to prevent it.

I've lived over 20 years as a homosexual person. I had been really afraid of coming out because I thought that I may be beaten or bullied. However to my surprise, nobody attacked me or ignored me. Many people were surprised but their reaction was very at ease.

You may be convinced that incidents of intentional discrimination such as beating or harassing gay people have become fewer. My gay friends who are over 30 or 40 also say that it is true that circumstances for gay people have become better. The main reasons why this good trend happened are the progress of school education, the increased amount information on the internet and gay activities for human rights. Thanks to them, gradually we are set free from the old and biased images of homosexuals.

But on the other hand, a lot of information which disdains gay people still exists. For example, there many comedians and shows which make us laugh by regarding gay people as laughingstocks. We can always hear a conversation where a man holds on to another man. The man says 'Don't hold on to me. I'm not gay. Go away!' Then everyone in the audience bursts out laughing. This is common not only on TV but in our daily conversation.

Do you laugh at those jokes or shows? If so, you unconsciously discriminate against gay people. We see you laughing at them. We believe that gay people will be laughed at and refused. As a result, we think that if we come out, we will be discriminated against as well. Then we can't show our true selves. So your unconscious discrimination stops us from coming out.

It is a most tragic point that we, gay people have to hide ourselves and pretend to be heterosexual people. It means continuing to tell a lie to our friends, to our family and to ourselves. We constantly face this dilemma whether we live openly as gay people or keep ourselves disguised. The truth is that almost all gay people feel they must hide themselves because of the fear of discrimination. Furthermore, we suffer from feelings of guilt in telling a lie about our homosexuality to people, especially to our family.

So please stop laughing at those jokes or shows which make fun of gay people on TV and in your conversations. Even if you're just kidding, your behavior hurts our feelings and forces us to live a lie. Only by raising your awareness, can you stop this kind of discrimination. I clearly remember the powerful and reassuring words which my friend said to me. She said 'I don't laugh at those jokes at all after I noticed my unconscious discrimination.' You can do it, too.

Suppose you still continue to laugh at them, you will hurt many gay people around you. It's because about 10% of the population is homosexual. Only you don't know that he or she is gay. In fact, did you notice that I was gay just by looking at me? In a worst scenario, if you have children in the future, you will hurt your precious children by your unconscious discrimination. Remember, there is the possibility that your children will be homosexual. I've watched my parents laugh at jokes which make fun of gay people. Their behavior made me sad and lonely as if I were refused by my own parents. Always, I cried alone. Do you want your beloved children to feel the same sorrow? It is up to you whether your children live with their true identities or with their persona.

Lastly I have a message to all gay people here. If you feel overcome by unconscious discrimination, please remember this simple truth. We didn't do anything bad or wrong. We didn't steal anything, deceive or kill anyone. We only love people who have the same sex. There is no difference, humans love humans. Since I found this truth, I've gotten courage to come out and to fight unconscious discrimination.

Now ladies and gentlemen, please think again about whether you are a part of discrimination or not. Only by raising your awareness, can you be a part of the solution. I strongly believe that we can create a wonderful world where no one needs to deny his or her true identity and where all of us can live as we are.

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