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Understanding the Consequences of  
Being a Minority Group Member

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## PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

**1. PREJUDICE:** To form an opinion on an issue, person, and so forth prematurely without having adequate information. Preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience. These definitions of prejudice speak more about the person making judgments than the person against whom the judgement is made. Some red flags in the definition include *preconceived opinion, not based on reason*, and *without having adequate information*.

**2. DISCRIMINATION:** Recognize a distinction, differentiate. Unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things. Recognition or understanding of the difference between one thing and another. Within the definition of discrimination there is two strands. The first being beneficial as we are taught to *differentiate between one thing and another*, and the second being quite corrosive as it is *unjust or prejudicial*. However, when we move into the realm of what is just or unjust we are moving into the realm of what is morally right or morally wrong.

**3. JUST OR UNJUST** It is interesting to me that a culture which prides itself on moral relativity should think itself capable of differentiating between what is just or unjust. As I was reading through the text, *Men and women of the corporation*, about the men who quarantined the women by only going to men only clubs, or the one woman who stayed silent while the men were telling dirty jokes, I began to understand that there is no discrimination between right and wrong at the basic level of a moral standard. As morally free agents, especially in this age of existentialism, men and women whatever race, color, or creed do not have the moral foundation which supports and declares what is just or unjust.

## EXPERIENCED CONSEQUENCES OF PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

On the front porch of many homes there is a doormat that says, “Welcome”. From time to time I come across a doormat when I’m at the hardware store which says “Go Away”. I chuckle when I see it because of its blunt candid message of not wanting visitors. This same message of “Go Away” is often bluntly told to minority or token members of a group. ““But the fact that all of us were having the same kinds of feelings’ means something more systemic was at work.”(Cose) Systemic racism of white supremacy in corporations is thought to be a norm that was built in. “The problem is the system of white supremacy. Every company contains norms that were built into its culture long ago.”(Wetlaufer) Strongholds of white supremacy, white superiority, and white dominance are evidence of moral downfalls of mankind and evidence of preconceived opinions that are not based on reason or actual experience. Since white dominance is a statistical fact in 98% of corporate America, minorities must not depend solely upon establishments to correct themselves. “...it becomes incumbent upon the employee to say look, this is the culture of this place.”(Wetlaufer) Whether it is getting out onto the golf course with white coworkers or forming coalitions within the corporation.

“Minority members have potential allies among each other, can form coalitions, and can affect the culture of the group.” (Kanter) Cultural movements are not some unseen force that accomplishes an agenda, they are individuals who move forward one step at a time. There are many difficulties in forming a coalition of individuals who move forward in unity, especially if there are very few individuals to be in unity with. “...if there are two tokens in a skewed group, it is difficult for them to generate an alliance that can become powerful in the group...” (Kanter)

The message “Go Away” can seem subtle if noticed at all by the majority, but to a minority it can be loud and clear and blunt as ever. “...they [managers] may decide not to promote an

African American man as early in his career as a white man...”(Wetlaufer) Many minorities in the workforce are eclipsed time after time because of no other criteria than race or gender. “For many black professionals, these are not so much isolated incidents as insistent and galling reminders that whatever they may accomplish in life, race remains their most salient feature as far as much of America is concerned.”(Cose) Those who have made it past certain barriers feel they have betrayed others and abandoned the cause of people who are struggling with upward mobility. While not finding a systemic cure for white supremacy individuals can make a difference with the power and authority they are given as long as it appears they are not vocal about it. “He had quietly made it his business to cultivate a few young blacks in the corporation and bring their careers along: and he could point to some who were doing very well and would have been doing considerably worse without his intervention.” (Cose) Sometimes minority or token people with power and authority do not want to draw attention to themselves or raise concerns of being an activist. “These women also found it hard to interest some other, secretly sympathetic managerial women in active advocacy of upward mobility for women because of the latter’s own fears of getting too identified with a single issue. (Others, though, seized on it as a way to express their values or to get visibility.)”(Kanter)

#### UNDERSTANDING THE CONSEQUENCES OF BEING A MINORITY GROUP MEMBER

Racial or sexist prejudice and discrimination are not the only concerns of minority members of a group. “...pressures and processes can occur around people of any social category who find themselves few of their kind among others of a different social type...”(Kanter) Currently many corporations work with a human resource department or the workers develop an internal network to ensure equality among members of differing social categories. “At Polaroid, we have a group called the Diversity Network Alliance. The alliance is in all parts of the company and includes

blacks, Hispanics, and gays, and its truly not a senior-management movement. Its an initiative run by and for the people at every level of the organization. Its everywhere, and its great.”(Wetlaufer)

The problem of supposed white superiority still hurts among racial lines as prejudicial treatment, *unexamined assumptions and opinions that are not based on reason or actual experience*, is used as the moral standard of how others are treated within a mixed or skewed social group. “It stems more from an unexamined assumption that whites, purely because they are white, are likely to fit in while blacks and other minority group members are not.”(Cose) There are real issues of social communication and interaction between tokens and the majority within a skewed group. Even if an equality of persons is reached. “Tokens cannot be assumed to share the same unspoken understandings that the rest of the members share because of their common membership in a social category...”, “For smooth interaction, groups require both discretion (the ability to put statements in their proper perspective) and a shared vocabulary of attitudes (the ability to take feelings and sentiments for granted) so that they can avoid the time-consuming process of translation.”(Kanter) Society as a whole has a long way to go until an equality of persons is reached. This is especially true when our society cannot define what a person is or when a person becomes a person. As many blacks or women or *any social category who find themselves few of their kind among others of a different social type* feel that they are treated as less than a person, the question our society cannot answer is being asked.

“...there are a lot of destructive traps out there for people of color. And if you fall into them – if you become angry or vengeful or defeated or complacent – you lose.”(Wetlaufer) As society continues to ethnically reject blacks, many concerns arise from those who see a world which their children and grandchildren have to grow up in. “With so many black men in jail or beaten down by society, whom would his daughters marry? With prejudice still such a force, who could ensure their

success?”(Cose) Those of *any social category who find themselves few of their kind among others of a different social type* usually find themselves in a state of emotional fatigue. “...how emotionally draining it can be to exist in a near constant state of adapting to another cultures view of the world, or of having to keep an upbeat attitude in a sometimes hostile environment.”(Wetlaufer)

What tokens have in common with other tokens are that.... “Tokens are the quintessential ‘individuals’ ”(Kanter) Being isolated as an individual within a group is a lonely place to be. An underlying unity among diversity is needed. Unity is quite different than uniformity. Tokens and minorities may have trouble finding common ground within a skewed group even though a Diversity Network Alliance or human resource department exist. “In short, outside intervention is required to break the cycles created by the social composition of groups.”(Kanter) Political correctness has been designated as outside intervention. Laws are written and put in the books not because it is the right thing to do, with moral relativism there is no right and wrong, but because it is the politically correct thing or the pragmatic thing or the most expedient thing to do at the moment for politicians to avoid controversy. America is putting judgments of morally in the hands of politicians who are being manipulated one way or another. “It may very well be that the civil rights debate has been so distorted by strategies designed to engender guilt...”, “Let us decide, from here on out, that no one need feel guilty about the sins of the past.” (Cose) Not feeling guilty about the sins of the past does not erase the sins of the past neither does it remove the cultural ghosts of discrimination and prejudice that often come back to haunt.

#### A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

This unity among diversity needs to start from an agreed upon moral standard of what is just and unjust apart from relativism and political correctness. God delivered His moral standard to Moses, and Moses delivered it to the nation of Israel, however, after many years of rejecting this moral code some very harsh words were spoken against the nation.

“Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.” Isaiah 1:4,5 (KJV)

The systemic corruption that has infiltrated America on all levels has to do with the rejection of God’s moral standards by individuals. Jesus taught that the corruption that is in the world is of the world and not for those who have the love of God in them.

“15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. 1 John 2:15-17(KJV)

If we are to be healed of this haunting cultural ghost of discrimination and prejudice outside intervention is required. Not the intervention of a corrupt double minded manipulated government, but an intervention by God through the prayers of His people.

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” 2 Chronicles 7:14(KJV)

We are called upon to trade the pride of life for humility, corruption for holiness, and the lust of the flesh for the love of God. Without this basic level of a moral standard our culture will continue to chaotically transgress and continuously redefine what is right, good, and just.

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