“Anybody Can Hate. Hate is Easy...Living Side by Side with Compassion, Tolerance and Respect Takes Real Courage.”

Jeffrey A. White
Are the divisions we see in society today (Us vs. Them, Ingroup vs. Outgroup, Drawing lines in the sand) exclusive to our generation?

- No

- This is a very human characteristic.

- Throughout history humans have been placed into superior and inferior categories based on social and cultural characteristics such as how much money they had, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and disease and disability.

- Often, this has led to the majority culture violating the basic human rights of minority cultures.
• What Us vs. Them mentality produces:
  • Social advantages (privileges) and disadvantages.
  • Social privilege is a special, unearned advantage or entitlement, used to one's own benefit and sometimes to the detriment of others.
    • These can include social class, age, disability, ethnic or racial category, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and religion.
  • If I have social privilege it allows me to navigate the social world and experience social mobility without my identity or any other social disadvantage hampering my journey. It gives me a head start!

• I want to touch on two of the most commonly misunderstood advantages or disadvantages and how they affect us.
  • Socioeconomic (were you born poor, middle class, or rich?)
    • https://www.reuters.com/article/us-poverty-brain-idUSBRE97S10W20130829
  • Race
• What **Us vs. Them** mentality produces:

• Racism

• To some, racism is a Klansman in a movie and nothing more. This lack of understanding is the dangerous part of racism.

• **Racism** is the belief that race is a fundamental determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.

• A belief held long enough can produce actions that result in prejudice, discrimination, hate, and violence toward people who look, act, or think differently than the majority.
What **Us vs. Them** mentality produces:

- **Systematic Racism**
  - is a combination of systems, institutions and factors that advantage a group of people over another group. Generally it is the majority over the minority. It causes widespread harm and disadvantages in access and equal opportunity.

- One person or even one group of people did not create systemic racism (but one group or one person can perpetuate it!!!), rather it:
  - is grounded in the history of laws and institutions which were created over time and exists in the institutions and policies that advantage one group over another.
  - takes places in interpersonal communication and behavior (e.g., slurs, bullying, offensive language) that maintains and supports systemic inequities and systemic racism.
Why is it difficult to accept others who are not in our group?

Fear and Survival

- We remain committed to our own self-preservation knowingly, but mainly unknowingly through our subconscious.
- Fear is our oldest and perhaps strongest emotion.
- When we interact with those who look, think, or act differently; we subconsciously filter out what is most useful and safe for us.
- Often, this leads us to reject others who don’t match what we perceive as safe and trustworthy (simply because they have a different opinion or because they may look different).

It is not in our nature to share power.
Why is it important to add team members who may not look or think like everyone else, to your team?

This is a leadership skill!
- When your organization is home to a diverse group of individuals from different backgrounds, experiences, and ideas; it better reflects the community in which it serves.

People with different backgrounds bring new information; and simply interacting with individuals who are different forces group members to prepare better, to anticipate alternative viewpoints and to expect that reaching consensus will take effort.

This prevents groupthink!
• What can we do to be more tolerant and include those who are different from us?

• Recognize and respect the vast individual differences that we have as a species.

• Empathy
  • Trying to understand another person’s view is really a difficult cognitive achievement.

• Compromise
  • Not only is it a pillar of Democracy; it is also a guiding principal of social life!
References

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