Perspectives on Diversity

Teaching Tolerance by Example

MIT Class Discusses Discrimination with Junior High Students

By Eur J. Lee

A black male walks up to a restaurant counter and asks for a cup of coffee. The white waitress behind the counter shushes him and attends to the white female who comes in after him. “Because me all want a cup of coffee,” pleads the black customer as the wait-ress rolls her eyes and ignores him. As the waitress continues to disregard the requests of this customer, his protests grow progressively louder and his patience slowly fraternized.

As the customer eventually storms away from the counter, the dozen or so onlookers all have a good laugh. After all, the waitress and customer are just seventh graders, and the presentation is a delightful diversion from MIT’s campus. On this day, one of the junior high students who are participating in discussions of race and diversity with MIT students as part of a class project in the Martin Luther King Jr. Design seminar (17.920).

“It’s always important to make time for conversations about race and diversity,” Brison- Meisels says. “It’s easy for teachers to lose track of this discussion.

Teach your children well

When asked to define discrimination, one seventh-grader answered “it’s a way to judge people in a way that’s not cool.” Although some students giggled when the topic of stereotypes and names used against sexual orient- nation was mentioned, the students discussed their own experiences with discrimination and performed skits about class-ism, racial discrimination, and gender discrimina-

“...to make broad assumptions about differ-
ent people is just wrong. There are different ways to combat the stereotypes, injustice and discrimination that are everywhere, and you guys aren’t too young to make a difference,” said N. Ijeoma Ezeofor ’06.

Examples of discrimination and stereo-
types that exist seem all the more harsh when performed by seventh graders. From a minori-

Teaching Tolerance by Example

Gay Marriage Gains New Legal Ground

By Jay S. Morgan

Eager to discover new rendering and social equality in the realm of gay rights, a group of seventh grade students at Fletchard Maynard Academy in Cambridge and interested in discourse through discus-

Gay marriage gains ground in 2003

Two landmark cases upholding gay rights were made in 2003.

In Lawrence v. Texas, the United States Supreme Court struck down a Texas law criminalizing sodomy between same-sex partners.

Gay couples argued that their conviction violated their constitutional rights to equal protection, liberty and privacy as pro-

In Goodridge v. Department of Public Health, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that the state must provide the protections, benefits, and obligations of civil marriage to same-sex couples. Civil unions were already ruled legal in the state of Ver-

Marriage, Page 10
Charlotte L. Newman

Marriage, the struggle for personal freedom and the civil rights for same-sex couples.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 1963: Marriage, the struggle for personal freedom and the civil rights for same-sex couples.

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Nataasha N. Rushing

Is the United States ready for a minority president?

It is very easy for people to immediately reply “yes” in response to this question. Yet, if our country is ready, then why has a minority candidate yet to survive the崽 of the party caucuses and primaries to receive the nomination? I venture to say that we are in denial of political inequalities, and the realization of a minority president is nowhere in the near future. There are many things in this country that we overlook that may be holding back our electoral process from reaching its full potential envisaged by our forefathers of representing all citizens of this country. Let us look at the primary example of African-Americans in national public offices.

First, the time elapsed since the end of blatant racial discrimination in this country is equivalent to an eye blink in the span of history. Slavery in America, which ended approximately 40 percent of the US population, yet comprise 77 percent of the House of Representatives and 87 percent of the Senate, a total of 79 percent of Congress. African-Americans (both male and female) represent approximately 13 percent of the U.S. population, 9 percent of the House, zero percent of the Senate, a total of 7 percent of Congress.

How can we expect the American people to elect a black president when they cannot keep a black senator in office? Perhaps there just aren’t that many blacks aspiring to public office. Even still, that cannot possibly account for the fact that there are currently no black senators.

Next, let us look at the trends for the blacks who have been able to run for the Presidential office. Jesse Jackson ran for the nomination of the Democratic Party in 1984 and 1988. Both times, he was unable to win the nomination. Colin Powell was speculated to become a candidate in the Presidency in 1996, but did not enter the race. In 2000, Alan Keyes ran for the Republican Presidential nomination, but eventually stepped down from the race. In this year’s Democratic Candidacy Race, we have seen Al Sharpton and Carol Mosley Braun. Braun, a former US Senator, recently dropped out of the race. Sharpton recently received zero percent voter support in the Iowa Caucuses and the New Hampshire Primary. Democratic sources say Braun felt it was time to quit because her campaign failed to catch fire. Solely based on the trends of black presidential candidates, things aren’t looking too good for the possibility of a black president.

Finally, the number of minority voters in the country is disproportionate due to voting restrictions. With the exceptions of Maine, Vermont and Massachusetts, the remaining states of 47 states and the District of Columbia prohibit inmates serving felons from voting in any public elections. While a majority of states restore voting rights to convicted felons after they complete their prison terms or probation periods, at least ten states, including Virginia, Delaware and New Mexico permanently prohibit former felons from voting. Due to the war on crime and racial profiling, there is a disproportionate amount of blacks convicted of felonies. Thus, more blacks are losing their rights to vote. This is not to say that these felons would not vote for a black presidential candidate or even at all, but it is something to think about. Also, there are thousands of homeless people who are unable to exercise their right simply because they don’t have an address to register with.

There is a problem with that, especially since active participation in government is one of the principles that this country was founded upon. Please make an effort to learn about this year’s presidential candidates and vote. The first step to change is action.

Nataasha N. Rushing is a member of the class of 2005.
Published in the January 21st edition of the Globe, the attempts to crackdown on profiling has proven to be ineffective. An article was publishing, the criminals based on their crimes. The shoe bomber, thought he was a Middle Eastern male. The sniper, militant white male. It all seemed so simple. Blacks and Hispanics don’t commit those kinds of crimes.

While Sept. 11 has made people from the Washington, D.C. and Virginia area, the police sniper was assassinating people throughout the Boston Globe, stating that in Milton, Massachusetts, minorities got 58 percent of tickets but were estimated to be 15.8 percent of drivers. In Boston, minorities received 49.8 percent of tickets but minorities got 58 percent of tickets but were estimated to make up 33 percent of drivers.

The use of race in airport security procedures as a matter of safety, and the DWM situation are not examples of blatant racism. I realize that both instances of racial profiling are instances of prejudice and stereotyping. There is no way one race can be eliminated in any crime or potential crime without some type of identifying evidence. While racial profiling is not defined as a tool of discrimination, it has become one, like so many other things designed for our safety. Admittedly, there are patterns in some crimes, meaning that most persons committing a particular crime may be mostly white, black, etc. But that does not mean that the entire race should be under scrutiny.

Even more appalling is that most of us are guilty of racial profiling in our daily lives. We’ve stood at the airport as looked at people with the thought in our heads “Someone might need to check that person out. He looks suspicious.” Though our biases may not have resulted in people not being let on planes or being pulled over for no reason, they are still just as dangerous. These are still prejudicial attitudes. We are still judging people by the color of their skin, and clearly, not the content of their character. Sure, we don’t know the character of every person that we see on the street, in the airport, in the convenience store, but this is all the more reason not to judge. A matter of safety, is it? Well, when the sniper was assassinating people throughout the Washington, D.C. and Virginia area, the police were looking for a white male. Everyone thought it was a white male. But, as it turns out, he was black. Imagine who could have been saved if authorities had opened their eyes to the fact that anyone, of any race, could have been the perpetrator. Let’s not forget about the shoe bomber. The man was white. Enough so. “Somehow, we just want to be able to help and support you. Everyone deserves to be addressed respectfully. These prejudices are allowing us to maintain our biases, our stereotypes, our prejudices.

While you are judging someone, someone else is judging you. These prejudices are allowing us to maintain our biases, our stereotypes, our prejudices.

The last time I was in an airport was the beginning of January, when I returned for Independent Activities Period. As I stood in the security line of the airport, my thoughts were on how much I enjoyed break. How I really didn’t want to come back to MIT, and exactly how cold would it be. Then, like others in line, I began to take off my shoes, my outer coat, my earrings, and checked my pockets for the usual: coins, keys, cell phones.

For one moment, I thought, I don’t know why I have to go through this. You never heard of a black person hijacking a plane. I’ve joked about such things with my family and friends, watching the news and placing a race to the criminals based on their crimes. The shoe bomber, thought he was a Middle Eastern male. The sniper, militant white male. It all seemed so simple. Blacks and Hispanics don’t commit those kinds of crimes.

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