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# *PROBING OUR PREJUDICES*

*A Unit for High School Students*

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**HORTENSE POWDERMAKER**

*Assistant Professor of Anthropology  
Queens College, New York*

**SUGGESTED SCHOOL ACTIVITIES BY**

**HELEN FRANCES STOREN**

*Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute of School  
Experimentation, Teachers College,  
Columbia University*



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# CONTENTS

|                                                |     |
|------------------------------------------------|-----|
| ACKNOWLEDGMENT                                 | vi  |
| PREFACE                                        | vii |
| I. WHAT IS PREJUDICE?                          | i   |
| II. PREJUDICE IN THE WORLD TODAY               | 6   |
| III. HOW WE GET OUR PREJUDICES                 | 16  |
| 1. The Kind of People We Are                   |     |
| 2. The Pictures in Our Mind                    |     |
| 3. Early Impressions and Experiences           |     |
| 4. Society Reinforces the Pictures in Our Mind |     |
| 5. False Generalizations                       |     |
| 6. Insecurity                                  |     |
| IV. WHAT PREJUDICE DOES TO US                  | 35  |
| 1. What Prejudice Does to the Victim           |     |
| 2. What Prejudice Does to the Subject          |     |
| 3. What Prejudice Does to Society              |     |
| V. WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT                     | 59  |
| 1. Introduction                                |     |
| 2. Steps To Be Taken                           |     |
| 3. Suggested Activities                        |     |

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Bureau for Intercultural Education is engaged in the preparation of a series of teachers' manuals and resource units for public school use. Its practice is to submit each manuscript to several persons and to ask for their critical appraisal of the materials. In this case the following persons read and commented upon the "prejudice" unit: C. O. Arndt, William H. Bristow, Allison Davis, Roma Gans, Benjamin B. Greenberg, Hugh Hartshorne, John LaFarge S.J., Kurt Lewin, Paul M. Limbert, Alain Locke, Daniel A. Prescott, Minnie M. Touster and William E. Vickery.

The Bureau expresses its appreciation of the help of these persons.

STEWART G. COLE,  
*Executive Director.*

## PREFACE

Prejudices are one of the most obstinate barriers blocking attempts to cope with social problems. We are beginning to realize that, while prejudices are not innate, they have a long history in the experiences of individuals, and that they must be attacked from many angles if we are to reduce them.

Anthropologists have worked on problems of race for many years and have scientifically established the fact that there is no evidence for correlating racial characteristics with inferiority or superiority of intelligence. They have also given us the concept of cultural relativity, indicating that differences in the culture of peoples do not necessarily signify the inferiority or superiority of any people. Although these facts are well known to scientists, they have made little impression on the majority of people. The study of anthropology has been confined to graduate schools and to a few colleges. It has not been considered as a part of the curriculum of secondary schools. It could be taught on the high school level as readily as history, geography, biology or any other typical study. For the subject matter of anthropology is intrinsically no more difficult than the regular studies, and it would seem to be as important as they are.

Yet it would be naive to think that prejudices, racial and otherwise, will be wiped out by teaching anthropology to more people, necessary and important as that is. This approach must be combined with other attacks. We

know that prejudices are not entirely due to lack of knowledge, but that they lie also in the realm of the emotions. As Spinoza long ago pointed out, "An emotion can neither be hindered nor removed save by a contrary emotion."<sup>1</sup> Modern psychological study has decidedly reinforced Spinoza's proposition. Our attack on prejudices must therefore include a frank recognition of their emotional nature and an understanding of how they are formed. Once we understand their nature and the manner in which they arise, it becomes easier to formulate plans for reducing or changing socially undesirable prejudices.

This small book is an attempt to help high school students become aware of their prejudices, to understand the nature, origin and effect of prejudices, and to suggest activities which can help reduce them. It is obviously only one of several methods of attacking prejudice. It is expected that additional factual data on race, culture, and minority-majority group problems will accompany or follow the use of this book, and, most important of all, that the teacher's attitude and the classroom activities will be incentives to the reduction of prejudices.

I should like to express my appreciation to Dr. Stewart G. Cole for initiating this project and for his continued helpful interest during the writing of the text. To Miss Helen Frances Storen I am indebted for her critical reading of the manuscript, her helpful suggestions, and her contribution of the Questions for Discussion and Suggested Activities for Students.

HORTENSE POWDERMAKER

Queens College

<sup>1</sup> Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part IV, Proposition VII.

## ***PROBING OUR PREJUDICES***



## Chapter I

### WHAT IS PREJUDICE?

SCHOOL has just opened for another year. David walked out of his class in a grim mood. During that first day he had already made up his mind—he just did not like his new teacher. David did not ask himself why he was prejudiced against her; and he did not stop to think how the prejudice might affect his progress in school, or that it might even affect the progress of his fellow classmates. David did not think about those things; he just knew he did not like her and that was that.

Practically everyone has some prejudices. None of us is so perfect as to be completely free of them.

A prejudice is an attitude we have toward a specific situation that we reach without sufficient consideration of the facts about the situation. It differs from an attitude founded on science and knowledge, for in the case of a prejudice we form a judgment without the help of science or of our own thinking capacities. We frequently do not know how a prejudice arose or when it first began. We may not even be aware that we have any. But whether or not we are aware of prejudices, they influence our behavior. They may influence us even more if we are unaware of them. Our first problem therefore is to be able to recognize a prejudice, either our own or that of other people.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The origin of the word prejudice is interesting. It comes from the Latin, *praejudicium*. *Præ* means *before* and *judicium* means *judgment*. Judgment implies coming to a conclusion after a consideration of all the factors. Prejudice means jumping to a conclusion before considering the facts.

Some of us have more prejudices than others. There are also differences in kind and intensity of prejudices. Not all prejudices are harmful. For instance, we all have prejudices against certain foods which we may never have tasted but which we have made up our minds in advance we would dislike. Many of us shudder at the idea of eating snails, which French people enjoy very much. Or, without having tasted it, we may think that French dressing on salad is horrible. Our preconceived notions about food may not be confined to foreign dishes. We are served a new vegetable, kale or turnip greens, and before tasting it we decide we do not like it. These prejudices may not be harmful. True, we may not have as varied a diet because of our prejudices about food, but we manage to get enough of the right kind of food to eat, and we harm no one by our dislike of French dressing, turnip greens, or snails. On the other hand, if a prejudice against a particular food is so intense that it upsets family harmony, imposes undue hardship upon the cook or the family budget, then prejudices against little things even foods, can become undesirable.

Our daily life is full of harmless prejudices. For instance, we may have definite likes and dislikes about colors without knowing exactly why. If you are a girl, blue may be your favorite color and you may dislike red. But your friend may have the opposite taste. In either case, the preference may have nothing to do with which color is the more becoming. Objectively, you and your friend may look equally good in either, but you each choose your favorite color and no harm is done. If you are a boy, you may prefer blondes and dislike brunettes or redheads. Somehow you are naturally attracted to a blue-eyed blonde and you

cannot see anything in a brown-eyed, dark-haired girl. On the other hand your friend prefers brunettes. Actually, from an aesthetic standard, one type can be as beautiful as another. It is difficult for us to know why we prefer one and dislike another, but we know we do.

These are all prejudices which do no one harm. But there are other prejudices which affect very much the lives of the people against whom they are directed. We frequently do not know the reason why we have these prejudices any more than we know why we prefer a blonde or a brunette, or a red to a blue dress. A prejudice against a dress because of its color may be harmless; a prejudice against a person solely because of color may be just as unreasonable, but it is devastating in its effect.

A colored student enters a classroom in which all the other students are white. The first reaction of some of the students may be to wish that he were not there, and then to hope that they will not have to sit next to him. They do not know what kind of person he is, whether he is pleasant or unpleasant, bright or stupid; but as soon as they see he is a Negro they do not want to have anything to do with him.

An American boy, born in this country of Chinese parents, brings one of his classmates, an American girl whose parents were English, to a school dance. The other students know little about the boy (who incidentally has never been to China) except that he is a good student and rather quiet, but they are indignant that an "Oriental" has brought an American girl to the dance. They think something should be done about it. The girl should be protected. It does not matter that they have never heard anything against the boy's behavior. As far as they know,

he has always behaved like a gentleman. They do not stop to think that these two young people were both born in this country—that they are both first-generation Americans, and that both had parents who were immigrants.

The girls' basketball team is going to elect a captain. The best player is Marie Proto, an attractive olive-skinned girl of Italian descent. Some of the players think she should be the captain. But the others—the majority of the team—whisper among themselves that Marie's parents are "wops," and that although Marie was born in this country, she is a "wop" too. They do not want a "wop" for the captain of their basketball team. Consequently Marie is not elected.

A Jewish family moves into a neighborhood where previously there have been no Jews. None of the people living on this street know anything about the Jewish family. But before they even see them, they decide that the Jewish family will be unpleasant and will "ruin" the neighborhood. Immediately they decide to have nothing to do with them.

Each of these incidents shows how an attitude was formed without consideration of the facts in the situation, indeed without any thinking at all. On the part of the older people as well as on the part of the students there was an almost instantaneous emotional reaction toward the Negro, the Chinese, the Italian and the Jew, which was not based on a knowledge of those people involved. Like our strong feelings against eating new or different kinds of foods, these antipathies toward certain races, nationalities, and religions are prejudices.

But whereas we may express our dislike of certain foods without doing any one harm, the expression of our dislike for people may do definite harm. In the cases mentioned

the people have been made to feel unwanted and inferior. Even before they have an opportunity to prove themselves, they have been discriminated against. They love this country and cannot understand why they are not accepted by their fellow citizens. The attitudes shown toward these people—the Chinese boy, the Jewish family, the girl of Italian background, and the Negro boy—are what we call prejudices which harm other people.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

- 1. What are some of your own prejudices? Distinguish between those which are harmful and those which are not.**
- 2. Are most of the people you know prejudiced? Consider the members of your family, your friends, teachers and classmates. Do you think these people are aware that they are prejudiced?**
- 3. Against which groups do you think there is the greatest prejudice in your school and in your community? Think of the various racial, nationality and religious groups.**

## Chapter II

### PREJUDICE IN THE WORLD TODAY

**P**REJUDICE is not a new phenomenon. But we find it taking a particularly vicious form in the world today. If we study the Nazi system in Germany, we see an intensification and glorification of prejudice. The basic ideas of the system are grounded in prejudice. One of the fundamental concepts of the Nazi system is racism, a completely unscientific and false theory which says that one race—the Nordic—is superior to all other races and that the supposedly superior race has the right to enslave and exploit all others. The Nazis have as their goal a slave world, a world in which whole nations and groups of people will be exploited for the benefit of “the master race.”

It was only after a struggle lasting for centuries that men were able to free themselves from the autocracy of kings and nobles who claimed a divine right to exploit the masses of people for their own selfish ends. Now racism, the avowed ideal and policy of Germany, is trying to restore that tyranny on an even more ambitious scale. Like the autocratic kings of the past, the Nazis have created stories and myths completely divorced from scientific fact to show that the Germans are a superior race and have the right to enslave others.

This theory of racism is really a convenient excuse to exploit other peoples, a political tool which Hitler uses to maintain himself in power. As long as it remains the

ideal of a society, there can be no peace in the world.

The Nazis, it is true, did not invent prejudices or even the concept of racism, but they have tried to reverse history by reviving fears and prejudices of the past. The history of mankind has been in part the history of the overcoming of fear and of prejudices. The Nazis' return to an age of darkness comes at a time when many peoples are beginning to discard the fears and prejudices of their forefathers.

Civilization has advanced considerably from the attitude held by our Stone-Age ancestors who regarded with suspicion and dislike even a single member of a neighboring tribe appearing in their midst. The hostile attitude of the peasants to a stranger during the European pre-industrial period was not much different from that of the cavemen. Their hostility was little more rational than that of primitive tribes.

At the end of the Middle Ages the feudal lords who had been all-powerful looked down upon and feared the merchants and traders who were just beginning to appear and who were the forerunners of modern capitalism. They were feared not only because they were different and therefore strange, but also because the feudal lords sensed that the rising merchant class would compete with them for power.

• To this was added the position held by the church that trade and moneylending were sinful. It is interesting to note that through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance there was animosity against Gentile bankers and merchants who were successful as well as against Jews. To the church, any form of moneylending for interest, no matter whether the rate of interest was small or large, was a sin. Many

Jews were forced into moneylending because agriculture and other occupations were forbidden to them. Luther's pamphlet *On Trade and Usury* was directed at Nordic monopolists and moneylenders of Germany, England, Sweden and Denmark.<sup>1</sup>

An occasional wealthy Jewish banker and trader arose, but there were far more wealthy Christian bankers and merchants, even in proportion to their numbers in the population. And from the Middle Ages until today, there have been far more poor Jews than rich ones. Yet the myth of Shylock developed and the Jews became scapegoats for this kind of prejudice. Historically, a scapegoat was any animal over which the sins of a tribe or people were confessed. This act thus symbolically transferred the sins from the people to the beast. Today, the word has come to mean any person or group of persons upon whom blame is placed unjustly.<sup>2</sup> The Jews have not been the only ones who have been accused of hoarding money and being stingy. The people of Scotland have had the same accusation thrown at them. Here it has taken the form of the familiar joke of the Scotchman squeezing the penny.

Actually whether a person is stingy or generous, thrifty or extravagant, has nothing to do with his religion or his nationality. These traits depend on his personality and the particular situation in which he is. Generosity is as common a trait among both Jews and Scotchmen as among any other group.

Prejudice has had a long history and there are few groups

<sup>1</sup> Beard, Miriam, "Anti-Semitism—Product of Economic Myths" in *Jews in a Gentile World*, p. 384, Graeber & Britt, Ed.

<sup>2</sup> For an interesting and comprehensive explanation of the term, scapegoat, see Kenneth Gould's, *They Got the Blame. The Story of Scapegoats in History*. Association Press, 1942.

or people who have not at some time suffered from it. There are examples of it in our own history. When America was first discovered the earliest prejudice was against the Indians. Declaring that the Indians did not belong to the human race because they were not Christians and had no souls, the Spaniards treated the Indians cruelly.

Later, as our country developed, there was prejudice against every succeeding wave of immigrants. The English settlers were prejudiced against the Germans, the Irish, and the French; the Protestants against the Catholics; and then, later in the nineteenth century, the descendants of the northern Europeans were prejudiced against the new immigrants from southern Europe. It mattered not that the people who talked against the newcomers were themselves the descendants of immigrants. And until the beginning of this century any one north of the Mason-Dixon line was to a Southerner nothing but a "Damn Yankee," regardless of the purity of his racial heritage.

The earlier group of immigrants held to their prejudices against the new immigrants and conveniently forgot how poor they had been on arrival in this country. They also forgot that the earlier the date of arrival in this country the greater the economic opportunities. Land was cheaper and more plentiful at the time when most of the immigrants from northern Europe arrived here than when those from southern Europe came. In the first period, anyone could move West and get land by merely squatting on it. Likewise for the first comers industrial opportunities were more plentiful when the country was being developed. These facts were not considered, for prejudice does not involve a consideration of facts.

There have been many glaring examples of prejudice in the history of our country, but prejudice has never been a part of our American ideal as it is a part of the Nazi ideal. Even if we fall short of our goal, equal opportunity for all, the ideal remains, and continues to influence our behavior. We may set up a goal for ourselves in school—we may want to get all A's. Now we may not achieve this goal; perhaps we will get a few B's and even a C, but we continue to try to get the A's. If we had not had this ideal we would not have tried as hard and perhaps would have received all C's.

Ideals form the inner core of a society and radiate outward, influencing the behavior of its people. The Nazi ideal which is based on prejudice influences the people in such a way that they are constantly striving to enslave their fellow men.

Let us examine the American democratic ideal. Our Declaration of Independence put forth a new idea when it referred to truths and privileges which were applicable to "all men." And it meant *all* men, not just exceptional men who might exercise exceptional powers. For many thousands of years men had no rights, no opportunities other than what kings and nobles, who ruled by divine right, wished to grant them. And what had been granted could always be taken away by the same ruler. The inalienable rights and duties of man as man is a relatively new concept.

Democracy presupposes a respect for each individual, whether he be white or colored, Catholic, Protestant or Jew, immigrant or native born, rich or poor. Democracy does not mean that everyone is alike and therefore equal. It means rather an awareness of individual differences and

an emphasis on the opportunity for each individual to develop and use his intelligence, whether he be above average or average. It means that he has the freedom to develop his own personality and make use of his special gifts.

Each one of us is different. Look around your classroom. There are no two students with exactly the same complexion. Members of the same race show great variation in their physical characteristics. Even your classmates who belong to the same race as you differ in the color of their skin, the shape of their heads, the color and texture of their hair, the shape of nose, and many other physical characteristics. They differ also in their abilities. Some students, as you know, are very bright and are always at the head of the class; others jog along safely in the average middle section of the class; and some tend to fall behind. So also do your friends and classmates vary in their characteristics. Some have quiet, easy-going dispositions, while others are excitable and quick to anger; some are sociable and make friends easily, while others are timid and find it difficult to make friends. Each one of us is a combination of characteristics, some of which are due to heredity and some to environment. These characteristics make each individual a bit different from everyone else. This is what we mean, when we say that each individual is unique. This fact of uniqueness or difference is not confined to the human species, but also applies to the plant and animal world.

The uniqueness of each individual has not always been recognized. In the past little value was placed on individual differences. A boy nearly always followed his father's vocation without regard to his own wishes or

ability. Marriages were usually arranged not on the basis of affection, but for family reasons, frequently economic ones. In the Europe of the Middle Ages, the role of the individual was almost completely determined by the class into which he was born (noble or serf), his sex, and his religion. Earlier still, among primitive tribes, life was even more regulated by clan or kinship ties, and each person followed a rather rigid social pattern of behavior.

Slowly through thousands of years of struggle the concept of the uniqueness of each individual has gained root. The Christian tradition with its emphasis on the need of individual salvation, the relationship of each man to God, and the equality of all men before and in God did much to spread and deepen this concept. The industrial revolution, by opening economic opportunities to new classes of people and permitting them to rise in status, also strengthened this idea of the value of the individual. No longer were class lines rigidly determined by birth. A man could get rich through his own ability and effort and rise from the class into which he had been born.

Our democracy carried the concept further. Education became free and universal in contrast to the earlier monarchical and feudal system when it was reserved for the few. The son of illiterate parents might become a distinguished scholar if he had ability. Because of our democratic ideal, the emphasis was on equal opportunity for each individual.

We all know that this ideal has been only partially attained in the United States. We know that everyone does not have an equal opportunity to make the most of his ability. Prejudices based on race, religion and nationality exist and result in discrimination against large sec-

tions of our population. But these prejudices are not part of the American ideal. Unlike the Nazi we are ashamed of our prejudices and strive to diminish them. Perhaps not all individuals within the country are ashamed of the prejudices, but as a nation it can be safely said that in this respect we are decidedly different from the Nazis. We do not make the cultivation of prejudices our objective. In fact, once we become aware of them we strive to check them. Always the American goal of fair play, of equal opportunity, beckons us on. Democracy is only in its infancy. Its possibilities for further development are infinite.

But these potentialities do not just grow like weeds in a field. Rather they are like flowers which need to be tended carefully to be brought to full bloom. The potentialities of democracy can only be made to bloom by careful nurture, not only by a few statesmen, but by every individual. Each one of us has a role to play in the development of democracy. Scarcely a day goes by in the lives of each of us when we do not have an opportunity to exercise our concept of democracy, to appraise our rights as individuals against our rights and obligations as members of a group. The aggressive boy in school who demands an unfair share of the teacher's time because of his disturbing antics cannot be fully aware of his role as a member of the class. On the baseball diamond or the football and hockey fields, the democratic concept of good sportsmanship and fair play must be practiced by everyone in the game. It is not enough for the captain and a few players to "play fair." One player who cheats or is a "poor sport" can ruin the whole team. The same holds true for us as members of the school and the community of which we are a part.

A world conflict now rages between the friends of democracy and its enemies. The Judeo-Christian concept of equality before God and the democratic one of equality of opportunity in this world have no place in Nazi theory. To the Nazis the concept of the uniqueness of each individual, the idea of equality of opportunity, the right to develop whatever potentialities one has, are dangerous ideas which they would destroy and replace with their system of enslaving man. A dictator has no respect for individuals. They are merely pawns to be used and exploited to further his own lust for power. Such are the ideas behind the struggle in which we are engaged. It is a struggle between two irreconcilable systems of human relationships, between two forms of society, one a degrading master-slave relationship, the other built on the concept of the individual uniqueness of man and his right to develop his own capabilities.

We must not only fight the enemy abroad. We must also fight it here, at home. For if we are to realize man's full potentialities we must free ourselves from our prejudices. In order to make progress toward our democratic ideal, we must destroy discrimination based on race, nationality, religion, or economic or social status.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In the world as a whole do you think racial prejudices and racial conflicts are increasing or diminishing? Give evidence.
2. What is the basic difference between the prejudice existing in Nazi Germany and prejudice in the United States? In what way do the Nazis make sure that young people acquire these prejudices?
3. In America do you believe there is more or less prejudice

## PREJUDICE IN THE WORLD TODAY 15

now than in your grandfather's time? How does the prejudice of today differ from the prejudice of fifty years ago?

4. Do you know people who say they truly believe in the American ideals and yet show definite attitudes of prejudice? Give examples.
5. Discuss the meaning of the statement "It is quite possible that we could win the war for democracy abroad and yet lose it at home."
6. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement: "Ultimately there is great value in the recent race riots because they focus attention on a basic evil."

## Chapter III

### HOW WE GET OUR PREJUDICES

#### 1. THE KIND OF PEOPLE WE ARE

**H**UMAN beings are complex. We must understand the nature of these complexities in order to learn how prejudices are developed and how they can be overcome. In each individual are a variety of habits, emotions, and patterns of behavior, some of which are contradictory. We love and we hate; at times we have courage and at other times we are afraid; we are tolerant toward some people and intolerant toward others; we accept the latest achievements of science and at the same time believe in myths which have no support except in tradition; we can be cruel and we can also be kind. This is true of all of us. When we look at one side of our natures and see our fears and cruelty, we are shocked and discouraged. But other times we are elated when we glimpse the possibilities of the other side—our love, our courage, and our achievements. In every human being we find these opposing tendencies and in all of us there is a struggle between them. We know from experience that under certain circumstances hate can be changed to love, that intolerance can change to tolerance, and that fear may give way to courage.

Hate and love of particular people are not in our nature when we are born. At that time we possess only the capacity to develop love and hate and the other human emotions. Whom we learn to like or dislike, love or hate

will depend on our experiences—experiences in our home, in our neighborhood, in our school, and the impressions these experiences make upon us. Some of these early impressions may be inaccurate and harmful. If we do not grow, these impressions will remain relatively fixed, but if we have the capacity and will to learn, we may be able to change some of these early attitudes. Growth means change, not only physical change such as growing taller and stronger, but also change in ideas and attitudes. Just as our bodily size increases with the years, so can our courage become stronger and our ideas more mature. One of the most outstanding characteristics which distinguish man from other species is his capacity to learn. His learning capacity is continuous. By this capacity we mean not only the ability to take in knowledge, but also the capacity to transform old habits and attitudes, to change fear into courage, and hate into love. All human beings have this capacity for growth and development, regardless of the color of their skin, their social class, or their nationality. It is this educability of man which has made progress possible.

We have said that we are not born with specific prejudices in our germ plasm. We can only inherit biological traits such as the color of our skin, or the shape of our face, or the color of our eyes. These are determined in the germ plasm. But all our characteristics which are not of biological origin come from society, the culture which surrounds us from the day we are born. The particular language we speak is not biologically inherited. If a Chinese baby was adopted right after birth by English parents and brought up in England, he would speak the English language and Chinese would be as unfamiliar to

him as to any English boy. Or, if one of you had been adopted by a Hottentot couple in Africa and had grown up among Africans you would speak the Hottentot language.

Nor is there anything in the germ plasm which determines what church you will belong to. As a person grows up, he joins his family's church. But, again if he were adopted as a baby, he would join the church of the adopted family. Or he may when he grows up change his religion. Color of skin and of eyes and other such biological traits cannot be changed by adoption into a different society. But the language we learn, our religion, how we earn our living, our ideas and attitudes, our manners, and our prejudices—these will come from the society which surrounds us. The newborn baby has no prejudices. How then does he acquire them? Students of human behavior have studied the problem sufficiently to help us answer this question.

## 2. THE PICTURES IN OUR MIND

By the time we reach high school we have what one student of the problem has called "pictures in our mind" of many people with whom we have had little and sometimes no contact. These pictures are known as stereotypes. There is the picture of a Negro, usually lazy, happy-go-lucky, undependable, with black skin, wide nostrils, and kinky hair. Perhaps one of the pictures is that of a "wop," a swarthy person, quick to anger, who will pull out a dagger, if provoked. The stereotype of a Jew is an unattractive old man with a beard, eating peculiar foods, talking loudly with gestures. Mention an Oriental, either

Chinese or Japanese, and we see a picture of the dreaded "yellow peril," our country swamped by slant-eyed, yellow laundrymen. An Irishman may immediately bring up the picture of an unreasonable person, always losing his temper and getting into fights and brawls. An upper-class Englishman may immediately conjure up a picture of a ruddy-faced gentleman, whose sole occupation is fox hunting. Although we may never have seen them or had any contact with them, we will have pictures in our minds of a Russian, a Turk, titled European nobility, an Eskimo. Some of these pictures may be attractive and others ugly. Most of the time they have little connection with reality.

### 3. EARLY IMPRESSIONS AND EXPERIENCES

How we get these "pictures in our mind" is a long story and goes back to our early childhood. We learn a great deal during the first six or seven years of our life, for our education begins long before we start to school. Nor is education always a formal process of which we are aware. It begins at birth and ends at death. We are constantly receiving impressions and having experiences from which we learn. The importance of formal schooling should not be underestimated but we must realize that it is only part of our education. Our parents, friends, books and magazines, the movies, radio, travel, all these are also important factors in our education. Older sisters and brothers, other relatives who live with us, and teachers exert a powerful influence on us.

To the little tot of two or three years, his mother and father are godlike creatures to be imitated and followed. This attitude of the child toward his parents is easily

understood when we realize how dependent on them he is for comfort, food, security, protection from danger, and love. In addition to material things, the parents are also the child's main source of knowledge. What he learns of the world and other people is like a specially printed book edited by his mother and father. If Mother does not like the people who live next door, then little Dick, aged two, and Sally, aged five, do not like them. Mother may be polite to the neighbors and may never even voice her opinion about them in the presence of the children. But the youngsters get Mother's true feelings from the tone of her voice, the expression on her face, from her gestures, for children are extremely intuitive and sensitive. They sense when Mother and Dad are happy and when they are sad or worried, even though nothing is said.

For almost every child, Father is a hero and Mother a heroine. If Father smokes a big fat cigar, then little Dick wants to put it in his mouth. Sally thinks it wonderful to smear Mother's lipstick and powder over her face. If Mother's favorite color is blue, then little Sally will want a blue coat. If Daddy talks loudly then Dick will raise his voice also. The children's favorite game is to play "grown-up," and they pretend to do the things their parents do. They pretend to have children, to go to the store to market, to visit and to telephone.

Children imitate not only activities but also feelings, attitudes, and opinions. Suppose that little Dick and Sally have grown up in a completely white neighborhood and have never seen a Negro. They do not even know the meaning of the word. Then, one day Father comes home and in the presence of the children tells Mother about how he had some trouble with a "dirty nigger" downtown.

His voice is angry as he tells the tale. And little Dick and Sally get a strong impression that a "dirty nigger" is something unpleasant, something Mother and Father do not like. Dick may even ask what a "nigger" is, if it is the first time he has heard the word, and he may be told that it is a colored person. Dick knows what dirty means, because he is scolded when he comes to the table with dirty hands, or when he falls in the mud while at play. So *dirty* is something bad, something which deserves punishment. Dick and Sally take over their parents' feelings and attitudes towards the "dirty nigger," just as they took over the dislike for the next door neighbor and the love for Aunt Mabel and Uncle Harry, and the idea that mothers and fathers have children, and go shopping, and telephone, and smoke, and stay up late.

Now Dick and Sally do not like colored people, who are "dirty niggers." They have not only a new phrase, but also a new attitude about a people whom they have never seen. A few weeks later Mother and Daddy have a friend for dinner who tells lots of funny stories. One of them is about a "dirty nigger" who does all kinds of things that no white person would do, and all the grownups laugh a great deal about the story. Dick and Sally are not sure why the grownups laugh, but they join in, too. If all the adults laugh, it must be funny. And "dirty niggers" become people who do outrageous and funny things which no white person would do.

Then one summer day Dick and Sally are taken by Mother on a wonderful expedition to a big zoo in a distant park on the other side of the city. They have to take a long exciting streetcar ride to get there. It is about five o'clock when they board the streetcar again to go

home. The car is crowded and it becomes more crowded when at one corner a group of workingmen get on. Some of the men are colored and some are white, and they have all been at work digging a ditch in which a new sewer pipe will be laid. It is midsummer and as a result of their work they are all hot and dirty and sweaty. Two of the colored men stand very close to Dick and Sally and their mother, who tries to edge as far away as she can. Dick whispers to Sally "dirty nigger." Now they have actually seen one, and the early impression is confirmed by experience. Neither they nor their mother notice that the white workingmen who had also been digging the ditch were equally dirty. There was no "picture in their mind" of a dirty white, but there was one of a "dirty nigger." Although there are dirty white people as well as dirty colored people in the world, the picture in our mind is only that of "dirty nigger." When we see a dirty Negro, he confirms the picture. When we see a dirty white person, we either pay no attention or do not regard him as typical. As Sally and Dick grow older, this picture in their minds of a "dirty nigger" becomes stronger and is reinforced by society.

#### 4. SOCIETY REINFORCES THE PICTURES IN OUR MIND

In this simple story of two young children you can see that society is no haphazard affair. Society is a well-organized system. What we do and how we do it is not left to chance or accident. Rather does society tell us what to do, and how to do it. There are certain forms of behavior called a pattern, which we are supposed to follow for almost everything we do. There are patterns of dress-

ing, of eating, of marrying, of education, of recreation and for all our other activities. The patterns vary from one society to another, and from one historical period to another in the same society, but some form of patterning is always present. We are seldom aware of the degree to which our behavior, important and unimportant, is regulated by the pattern of the society in which we live.

For instance, while the need to eat is a biological one and is the same for everyone, what we eat, how we eat and when we eat is determined by the pattern of society. Each culture has its particular foods and special methods of cooking, its own table manners, and time of dining. A child growing up in England is taught to handle his fork and knife quite differently from the way the American child uses his his fork and knife. The Viennese dines late, perhaps has his dinner at nine or ten o'clock, while in America, we eat dinner at about six or seven o'clock. In England the dessert will probably be a hot pudding, while in Vienna it will be a sweet pastry. In the United States it will probably be pie. So while the Englishman, and the Viennese, and the American satisfy their hunger, yet it is their particular group pattern which prescribes how they do it and with what foods. Likewise it is society which says that girls' clothes should be frilly and pretty while boys' clothes should be plain, and that girls can have long curls, but that boys' hair should be short. But in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, men wore satin doublets with lace frills, and elaborate wigs with curls. It was the prevailing culture which prescribed this fashion for a gentleman.

Marriage fulfills deep instinctual needs, but the forms of courtship and of marriage are again prescribed by

society. The traditional European marriage of the past, was arranged by the families. The prospective bride and groom knew each other slightly or not at all. It was different from the marriage of today, which represents the free choice of two young people. Even such a natural emotion as crying is regulated by society. Men and women have the same emotions, but it is not considered manly in our society for men to weep, while it is all right for women to do so. We all know that it is not easy to go against the conventional patterns of our society. The price we pay for following a different pattern is ridicule, ostracism, or, in severe cases, punishment.

Not only is our behavior regulated by society, but so also our ideas and our feelings. Let us continue with the example of Dick and Sally and see how, as they grow up, society steps in and directs the way they think and feel about Negroes. We left them with a "picture in their minds" of a "dirty nigger." The picture was formed before they ever met a Negro and was confirmed when they did see a dirty Negro. The fact that they see clean Negroes and dirty white people does not change their stereotype.

When Sally and Dick learn to read, they learn that black is evil and white is virtuous. The use of such phrases as "black as sin" and "black sheep" subtly strengthens their prejudices against dark-skinned people. Angels who represent virtue are always pictured as white. All through our literature from the time of the Bible, black is the symbol for evil and white for virtue. Black is also the symbol for sorrow—it is worn at the time of death; while white is the symbol for happiness and purity—the bride traditionally wears a white dress. We are all influenced by such color symbols. In the newspaper, Sally and Dick see a

large headline, "Black Man Kills White Girl." A white man might also kill, but the headline does not blazon, "white man." Sally and Dick, as they grow up, are permitted to go to the movies. Sometimes a Negro has a role in the movies, but he is seldom the hero. Usually he is a servant, obsequious to his white "superiors." Frequently the servant provides a comedy note by his naïveté, or amusing antics.

Even though the children have never had a Negro servant in their own home, the concept of servant and obsequiousness and comedy is added to the picture in their mind. They see cartoons and pictures of Negroes, which emphasize the thick lips and the kinky hair. In their history books they read that the Negroes were taken from Africa where they had been heathens and savages, and brought into this country as slaves. They therefore conclude that Negroes must be an inferior people. Sally and Dick do not know, or if they do know they forget, that the ancestors of the white people were once heathen and primitive savages. They do not learn that the Negro natives in East Africa had well-built roads, a highly developed political system, a smoothly functioning economic structure, and a judicial system with a hierarchy of courts, long before any black man was brought to the western continent. Our schools do not stress these facts. Instead we are given the impression of Negroes who are wild savages living close to Nature, more like animals than men. Sally and Dick rarely if ever hear about outstanding Negro scientists, artists and writers of today. They have heard about a famous Negro prize fighter, but this just confirms their picture of the Negro as a brute and a savage fighter.

If Sally and Dick happen to visit in the South they see that Negroes are segregated from white people. The Negroes have to sit in the balconies of the movies, ride in the rear of the buses and streetcars, use different waiting rooms at the railroad station, and always enter a white person's house by the back door. They are never called Mr. or Mrs. or Miss, but are referred to as "boy," "Uncle" and "Auntie" or by their first name, regardless of age or position. Patterns of race relations in the South can leave no doubt in anyone's mind as to the inferior position the Negro is forced to occupy.

In the North or West, the social patterning is not quite as obvious in regard to Negro-white relationships; but in many subtle ways, the North also stresses the inferior position of the Negro. Sally and Dick know that Negroes live in the poorer parts of town, usually crowded and unpleasant, and that the Negroes whom they meet work as servants or in other service trades. Sally and Dick do not meet the Negro college professor or the distinguished Negro artist. They probably do not even know of their existence. When Sally and Dick are in high school and college they see that the Negro student is never asked to join their fraternity or sorority and that he is seldom elected to any important class office.

No matter to what section of the country Sally and Dick go, they see society constantly affirming and reinforcing the picture early formed in their minds. The Negro is a "dirty nigger," an inferior creature, good only in the role of servant or other menial role, someone to either laugh at or fear. All the social patterns in the community relating to Negroes strengthen the "picture in their mind."

Of course, Negroes are not the only ones for whom Sally and Dick and the rest of us have pictures in our mind. We have pictures of the politically minded Irish Catholics, of the rich Jews, of the Mexican migratory workers, of the "wop" immigrant, of the Chinaman—and of many others. These pictures are formed in a similar way to the one just described. All of these people are likewise regarded as dirty. The epithets, "dirty Catholic," "dirty Jew," "dirty Chink," "dirty wop" are common—and the young child hears them long before he ever sees a Catholic, a Jew, a Chinese, or an Italian.

It happens that much of the important work of the world is dirty. We could not get along without the farmers and the coal miners, and digging coal and digging in the vegetable garden will inevitably make the miner and the farmer dirty. An industrial worker in the steel mill is likely to end the day grubby and dirty. This work is dirty regardless of the race or nationality of the worker. There is nothing basically evil about dirt itself. But through the ages it has acquired a deep symbolism of evil. That is, associations of evil have been connected with it for such a long time that people mistakenly think dirt is evil.

The child hears his parent refer to a "mean Jew." Later he hears that Jews are different from other people, that they eat different foods, go to church on Saturday, speak a strange language. All these qualities combine to form a picture in his mind of a Jew as someone queer and foreign. Perhaps the first Jew he actually meets is a student in his school, who seems much like everyone else. But this does not disturb the picture in his mind. He thinks the Jewish boy in school must be an exception, or that he is just clever in concealing his real nature. Actu-

ally this Jewish boy may be the average Jew, while the mental picture is a caricature.

The object of our prejudice may change from one historical period to another. In the middle of the nineteenth century, when the Irish were migrating to the United States in large numbers, the older Yankee was accustomed to think of the typical Irishman as reckless, whisky-loving, thriftless, quick-tempered, and ever ready for a fight. The Irishman was also disliked because he was a Catholic. The facts that he worked for miserable wages on railroads and canals, that he lived in labor camps in conditions of great squalor, and that his wages were supplemented by copious supplies of raw whisky, were, however, not taken into account.<sup>1</sup> As in the case of the other stereotypes, the social patterns supported the picture in people's minds. At this time a familiar slogan in a railroad station, and a common advertisement in newspapers read: "Help Wanted. No Irish need apply."<sup>2</sup> Today we find the same type of advertisement, perhaps not so frankly worded but with the same intent: to keep a whole group of people from certain occupations regardless of the fitness of individual members. Only now, Jew and Negro have replaced the Irish. These advertisements specify only "Christian" or "white" applicants need apply.

In this same period of our history Catholics were regarded as extremely dangerous people. There was even a political party, the Know-Nothing Party, which gave organized social expression to hostility against Catholics. If Sally and Dick had been Protestants growing up during the middle nineteenth century, they might have over-

<sup>1</sup> Davie, Maurice R., *World Immigration*, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

heard their parents and other adults saying that the Pope was trying to colonize America so that he could gain control of it. They would have followed the older people in believing that Catholics were entering the police force so that they could control it, that firearms were being stored in the basement of Catholic churches to prepare for the day of reckoning between the Protestants and the Catholics, which was supposedly near at hand.<sup>8</sup> Sally and Dick would have had pictures in their minds of a Catholic as a sinister person who was plotting to overthrow the government by force. Today, a hundred years later, we smile at this picture. But we do not smile at the pictures that are now in our minds. These we accept earnestly and seriously and never question their authenticity. Perhaps a hundred years from now our descendants will smile at the misconceptions we have of the Negro, the Mexican, the Chinese, or the Jew.

#### 5. FALSE GENERALIZATIONS

There is another way that we get false ideas about a whole group of people. Bill plays marbles with a group of boys in his neighborhood, and one of them, John, a Polish boy, cheats. Bill then concludes that all Poles cheat, and he carries this idea with him throughout his life. If some American boy had cheated in exactly the same way, Bill would not have concluded that all Americans are cheats.

When he is older, Bill reads in the paper that two Italians who were drunk got into a fight and one stabbed the other. Bill has never known any Italians but he swiftly jumps to the conclusion that all Italians are drunkards and stab each other in the back.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

Or he hears of a Mexican immigrant who stole some money from his boss, and so, for ever after, he thinks of all Mexicans as thieves.

In all three cases Bill concluded that because one member of a group acted in a certain way, all members of that group will act the same way. This type of poor reasoning is called false generalization. To generalize is to come to a general conclusion as a result of learning particular facts or ideas. For example, if you are a member of a club that functions well at every meeting and lives up to its standards, you may justifiably say, "We have a good club." This is a true generalization based on observation. If, however, you observe another club during only one of its meetings when nothing is accomplished, and you say, "That club is no good," you are making a false generalization, because you have not based your conclusion on sufficient evidence.

We all suffer from this unfortunate habit of making false generalizations, especially about racial or religious groups or nationalities other than our own. We do not make them as frequently about our own group. If we are white Protestants and a member of our group cheats, we do not condemn all white Protestants. If we are Catholics and one of our members lies, we do not say, "All Catholics are liars." In order to be clear-thinking individuals we must realize this inconsistency and avoid making false generalizations.

## 6. INSECURITY

There is another cause for the development of prejudice which has little connection with direct experience, but which arises primarily out of a person's insecurity. Some people are so insecure in their jobs or social position that

they need someone to look down upon in order to bolster their own confidence. For instance, there is the case of a girl, Barbara Green, a senior in high school who is ambitious to become an actress.

She has taken part in some amateur theatricals in grammar school and in Sunday school. Since she was a little girl she has been reciting pieces for company. Her family and friends have continuously encouraged her to think that she has great talent and that her name will be on Broadway someday. She has some doubts of her own ability, but goaded on by her family and her own ambition she keeps on trying. There are tryouts for the main role in the senior high school play and Barbara, half scared and half confident, enters the contest. She does not win the coveted role. Instead, Sadie Cohen, a Jewish girl, gets it. Barbara feels miserable, unsure of herself, of her ability and of her future. She seeks the easy way out and blames Sadie, a Jewish classmate, for her lack of success. Later this blame is shifted to all Jewish people. There are thousands and thousands of prejudiced people who fall into this category; people who are insecure through their own lack of ability or opportunity and who feel more secure if they can find someone or some group of people to blame. It keeps them from feeling like failures. They reason that they have failed not because of lack of ability, but because the "wicked Jews" have tricked them. And this makes them feel better.

Barbara Green represents one kind of insecurity due to the fact that her ambition was out of harmony with her ability or talent. But thousands of people are insecure not because of lack of ability or discrepancies between talent and ambition, but because they do not have the oppor-

tunity to earn a decent living. The poor whites in the South, mostly sharecroppers, would like to have enough to eat and a house which does not leak and shoes for the children so that they could go to school. But no matter how hard they work, the majority are denied such things which most of us consider bare essentials. And so they feel helpless and insecure and angry because they are not given the basic economic opportunities. But instead of trying to find out what is wrong with the whole sharecropping system which keeps them in this poverty stricken state, they blame the Negro. If a colored man shows some sign of getting ahead, the poor white frequently becomes madly jealous and takes out his jealousy in some act of violence against the Negro. The prejudice of the poor whites against the Negroes goes back to before the Civil War when the colored slaves did the skilled labor which the white workers thought should be reserved for them. Today, the poor white still regards the Negro sharecropper as his rival, one who must be kept down so that he can get ahead. And the same poor white, who is looked down upon and even despised by the more prosperous members of his own race, finds satisfaction in looking down upon someone whom he considers beneath him. The Negro provides a most convenient scapegoat, on which the poor white can vent his anger and frustration because of his own low position in society.

Or, one can take another type of person who is prejudiced. A businessman whose father was a poor immigrant from the working class is now a fairly prosperous member of the middle class. He would like to conceal his early background of poverty and have everyone think that he was always a member of his present group. He feels he

must always be on the alert, mind his "p's" and "q's," or otherwise he will not be one of the inner circle of his business associates. So when the latter condemn the immigrants or the workers our businessman makes his complaints louder than the others. He does this because he is scared; he is new in his position and uncertain, and he feels that he must at all costs maintain his new status.

It is among these people,—people who are afraid they will not be able to make a living, afraid they will not succeed, afraid that people will not like them,—that we usually find the deepest prejudices. It is these people who will refuse to work beside a Negro in a factory, who get excited if a Jew moves into the neighborhood, and who shudder at the idea of Chinese settling in their city.

The infant is not born with prejudice. There is nothing in his germ plasm which forces him to hate or dislike a Jew or a Catholic, a Negro or a Chinese, an Italian or a Polish immigrant. In other words, prejudice, as we have shown, is not instinctive. But while young babies have no prejudices, children acquire them through contact with the prevailing attitudes of the community in which they live. The child absorbs prejudice unconsciously through his parents and other people in his immediate environment. His prejudices are strengthened by false generalizations from his experience and by his own insecurities. It is society which determines against whom he shall be prejudiced. Obviously, the scapegoat is not the same for all societies. But the scapegoat suffers whoever he is.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How influential do you think your parents have been in developing your attitudes? How influential your friends?

## PROBING OUR PREJUDICES

2. Give examples of experiences in your own life paralleling the experiences of Dick and Sally.
3. In what ways has prejudice increased in America since the war, in what ways has it diminished? What factors are responsible for these changes?
4. The following statements are false. Analyze each statement and give the answer you would make to a person who believed it to be true.
  - A. Man is born with prejudices.
  - B. Children are influenced very little by their parents.
  - C. Certain races are inherently superior to other races.
  - D. Unsocial attitudes cannot be changed.
5. Some people maintain that all antagonisms between groups such as race riots and even wars have economic causes. Support or refute this statement citing examples.

## Chapter IV

### WHAT PREJUDICE DOES TO US

**WE** HAVE seen that the question of prejudice is not just an academic matter, but is a profoundly important problem that vitally affects the lives of all people. In this chapter we shall discuss (1) the effect of prejudice on its victims—the people against whom the prejudice is directed; (2) the effect upon the subject—the people who hold the prejudice; (3) the effect upon society as a whole.

#### 1. WHAT PREJUDICE DOES TO THE VICTIM

The most obvious effect of prejudice is on the person against whom the prejudice is directed. His whole life may be tragically affected. He may have to live in filth, squalor, and disease, receive less education, and earn less money, all because he is a member of a group against whom the dominant members of society are prejudiced. Let us examine what happens to the victims of prejudice.

The average Negro's life span is ten years less than the average white man's. Although he is a native-born American citizen, he does not have equality of opportunity in attaining an education or getting a job. In the South, where there are separate schools for the Negroes and whites, the schools of the former are almost uniformly poorer than those of the latter. To give you an idea of the difference, in 1936 in ten Southern states the expenditure for each white pupil was \$49.30 while for each col-

ored pupil it was \$17.04. (In the same year, the average expenditure per pupil in the United States as a whole was \$80.26.)<sup>1</sup>

There is a common saying among Negroes that they are "last hired—first fired." Although they are only 9.8 per cent of the total population of the nation they constitute about 20 per cent of the unemployed.

Even for those who are employed the opportunities are extremely limited. It is not uncommon to find a colored railway porter who has had a college education. Frequently girls with college degrees are forced to take jobs as waitresses and servants, because other openings more in keeping with their education are denied them. For instance, among the Negroes, 64.8 per cent of all the workers are in agriculture and domestic service, while the percentage for native whites is only 28. And in agriculture only a small percentage of the Negroes own their own farms. They work as sharecroppers or tenant farmers barely making a living. In the war industries today, only about 1.3 per cent of all the workers are colored and most of these are in unskilled positions.<sup>2</sup>

Take the case of a Negro boy, Frank Smith. Frank was twelve years old when his family moved from the cotton fields of Alabama to a large northern city. His parents had been sharecroppers, and Frank had worked in the fields with them, and was counted as "half a hand." He attended school only five months out of each year, and when he was needed to pick cotton he stayed home from school. The standards of the country school were much lower than the average urban one. His parents became

<sup>1</sup> *Survey Graphic*, November, 1942.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

discouraged about ever getting ahead as sharecroppers. Having heard stories about the better opportunities in the northern cities, they crowded their four children into a truck and came North.

Frank was excited but also frightened by the big city, the noise of traffic, the crowds of unknown people, and the feeling of rush and hurry that was in the air. He and his parents and three brothers and sisters were crowded into two rooms in a tenement house jammed with other Negro families. The dirt and smells of the dark hall in the tenement house were worse than anything he had experienced in Alabama, where at least there had always been sunshine and fresh air.

Frank's father looked for work. He tramped the streets but could find only odd jobs, so he finally left for a near-by city where he heard there were more opportunities. Frank's mother took a job as a houseworker, leaving for work in the morning at seven and returning about eight. Frank went to a school in the neighborhood, but because his previous schooling was inadequate he was put in the fifth grade with ten-year-old boys, although the boys of his own age group were at least two grades ahead.

Even though he studied he could not seem to keep up with the ten-year-old colored boys who had always gone to school here. Frank became discouraged and took to staying home from school. His father was in another city and his mother was away working in someone else's home all day. There was no one around to care what he did.

He fell in with a gang of older boys, who roamed the streets, "shot crap," and engaged in petty thefts. Frank became one of the gang. He had more fun being with them than he had had at school. His mother received

word of his truancy and tried to make him go to school, but she had little influence over Frank any more. Frank stayed away from school and ran around with the gang. He aped the bigger boys, learning to drink and smoke, to steal, and to run fast to escape the police.

One night the gang had a special job on. They knew that a certain car was parked regularly on a rather dark street, and they planned to remove a couple of the tires. Frank had been in on this type of theft before and had become an expert in removing the tires quickly and quietly. So he was selected for the job while two boys were stationed at the corner to watch for the police.

But the police had had their eye on this gang for some time. The reports of thefts in the neighborhood had been increasing. Frank was in the midst of removing the first tire when a policeman suddenly darted out of a near-by alley. The two other boys had no time to give a warning, but ran away as fast as possible. Frank dropped his tools, but the policeman grabbed him before he could even begin to run. He was taken to the police court and held. His mother came down crying, but she was unable to help him. Frank was tried, convicted, labeled a "delinquent," and sent to a reformatory.

Bitter and resentful because he had been caught, Frank resolved that when he got out he would become a clever thief and outwit the police. Eventually, he did become a hardened criminal, alternating between committing crimes and serving time in jail.

There was nothing innately bad about Frank that had made him into a delinquent and then a criminal. Given the proper opportunity he perhaps could have developed into a useful citizen. If his father had been employed, if

his mother had been able to give him more attention, if he had had more of a chance for an education, if he had not had to live in a crowded, dirty slum where there were gangs of young hoodlums—the story might have been different. It was largely because Frank was a Negro that these conditions existed. It is probable, if his father had been white, he would have found it easier to have gotten a job, and would not have had to go to a different city. His mother might then have stayed at home and given more attention to her children. If the family had been white, even though poor, their living quarters probably would not have been so crowded and dirty. The Negro slums are always far worse than any other slums. As a rule Negroes have a much more difficult time finding adequate housing than do whites. Even in the poorest sections of town, flats in the Negro quarters rent for more money and have fewer conveniences than the flats in the white sections.

If Frank had been white, he would have had a better elementary education. He would, therefore, not have fallen so far behind those of his own age-group, and would not have become discouraged with school. He then might not have joined the young gang of petty thieves and become a delinquent, and later a criminal. It is true that there are also white delinquents and white thieves, who have taken to crime because of poverty, neglect and bad environment. The point, however, is that more Negroes than whites are forced to live in the kind of environment which breeds delinquency and crime, and so it is more difficult for them to escape becoming criminals than it is for whites.

In the southwestern part of our country it is the Mexicans who are the most recent immigrants. They are migra-

tory seasonal agricultural workers, wandering through Missouri, Arkansas, Montana, Wyoming, South Dakota and other states of the Southwest. Colorado has many of them employed in the beet fields. They work on a contract which includes the labor of the entire family, men, women, and children. But no matter how hard they all work, since the work is seasonal, they are usually unemployed part of the year and have to depend on public assistance. According to a study made in 1938, in one of the beet growing counties the average annual income from working in the sugar-beet fields was just a little over \$400 for the whole family. Since the families were large, this made the average earnings per person about \$70 a year.<sup>3</sup> A family cannot be self-supporting on such an income.

The housing conditions of these Mexicans are abominable. Most of the sugar-beet workers live in one- and two-room shacks. Five to eleven persons are crowded into these one-room hovels. Because of wretched housing conditions health problems are exceedingly serious and the infant mortality rate is very high. The state of Colorado regulates the housing of dairy cattle but does nothing about the housing conditions of 25,000 Mexican beet workers. In addition there is rank social discrimination. In many small towns in this area a Mexican cannot get a meal in a restaurant or a shave in a barber shop. "White Trade Only" is the sign in many shop windows. Many of the children get almost no schooling and practically none of them go beyond the eighth grade.<sup>4</sup>

Little Manolo was the sixth child to be born in the Escota family. Both his parents had been born in Mexico,

<sup>3</sup> McWilliams, *Ill Fares the Land*, p. 117.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

but each one of the children had been born in a different state (Texas, Iowa, Missouri, Colorado, Nebraska, and North Dakota), as the family had moved from one sugar-beet area to another. Manolo was born in a two-room shack with no plumbing facilities and only surface wells available. He was surrounded by filth from the day of his birth. His mother had to go back to the fields soon after he was born. Before Manolo was a year old, he was dead, of diarrhea, one of the "filth-borne" diseases from which the Mexicans suffer so much.<sup>5</sup> So little Manolo died before he even had a chance to grow up and become a beet worker. Because he had been born of a Mexican migratory family, the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness were not for him.

It is not to be inferred from these stories that the victims of prejudice must either die young or develop into criminals. In every minority group there are individuals who somehow achieve high goals despite the prejudice directed against them. Nevertheless, on the average, all too often individuals suffer in some way because of a pervading prejudice against the group to which they belong. This is sometimes overlooked because the prejudice against some groups is on a subtle level.

The prejudice may appear in what seems like relatively small things and yet have a profound effect on its object. This is often true of the prejudice directed toward Jewish people. They do not have to live in squalor, because economic opportunities, while not completely open to

<sup>5</sup> From 1929-1938 the average of deaths in the sugar-beet counties from tuberculosis was 23.7 per cent and from diarrhea and enteritis, 63 per cent, as compared with the average for the whole state of 4.37 per cent of the former disease and 24 per cent from the latter diseases. (McWilliams, *Ill Fares the Land*, pp. 118-119.)

them, are sufficiently broad to allow them to become successful. They can receive an education. Yet they are never completely free from the effects of prejudice.

Take the case of a girl, Elaine Gold. She and her family moved from a small village in Oregon to a large city in the East. In the little village in the Northwest, the Gold family had been one of the few Jewish families in the community and was completely accepted. Elaine played freely with Protestant and Catholic girls, was a member of their clubs, and always felt like one of the crowd. Both she and her parents were born in the United States, and they considered themselves no different from any other American family. Then the family moved East to a large city where there were a great many Jews. Elaine was in the second year of high school. She was an attractive, intelligent girl who always made friends easily. Therefore, she was puzzled when she was not asked to join a school club, some of the members of which she had met and liked. It was a social club, and the girls all had a good time together.

Elaine kept waiting to be asked. It was not until late in the year that she realized that she was not going to be asked. Another Jewish girl told her that no Jews were ever admitted to this club.

Elaine was deeply hurt. It was her first rebuff as a Jew. She looked at herself in the mirror. She could not see that she looked any different from the girls in the club. Her father earned about as much money as the fathers of the club girls. She had been well brought up and had good manners. And while she was not a genius, her marks were good. But now, for the first time, she was made to feel

different and unwanted, not a part of the crowd, although she did not *feel* different.

Elaine said little about the matter and never mentioned it to her parents. But deep down within herself she was hurt and sad. She ceased being as gay and friendly as she had been back in Oregon. She became more reserved and suspicious of people. No longer was she sure that people liked her. Sometimes she held back from others because of the doubt in her mind: "I may not be accepted because I am a Jew." Elaine finished high school with a good record, but she had become a hurt and rejected girl.

Since her parents could afford to send her to a good private college, she applied for admission to one of the better-known New England colleges, but her application was turned down. She heard indirectly that she had not been accepted because the "quota" of Jews had been filled. Elaine then went to a state university, where the anti-Jewish feeling was not so strong.

They may seem like little things—exclusion from a high school club, from a college—but they left a permanent mark on Elaine. She was never to lose completely this feeling of being unwanted, of not being a part of the group. It is true that as an adult she participated in American life, she voted and paid her taxes. But she knew she was not quite part of it all. There were summer resorts and hotels where she was not welcome, and her children met the same rebuffs that she suffered. Small things perhaps—but big enough to make these fellow Americans feel like strangers and outcasts in their own country.

Similar or worse rebuffs may be met with by an educated Chinese, not only on the West coast but also in the East. One Sunday night before Pearl Harbor, Mr. Soo Cheng,

an economist and a graduate of one of our American universities, was driving with his family on a crowded thoroughfare in a big eastern city. The traffic came to a sudden halt because of some jam farther up the line. The bumper of Mr. Cheng's car locked with the bumper of the car in front of his. The man in the other car looked back and saw the Chinese family. "Hey you yellow ——— what do you think you are doing?" A policeman came up and began shouting to Mr. Cheng to move on. He immediately assumed that it was all Mr. Cheng's fault (actually it was no one's fault and no great harm had been done), and in an ugly manner he demanded Mr. Cheng's license and seemed disappointed when he could find nothing the matter with it. Finally the bumpers were unlocked, the white man in front let out an oath against those "yellow devils," and the policeman angrily told them to get moving. This was the way the Cheng family began their vacation.

It is true that a member of a minority group survives insults and rebuffs. But his personality may be definitely affected. He may become bitter and disillusioned and decide he will have nothing to do with the dominant group beyond what is necessary. He may remain in a ghetto composed of his own group. Or he may become bitter and take out his bitterness in being aggressive, having a "chip on his shoulder."

It is also possible that his aggressiveness may be directed not against the dominant group, but against the people of his own group. We are all familiar with the story of the man who has a hard day at his office and has to put up with the bad temper of his boss without being able to answer back. He comes home after such a day and fre-

quently takes out his annoyance on his wife or children. So a person who feels that it is not safe to protest to the dominant group may become overtly aggressive toward his own people, particularly toward those over whom he has authority.

Another possible reaction to the situation is that although a member of a minority group may feel bitter, he may adopt a policy of appeasement. He may decide that he will get along better if he flatters the members of the dominant group and fawns on them. This was a technique used by many slaves to get favors from their masters. This is sometimes called the "Uncle Tom" type of attitude. Still another possibility is that the member of the minority group really accepts and believes what the dominant group says about his people, that is, that they are inferior. It would be as though the Jews really finally came to believe what Hitler said about them. This is the most tragic of the possible psychological reactions.

All human beings have some problems of adjustment in their relationships with other people and with the world about them. But to be a member of a minority group means having all the problems that everyone has, plus a great many more. The Polish Jew, the recently arrived Italian Catholic, the educated Chinese, the distinguished Negro artist, all of them making contributions to American life, are constantly being reminded in little ways or big ways that they are regarded as inferior to other human beings. It is much more difficult for them to achieve the goal of a relatively well-adjusted person. The fact that so many of them do succeed represents a triumph over real difficulties.

A maladjusted personality is only a small part of the

total price which prejudice may extort from its victims. Many of them, such as the majority of Negroes and Mexicans, are forced to live in squalor and filth. For many the color of their skin will determine the amount of education they receive, the type of job they will get, where they will live, and even how long they may live. Because he is a Negro a man may be hunted like an animal and strung up on a tree, without a chance to prove himself innocent of the crime for which he was lynched. This is what prejudice does to its victims.

## 2. WHAT PREJUDICE DOES TO THE SUBJECT

What about the people who hold prejudices? Are they helped by their prejudices? It has already been indicated in an earlier chapter that the people who have the most prejudices are those who are the most insecure, those who are most afraid. Often they are the people who are worried about their jobs, about whether they will succeed, and uncertain about their status in society. Does prejudice help them to overcome these fears and become more successful?

Quite the contrary. The first and most obvious effect of prejudice is that it acts as a kind of blinder to prevent the person from seeing his real situation. It prevents the sharecropper or the high school student from objectively examining the causes of his failure. The poor white sharecropper does not see that he remains poor because of the inefficiencies and injustices of the sharecropping system; that the Negro, far from being the cause, is caught in the same system. The high school student described earlier was prevented from appraising realistically her dramatic

ability in terms of her ambition. If a person does not know the causes of his failure and refuses even to look for the real causes how can he hope to make the situation better? Prejudice thus condemns him to permanent insecurity. He blames the Jew, the Chinese, the Negro, or some other scapegoat and therefore does nothing about the real situation with which these people have no connection. Thus, one of the most harmful effects of prejudice is that it makes impossible any real solution of economic, social or personal difficulties. We may go on hating, but that will not change our economic position, nor give us talent or success.

Prejudice also threatens the full development of the personality of the person holding it. The amount of energy that any one person has is not unlimited. If much of his energy goes into hating Negroes or Mexicans, Chinese or Jews or other groups, there is not much left for other activities. Hate is likely to be destructive and narrowing. Love is expansive and creative. The prejudiced person is apt to become small and mean, always putting up a fight against his kindlier and more co-operative impulses. That side of his nature, the co-operative side which can see something good in all peoples and which wants to help them, is thwarted. If this process goes on continuously over a long period of time, the person may become mean and unfriendly not only toward the people against whom he is prejudiced, but toward other people as well. His whole nature becomes thwarted and all his human relationships are affected. His whole life narrows.

The healthy development of a human being follows an ever expanding and widening course. The baby knows only the people in his family; the growing child broadens

the circle to include his classmates and the neighbors. As he becomes an adult his circle grows, and he has a sense of identification with larger groups; a trade union, a chamber of commerce, a city, a state, a nation, and finally perhaps a feeling of oneness with all of humanity.

The history of mankind has followed a similar development. As already indicated, primitive man of the Stone Age was afraid of all strangers. He was identified with his clan (his relatives) and his hamlet or village. Later this identification was extended to a tribe. The state is a relatively recent social development. The feeling of being an American, part of a vast country and identified with millions of people would have been unknown to our primitive ancestors. The feeling of closeness that we have with millions of people we have never seen, British, Chinese, Russians, our allies in this war, again is a relatively modern development. The development of a feeling of internationalism, as expressed in the concept of the Four Freedoms for the whole world is a still later development in the growing realization of the common humanity of all men. This has been the course of progress.

But the prejudiced man reverts to the state of the child or to that of the primitive savage. His circle is limited. He will refuse to know anyone who looks different from himself, or comes from another part of the world, or practices another religion. He loses all the richness that comes from contacts with other people. Instead of feeling at one with his fellow men he is unreasonably suspicious of them. He marks a step backward in the development of humanity; hatred and narrowness replace love and expansion.

## 3. WHAT PREJUDICE DOES TO SOCIETY

There is a third result of prejudice—the effect on society. What does prejudice do to the society where it flourishes? Does prejudice help it to function?

No one lives completely alone. Everyone lives in some form of society. Each person comes in contact with a large number of people in a variety of ways. Every day we are involved in family, school, and community relationships.

A classroom is a small segment of society in which there are continuous relationships between pupils, and between pupils and their teacher. Let us look at two classrooms in two different grade schools in the same city. In both there are children of a variety of racial, nationality, and religious backgrounds. In School A neither the principal nor teachers are interested in studying the community or finding out about the family background of the students. They are told that the most important thing is *order* and that it is their job to maintain strict discipline and to see to it that the students, especially those who are going to college, pass the standard examinations.

The seventh grade teacher in this school came to the city from a small town where most of the people were native born and Protestants. She is disappointed to be placed in a school where there are Negro children and "foreigners."

In social studies class she usually avoids any discussion of racial problems—because she fears it might become controversial and cause disorder. When she hears the children call each other "Wop," "Polack" or "Nigger" she tells them to be quiet, but makes no attempt to help

them overcome their prejudices. She embarrasses the children who speak with an accent by such a remark as "You are not a very good American if you don't speak English correctly." When a colored child is left out of a game she does nothing about it. As a result, by the end of the term, prejudice and discrimination flourish, and there is no harmony within the classroom. Instead, there are constant quarrels and fights which prevent the students from advancing in their studies and in developing themselves.

In School B the principal and teachers have high scholastic standards, but they are also interested in social problems and the backgrounds of their students. They meet often to discuss school problems and to plan the school program. They have set up a philosophy of education which is in keeping with our democratic ideals. They study the community and visit the homes of the students.

The seventh grade teacher also comes from a community where she has had few contacts with Negroes or first generation Americans, but she has read widely about these people and she has learned democratic methods of teaching in a modern teachers' college. In her classroom the students set up standards, they help plan the lessons, and they appraise their own activities in terms of these standards. This teacher believes that it is just as important for students to learn to work and play together in a co-operative manner as it is for them to pass their mathematics examination. There are no special privileges, and each child is given an opportunity to develop according to his abilities. When any dissension arises between individuals or groups it is discussed openly.

In social studies class the students study the contributions of the various minority groups to American life,

they visit the different churches in the community, they learn the facts about the conditions of the Negroes in the South and the Mexicans in the Southwest. Most important of all they learn about our American ideals and are encouraged to work toward the attainment of these ideals. In this seventh grade there is an atmosphere of good fellowship, based on mutual understanding and respect. It is in this atmosphere of peace that students develop these attitudes impossible in an atmosphere of strife. The students of the classroom B are not innately different from those in classroom A. The faculty of each school probably claims that it believes sincerely in democracy. But the difference lies in the fact that in School A little or nothing is done to teach children the meaning of democracy or the opportunity to practice it, whereas in School B many of the activities are directed toward this end.

The same type of problems exist in a community as in a school. Tensions and hostilities due to prejudices between different groups in a community prevent it from making progress. For development and progress come through co-operation, not through strife. If peoples will not work together, they will be exploited against each other. If a group of white workers refuse to work with Negroes or take them into their unions, the Negroes will be forced to work for less than the whites, and this will in turn reduce the wages of the white workers, since the employers will always have a source of cheap labor on hand with which to replace them. If part of a community is kept on a poverty level, the whole community suffers. The low purchasing power of the poor lessens the income of the businessman, since they cannot buy his goods. He

then pays less in taxes; thus the state has less to spend on education, roads, parks and other public enterprises.

It is perhaps no accident that the South, where the race problem is greatest, is also the Nation's "Number One" economic problem. "The most conspicuous recent example of this concerns the southern white and Negro miners in the Birmingham area. Over the whole history of their separate competitive bargaining with industry and management, neither racial group achieved substantial economic improvements. In fact, the more intense the racial competition, the weaker the wage structure became. It was not until the policy of racial segregation become secondary to common economic improvement that gains for either were possible. There are now, despite the tradition of separation, over a hundred unsegregated unions in this area."<sup>6</sup>

It is in the South, where prejudice against the Negro is the greatest, that the per capita income for both, whites and Negroes, is the lowest in the country and the schools are the poorest. It is obvious that the advancement of the South has been greatly retarded because of the prejudices engendered by the interracial system. The system of segregated schools and "Jim Crow" transportation is costly. The hates and hostilities which have developed because of segregation have prevented the South from progressing as rapidly as the other sections of the country.

Occasionally when the tensions developed by these hostilities become too much for the people to stand, demonstrations, race riots and lynching break out. Recent race riots in our industrial cities of the North show that the tension is not confined to the South. Large groups of

<sup>6</sup> Johnson, C. S., *Patterns of Negro Segregation*, p. 321.

Negroes are crowded into the poorest sections of the city with almost no recreational facilities. There are thousands of white workers who have been economically insecure all their lives. These white workers are afraid the Negroes may take their jobs; they show resentment if Negroes are promoted from an unskilled to a skilled job; they feel better if they have someone to look down upon. During a race riot hostilities and hates flourish, production in critical war industries is stopped, the community is torn apart by strife.

If a society, particularly a democratic one, is to function smoothly and efficiently, co-operation must replace strife. In a dictatorship like that in Germany, such co-operation is not important for if the masses of people do not obey the orders of their rulers they are consigned to a prison, thrown into a concentration camp, or put to death. But in a democracy, where there is a greater freedom in human relationships, co-operative attitudes are essential to its life. There is an analogy in family life. If the bickerings and quarrels between members of a family increase beyond a certain point, the family either functions poorly or breaks up. One mate divorces the other, and the members of the family are scattered. Similarly, members of a democratic community are part of a larger family which depends for its continuance on the co-operation of its members. If the members cannot get along with one another the community like the family will break down.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> It is of interest that under the Nazi system the family too is of the authoritarian dictator type. Women are relegated to the kitchen and completely dominated by their husbands. The democratic relationship which exists in the United States between most husbands and wives is very different.

Society is always the loser even if hostilities and tensions are under cover. Certainly, a community is not at its best when a large number of people are bitter because they are denied their rightful opportunities. As already noted, some of our crime and delinquency can be traced to this discrimination. A community is not as rich as it might be if all the members in it cannot contribute according to their individual potentialities. Think of how much poorer our country would be if the late Professor George Washington Carver had not been allowed to carry on his research because he was a Negro. Yet we do not know how many potential scientists we lose because of the difficulties Negroes experience in getting an education and in finding opportunities to use their abilities.

Our civilization is based on contributions from every race and nation, and we can ill afford to lose any of them. What we enjoy today, we owe to different peoples all over the world. As Professor Ralph Linton puts it:

"Our solid American citizen awakens in a bed built on a pattern which originated in the Near East but which was modified in Northern Europe before it was transmitted to America. He throws back covers made from cotton, domesticated in India, or linen, domesticated in the Near East, or wool from sheep, also domesticated in the Near East, or silk, the use of which was discovered in China. All of these materials have been spun and woven by processes invented in the Near East. He slips into his moccasins, invented by the Indians of the Eastern woodlands, and goes to the bathroom, whose fixtures are a mixture of European and American inventions, both of recent date. He takes off his pajamas, a garment invented

in India, and washes with soap invented by the ancient Gauls. He then shaves, a masochistic rite which seems to have been derived from either Sumer or ancient Egypt.

"Returning to the bedroom, he removes his clothes from a chair of southern European type and proceeds to dress. He puts on garments whose form originally derived from the skin clothing of the nomads of the Asiatic steppes, puts on shoes made from skins tanned by a process invented in ancient Egypt and cut to a pattern derived from the classical civilizations of the Mediterranean, and ties around his neck a strip of bright-colored cloth which is a vestigial survival of the shoulder shawls worn by the seventeenth-century Croats. Before going out for breakfast he glances through the windows, made of glass invented in Egypt, and if it is raining puts on overshoes made of rubber discovered by the Central American Indians and takes an umbrella, invented in southeastern Asia. Upon his head he puts a hat made of felt, a material invented in the Asiatic steppes.

"On his way to breakfast he stops to buy a paper, paying for it with coins, an ancient Lydian invention. At the restaurant a whole new series of borrowed elements confronts him. His plate is made of a form of pottery invented in China. His knife is of steel, an alloy first made in southern India, his fork a medieval Italian invention, and his spoon a derivative of a Roman original. He begins breakfast with an orange, from the eastern Mediterranean, a canteloupe from Persia, or perhaps a piece of African watermelon. With this he has coffee, an Abyssinian plant, with cream and sugar. Both the domestication of cows and the idea of milking them originated in the Near East, while sugar was first made in India. After his fruit and

first coffee he goes on to waffles, cakes made by a Scandinavian technique from wheat domesticated in Asia Minor. Over these he pours maple syrup, invented by the Indians of the Eastern woodlands. As a side dish he may have the egg of a species of bird domesticated in Indo-China, or thin strips of the flesh of an animal domesticated in Eastern Asia which have been salted and smoked by a process developed in northern Europe.”<sup>8</sup>

People of every race and nationality have contributed to the richness of our civilization. The color of their skin, the shape of their eyes, the texture of their hair—these had nothing to do with their intelligence or creativeness.<sup>9</sup> Anthropologists know that if we were to select the most intelligent, imaginative, energetic and emotionally stable third of mankind, we would find all races about equally represented.

If minority groups are prevented from making their contributions, we lose not only important inventions, but we are also denied the personal richness that comes with the mingling of peoples. Most of us like to travel in order to meet different people and get new ideas. In a country such as ours we can stay at home and have a variety of experiences with many kinds of people, unless we are prevented from having these experiences by our prejudices against people who are different. Difference is something to be valued rather than despised. It makes our culture richer, more varied, and infinitely more interesting.

<sup>8</sup> Linton, Ralph, *The Study of Man*, pp. 326-327. D. Appleton-Century Co.

<sup>9</sup> See: Benedict, R., *Race and Cultural Relations*, National Education Association; Benedict, R. and Weltfish, J., *The Races of Mankind*, Public Affairs Committee, Pamphlet No. 85; and Klineberg, O., *Race Differences*, Harper & Brothers.

We pay a terrific price for our prejudices—all of us, the victims, the people who hold the prejudices, and the society of which we are all a part. Disease, death and crime are part of the price the victims pay. Wasted potentialities, warped personalities, lowered economic standards, conflicts and tensions which are obstacles to progress are part of the high cost we pay. We who boast about our high standards, about our efficiency, about our ideals cannot afford our prejudices. We who have carved a nation out of a wilderness, who have led the world in technological progress, who foster high ideals concerning the dignity and freedom of all human beings, must do something about our prejudices.

#### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Give some examples of the effects of prejudice in your school or in your community.
2. Among your friends and acquaintances, are the prejudiced ones happy? Do you think they lead as interesting a life as those persons who are not so prejudiced?
3. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Give reasons for your belief.
  - A. American democracy has been strengthened and enriched by the contributions of many racial, religious, and nationality groups.
  - B. Most of our economic and political troubles have been caused by "foreigners." We should have had a much more rigorous immigration policy.
  - C. Negroes can never become socially assimilated with whites. There should be a policy of absolute segregation.
  - D. Asiatics do not make good Americans. We should not change our exclusion laws.
  - E. As a rule foreign-born persons make as enthusiastic and sincere citizens as American born.
  - F. We should welcome European refugees to our country.

Many who have come have contributed much to our American culture.

4. Negroes are often accused of carrying a "chip on their shoulders" and of "looking for trouble." Why do minority groups sometimes react in this manner? Does this kind of behavior help their cause?

## Chapter V

# WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

### 1. INTRODUCTION

**S**INCE prejudices are not in the germ plasm, since they are not part of our biological make-up, they can be changed and eradicated. We have seen that the child absorbs prejudices from his social environment. We know that this environment is constantly changing. Therefore if we can at least reduce those forces in our society which produce the prejudices, then the prejudices likewise will be reduced. For instance, if the economic situation of the poor whites in the South were improved and they became more secure, it is practically certain that their prejudices against the Negroes would be considerably diminished. This, of course, is a large social problem, one that must be solved on political and economic lines. It involves large-scale social planning and is a real challenge that must be met in our time.

Man has surmounted many other difficult problems, problems which taxed all his ingenuity, intelligence and courage, in the long march from prehistoric times. Unlike our savage ancestors we control large parts of our environment, and our scientific achievements in engineering and medicine would seem to be miracles to them. These achievements were attained through the patient work, creative intelligence, and persistence of many men, some famous and some unknown. The problems involving human relationships, particularly relationships between peo-

ples of different races, religions, and nationalities have not been met as well as the problems in the natural sciences. They are perhaps more difficult because *we* are involved in these problems. But, as we have indicated earlier, some progress has been made. We know that man *does learn*, that his attitudes, opinions, and behavior have changed throughout the ages and will continue to change. We know, too, that these changes can be directed toward certain goals. The reduction of prejudices in ourselves and in society is one of our most basic problems and is intertwined with all other social problems. It can and must be tackled.

What can a high school student do? He obviously can participate in social planning only to a limited extent. But there are other things he can do. He can try to reduce his own prejudices. He can arm himself with facts. He can try to improve the situation in his school so that prejudices will not flourish there. In his immediate neighborhood and community he can do important work to prevent any outbreak of both organized and unorganized attacks on minority groups.

## 2. STEPS TO BE TAKEN

### A. *The Desire to Do Something*

First you must have a sincere desire to do something about your own prejudices. If you feel strongly that the kinds of prejudices we have been describing are contrary to the essence of American democracy, if you believe in justice rather than injustice, if you wish to develop all the potentialities of all the people in the country, then

you can and must set out to do something about this disease which eats into the core of our society.

### ***B. The Recognition of Prejudice***

The second step in the attack on prejudice is a frank recognition of it in ourselves. As we said earlier, there is hardly anyone in our society without some prejudices. To rout the enemy, we must first recognize him. The denial of the existence of prejudice in ourselves does not take it away nor make it less strong. We must bring our prejudices out in the open, admit them honestly, and examine them carefully. Let us try to distinguish between our prejudices and our opinions which are based on careful considered judgment. We can then label this or that opinion or form of behavior in ourselves as prejudice.

### ***C. Attempt to Eradicate or Reduce Prejudice***

The next step is a definite attempt to eradicate or materially reduce our prejudices. The activities suggested later in this chapter should help you in the attack on your prejudices. You and your teacher may think of other helpful activities. Your prejudices will not probably disappear overnight. But gradually they should become weakened, and eventually many of them routed.

### ***D. Do Not Act on Prejudice***

If, after an honest appraisal of yourself, you find that, in spite of your strong efforts, some prejudices still linger, you must be careful not to *act* on them. For instance, if you know that you are prejudiced against one of your classmates, you can make a special attempt to see his good points and be fair with him. You may never like him, if

your prejudice remains, but at least you can keep from abusing him.

### *E. Work in Your School and Neighborhood*

You may not be able to reform the whole world, but there is work you can do in your classroom, in your club, in the school, and in your neighborhood which is of importance in the fight against prejudice. You can find out what the situation is, and then if it is not good, work to change it. There are many suggestions for this kind of work in the activities at the end of this chapter.

### *F. Work in Your Community as You Grow Older*

The battle is not only on the personal front, important as that is. It is not enough to just look at ourselves. Let us also look at the society in which we live and see how the social expressions of prejudice can be reduced. What can be done about the way prejudice is expressed in our social institutions and customs and laws? The first and most obvious way is through laws, through some form of government control. Today there seems to be more reason than ever for legal controls to implement democracy. The whole theory and existence of democracy is being challenged by another form of government which has goals diametrically opposed to ours. As we fight for the right to continue with our own democratic way of life, we must also fight to extend and strengthen it and to check those injustices which sap its vitality. Laws can help a great deal; laws against lynching, laws against the poll tax, laws against discrimination in industry, laws against discrimination in unions and in education.

Laws rarely, however, prevent injustice completely. We

have laws against murder and theft, but we still have murderers and thieves. But we certainly have fewer murders and fewer thefts than if we had no legal restraints. Many people will be restrained from acting on their prejudices if they know that a jail sentence or a heavy fine is the result of such behavior. Although there will still be some who will break the law, the effect of a well-enforced law should not be underestimated. When a new law is first made, it may be broken fairly often, particularly if it differs from the old traditions. But if the law is enforced, gradually it is respected. A new generation growing up under the new law learns to take it completely for granted. And even though there may always be some who will break the law, its effect on the majority of people is important.

As citizens, we can see that the existing laws are enforced. When we are old enough to vote we can elect representatives who will enforce them, and we can make our voices felt when they are not enforced. As members of various organizations, whether a trade union or a chamber of commerce, a church, civic or social club, we can protest against prejudice being expressed in them. At times of wild rumors, of demonstrations, and of riots, we can refuse to let ourselves be swept along in these emotional torrents. We can keep our heads and attempt to make other people keep theirs.

We can also support those social reforms which wipe out some of the existing injustices. Slum clearance, better housing, more recreational facilities in poor neighborhoods, the abolition of discrimination in jobs and salary schedules, all these and many more should receive our support if we wish to carry out the ideals of our democracy.

We said earlier that man is prejudiced when he is afraid. The problem then becomes, how can we make him less afraid so that he does not need to be prejudiced. Here we enter into the whole field of social security, all our recent legislation to protect people from the insecurities of unemployment and old age and sickness, all our work to extend slowly the basic benefits of our civilization to all people in the country, to free them from the fears of hunger and unemployment. Once these fears are removed to a considerable degree, no group will be afraid of other people as competitors. They will then be able to co-operate with people rather than to isolate and hate them.

### 3. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

#### *To Find Out If You Are Prejudiced*

Many attitude tests to measure prejudice have been devised by educators. The names of some of these tests are listed in *Intercultural Education in American Schools* by Vickery and Cole, pp. 139-144. Ask your teacher to obtain copies of one or more of these tests. Let each student take the test. When results are tabulated, you will have a picture of the kinds of prejudices that exist in your classroom.

If you are unable to get the standard tests, you can devise one of your own. It may not measure your attitudes as accurately as the standard tests, but it will give you a rough idea of the prejudices held by yourself and your classmates. A simple test can be constructed by making a long list of racial, nationality and religious groups. For example:

1. Chinese
2. Italian

3. Negro
4. Catholic
5. Baptist
6. Jew
7. Etc.

Let each student copy the list and cross out any name that stimulates an unfavorable reaction when he hears it. Look over your paper to note your own prejudices. Then have all papers handed to a committee, who will tabulate the results. You will be able to tell from these results what percentage of students is prejudiced against each racial, nationality or religious groups.

Another type of test to discover the extent of prejudice may be devised by preparing a set of questions concerning your actions toward minority groups in a particular situation. For example white students might answer questions similar to the following:

1. Would you dance with a Negro?
2. If you owned a house in a white section would you rent to Negroes?
3. Would you vote for a qualified Negro for mayor? Protestant students could change the word Negro to Catholic and answer the same questions. Students of English ancestry could supply the word Italian or that of any other nationality group.

### *To Find Out About Prejudice in Your Community*

1. Appoint a committee to make a report on prejudice in your community: (1) By talking with teachers, businessmen, public officials and union leaders, find out (a) if teachers are selected regardless of race, nationality background or religion; (b) if employees in

industries and stores are hired regardless of race, nationality or religion; (c) if policemen, firemen and other public officials must be of a particular race or religion; (d) if union membership is restricted to any particular racial or religious group.

2. Find out if there are restrictions regarding buying or renting houses in certain districts.
3. Find out if certain racial groups are prevented from attending theaters or from eating in restaurants.
4. Find out if certain clubs restrict membership to members of a particular race or religion.

*To Find Out About Prejudice in the World Today*

1. (a) Appoint a committee to collect newspaper and magazine articles which reveal prejudice. Discuss the articles in class and try to discover the reason for the prejudice. What person or organization is responsible for the article? What are they trying to accomplish, and why?

(b) Appoint another committee to report on movies that portray racial, nationality or religious groups as inferior or undesirable persons.

2. Give a report on Racism as it exists in Nazi Germany. For a good reference see Franz Boas, *Aryans and Non-Aryans*. Bureau for Intercultural Education. 10¢
3. Draw a series of cartoons illustrating examples of prejudice in the world today.
4. Give a report on the effects of prejudice on any one particular group in the United States. For a good reference on Mexicans see Carey McWilliams, *Brothers Under the Skin*. Little Brown, 1943.

For an interesting account of the problems of the

Negroes in Harlem, read Roi Ottley's *New World A'Coming*. Houghton Mifflin, 1943.

5. Make a series of graphs showing the differences in educational and economic opportunities for Negroes and whites in the South. For information see *Survey Graphic*, November, 1942.
6. If your parents are foreign born, ask them to tell you of pleasant and unpleasant experiences they had when they came to this country. Did they find it difficult to get jobs because of their nationality? Were the "old Americans" friendly or unfriendly to them? Has the prejudice disappeared or does it still exist?

#### *To Find Out About Prejudice in the Past*

1. Give reports on prejudice against early Christians, Jews in the Middle Ages, the Puritans and Quakers in England. Consult history texts. For a particularly good reference on persecution of the Jews, see the pamphlet, *They Got the Blame* by Kenneth Gould. Association Press, 1942.
2. Report on prejudices in the United States that led to the development of one of the following organizations:
  1. The Ku Klux Klan
  2. The Know Nothing Movement
  3. The American Protective Association
  4. The Black Legion

For information see United States history texts or *Social Science Encyclopedia*.

#### *To Find Out What Causes Prejudice*

1. Have a Truth Party. Let students volunteer to tell of their prejudices, and how they think they were acquired

2. Make a report on the recent race riots and their causes. Look in the *Readers Guide* for magazine articles which analyze the causes of these riots. Read the pamphlet *Why Race Riots* by Earl Brown. Public Affairs pamphlet No. 87, 1943. For an analysis of the Detroit riot read *Race Riot* by Alfred McClung Lee and Norman Humphrey. Dryden Press, 1943.
3. Write a skit illustrating experiences you have had or heard about in which invalid generalizations were made about a racial or religious minority group. (For example, see p. 29 the story of the Polish boy.)
4. Make a list of the factors responsible for the growth of anti-Jewish prejudice in the United States. List first the factor you consider most responsible. Put your list on the blackboard and hold a class discussion to see if other students agree with your conclusions.
5. Give a report exploding the myth of racial superiority. For a good reference see *The Races of Mankind* by Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish. Public Affairs pamphlet No. 85, 1943. Also *Race—What the Scientists Say* by Caroline Singer. Bureau for Intercultural Education.

#### *What To Do to Overcome Prejudice*

1. Plan a year round program to help the students in your school become better acquainted with various racial, nationality and religious groups in your community.
  - (a) Invite speakers. . . . A good policy is not to have these invited guests speak about race, nationality or religious problems, but to have each one talk about his particular professional interest. An outstanding Negro

poet might talk on American poetry; a distinguished Jewish chemist on some of the recent developments in his field; a Chinese scholar on the history of Chinese art. It is important to see these people as individuals, each making his own contribution, rather than as a representative of a particular race. Your guests will be more comfortable talking about their special fields of interest than in discussing themselves as part of any group problem.

Talks on race problems should be included in your school programs, but the speakers should be outstanding anthropologists and sociologists who will analyze the problem. They should come as specialists rather than as members of a particular group.

(b) Arrange for visits to sections of the community where separate nationality groups live. Both the slums and better districts in the Negro area should be visited. Chinatown, the Polish, and Italian neighborhoods provide other subjects for trips. The Young Men's Hebrew Association might be visited and observations made on their club activities. Arrange for visits to various churches. Make an appointment with the priest, minister or rabbi and ask him to tell you about the religious beliefs and practices of the congregation and something about the church's program.

(c) Prepare an exhibit of books dealing with (1) contributions of minority groups; (2) problems of minority groups. A good bibliography is given in *Intercultural Education in American Schools* by Stewart G. Cole and William Vickery. Bureau of Intercultural Education.

Let one group of students study laws that seek to pre-

vent discrimination against minority groups. Find out if your state has a Civil Rights bill. If so, obtain a copy and read it to the class. If not, get a copy of a Civil Rights bill from another state. Try to find out why your state does not have such a bill.

3. Make a study of recent bills introduced into Congress to prevent discrimination in the South, i.e. the Anti-Lynching Bill and Anti-Poll Tax Bill. Information may be obtained from *Congressional Record* and by looking in the *Readers Guide* for periodical comment on these bills. Find out how your representative voted on these bills.
4. Read again our Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights. Select the sections of these documents that express the democratic principle of equal rights for all men. Also select any specific references relating to discrimination against persons of certain racial or religious groups. Copy the excerpts on a poster and hang up in the classroom.
5. Read Amendments 13, 14, 15 to the Constitution relating to the freedom of the slaves. In what ways have these Amendments been violated? How has the 14th Amendment been misinterpreted? Do you think these amendments need to be clarified or expanded?
6. Give a report on the attitude you think we should take toward our Japanese-Americans. Consider the following questions:
  - (a) Do you approve of the present policy adopted by the government?
  - (b) Why did the government adopt a different policy toward persons of Japanese parentage than toward persons of German parentage?

If you were appointed on a citizens' committee to set up a program for overcoming prejudice in the United States which of the following suggestions would you *approve*? Which would you *disapprove*? Give reasons. Report to the class.

(a) Find ways of distributing scientific information regarding race to all Americans.

(b) Encourage Negroes and other minority groups to instigate a revolt against the government.

(c) Abolish by law segregated schools throughout the country.

(d) Abolish by law Jim Crow transportation.

(e) Encourage minority groups to use methods of passive resistance such as going into restaurants and sitting until they are served or ejected.

(f) Request the President to issue an executive order abolishing segregation in the armed and auxiliary forces.

(g) Encourage all persons to make friends with various racial, nationality and religious groups.

(h) Try to get government to deny subsidies to housing projects when they are discriminating against people because of color.

(i) Encourage persons of minority groups to run for public office.

(j) Try to get unions to remove bylaws barring members because of race or creed.

(k) Try to get cities to remove zoning laws which encourage "little Harlems" or "ghettoes."

(l) Write letters to newspapers which do not give fair treatment to minorities in the press.

For additional suggestions see Carey McWilliams,

*Brothers Under the Skin* (Little Brown, 1943) and *Races of Mankind* by Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish (Public Affairs pamphlet No. 85, 1943).

8. In 1943 the National Resources Planning Board proposed a new Bill of Rights. Write directly to Washington for a copy or look in the *Readers Guide* for article commenting on the Board's proposal. This suggested Bill is chiefly in the area of economic rights and would be, of course, in addition to the first ten Amendments to the Constitution. After reading the proposed bill, give your reaction, telling whether the achievement of such rights would do anything to help eliminate the cause of prejudice in our country.
9. In what ways do other countries handle racial prejudice? Give a report on the attitude toward the colored races in England, France, Brazil, Russia. A good description of race relationships in Brazil can be found in *Survey Graphic Calling America Series*, November, 1942.  
For an account of the way the Russians prevent race prejudice see *The Races of Mankind* by Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish (Public Affairs pamphlet No. 85, 1943).
10. Many individuals and groups who are working on plans for a postwar world believe that complete racial equality is a necessary premise upon which any plans for an international order must be based. Study the Four Freedoms and Atlantic Charter. Read also selections from speeches and articles by Vice-President Wallace, Wendell Willkie, and others. Point out any reference to racial equality.
11. Write to any of the following organizations for in-

formation concerning their programs for promoting intercultural education:

Common Council for American Unity

222 Fourth Avenue, New York City

Council Against Intolerance in America

60 E. 42nd Street, New York City

East and West Association

40 East 49th Street, New York City

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

69 Fifth Avenue, New York City

National Catholic Welfare Conference

Social Action & Education Dept.

Washington, D.C.

National Conference for Christians and Jews

381 Fourth Avenue, New York City

National Urban League

1133 Broadway, New York City

Bureau for Intercultural Education

119 West 57th Street, New York City

12. Have a committee prepare a set of standards for democratic procedure in your classroom. Hold a discussion to get class approval of the standards. Each week appraise your classroom procedure in terms of these standards.

