

EPISODE

Cultural Crisis

SUB CATEGORY

Social

TITLE

The Cultural Divide: Tolerance vs Discrimination

EXCERPT

Learn more about the dangers of cultural clashes that may escalate into social violence and thus why cultural tolerance is important in this diverse landscape given that globalization has simultaneously brought the world closer and vulnerable.

CONTENT

Cultural tensions that arise due to the lack of tolerance can be problematic for social stability. It is thus critical to examine this challenge of cultural intolerance to understand why mutual respect is necessary.

Cultural Bigotry

Cultural sensitivity is being aware that cultural differences and similarities between people exist without assigning them a value - positive or negative, better or worse, right or wrong. In an idealistic world, everyone would have the capacity to understand cultural sensitivity. However, in reality, cultural insensitivity has existed since the beginning of time. With the absence of cultural understanding, inappropriate behaviour is sure to follow.

This remains a problem as it is still relevant in the 21st century, in spite of the rise of social movements that promote liberal views and the need to respect diversity. One of the most common places to experience cultural insensitivities is in the workplace, from an individual's greetings to the way they eat. Latinos, for instance, are usually taught to work hard and keep their heads down. They are taught that they will be recognized by their hard work. But the reality in workplaces across America is that people who fail to speak about their accomplishments are often passed over for promotion. This discrimination takes a toll on the victims mental and sometimes even physical health. Thus, the absence of cultural understanding is still a large issue for many in today's world.

Progress: Changing Social Norms

The changes in demographic patterns, over time will affect the social perceptions and behaviour, during this time, there will be two ideologies - the old and young. The elders would have views usually guided by traditional values while the young would have views guided by modern values. Additionally, upbringing plays a part in shaping the social behaviour of individuals, including their perceptions towards those with different cultural backgrounds. Thus, places with a racial majority would naturally have better cultural understanding towards that race.

An example of changing demographics would be in the United States where Hispanics along with African Americans and Asian Pacific Islanders surpassed one third of the U.S. population in 2010. As their numbers continue to rise, they are on track to reach 54% of the population by 2050 – making them the minority-majority. This would cause a shift in the new social norm and increased cultural sensitivity.

Education: The Silver Bullet?

Education is currently the leading method to overcome cultural division, there are public campaigns led by schools and non-governmental organizations. This allows society to break cultural stereotypes and reinforce cultural understanding. For instance, there are multiple campaigns from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), promoting tolerance and teaching others how to live together. In the classroom, teachers can arrange work groups such that there is diversity in every group. When impressionable young students are taught to be more accepting from a young age, they are more likely to be understanding of different cultural practices and differences.

In retrospect, cultural tolerance is key in a diverse landscape - in which countries all across the globe are shifting towards. It is only when nations can achieve cultural tolerance will they be able to live in a harmonious society.