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Stereotypical Thinking of Black Men

Based on the essay “Just Walk on By: Black Men and Public Space” by Brent Staples

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could all agree about stereotypical thinking? The trouble is, we can't due to stereotypes. In “Just Walk on By: Black Men and Public Space” Brent Staples argues that black males are perceived as threatening public space and others say black males are dangerous and muggers. How can we come to a compromise that recognizes stereotypical thinking is wrong. An example of this is in Brents essay, “Black men have a firm place in new york mugging culture. Norman Podhoretz in his famed (or infamous) 1963 essay, “My Negro Problem--and Ours,” recalls growing up in terror of black males; they were “tougher than we were, more ruthless,” he writes--and as an adult on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, he continues, he cannot constrain his nervousness when he meets a black men on certain streets” (Staples, 1). This shows how Staples was being stereotyped by New Yorkers, because of the way black men are perceived in the media as dangerous.

In Brents essay “Just Walk on By: Black Men and Public Space,” he states “Women are particularly vulnerable to street violence, and young black males are drastically overrepresented among the perpetrators of that violence. Yet these truths and no solace against against the kind of alienation that comes of being ever the suspect, against being set apart, a fearsome entity with

whom pedestrians avoid making eye contact.” (Staples, 1). I agree with what Staples is explaining because some people do still treat black males as criminals today, as they did in 1970. In addition to that, another reason I agree is because even though a man may be African American it does not mean you should perceive him as dangerous based on looks. No one should be alienated and given different treatment just because they look a certain way, lastly, even if an African American committed a crime, this does not mean every single black male would do the same. For example in the article “Black Criminal Stereotypes and Racial Profiling” it states “Because media presumably have the power to help construct the meaning of race in our society, it is apparent that they play a significant role in defining Blacks as criminals as a result of the way they are often presented to readers and viewers. For many, this “visual representation can be assimilated to a larger, undifferentiated group, in this case the stereotype of a dangerous black male” (Entman, 1992, p. 350). Research on media influence has concluded that Blacks are indeed more likely to appear as criminally threatening on local television news, suggesting that this may encourage the social construction of threat in relation to Blacks.” This quote explains how the media makes black males seem, they are so often portraying black males as criminals it sets a mindset to people that African American males are harmful and dangerous. This proves my point, African Americans should not be perceived as dangerous because of what the media shows, the media does not show the full truth most of the time, no one should judge any race because of what they see on the news.

Although some may say the African American male population is criminals and muggers, they are wrong. African American males should not be treated a certain way because of their

race, a man from a different race can be a mugger or criminal, just as much as an African American man can. The main variable in this stereotypical thinking of black men being criminals is not based on gender, gender does not matter. An example is in Judith Cofer's essay "The Myth of the Latin Woman: I Just Met a Girl Named Maria" she states "There are, however, thousands of Latinas without the privilege of an education or the entrée into society that I have. For them life is a struggle against the misconceptions perpetuated by the myth of the Latina as a whore, domestic or criminal" (Cofer, 375). This quote shows that Latin women are also perceived and shown as criminals and harmful, so in this case, the main variable is not gender. Stereotypes are mainly formed based on how the media shows a certain race, when we develop such a trustworthy relationship with the media we tend to believe everything they may tell us. A man of any race, is just as likely to be perceived and perpetuated as a danger to others and a threat to the public. In today's media, same as in 1952 and in the 1970s, they hide the truth. Another example is in the article "Media Deception: You Are *Not* Getting The Truth" it says:

Many have realized long ago that our politicians will lie to us at the drop of a hat, but most have no clue that our news media lies and deceives us just as much, *if not more so*. We have been deceived by our media to such an extent, mostly because people are too trusting of our news system. They very naively believe that broadcasters and journalists would never lie to us. This trust has worked against us with devastating consequences which are unknown to most. To understand how badly you have been misled, you first need to learn about how our news organizations have been infiltrated. Once you learn this undeniable historical fact, it is far easier to understand that life is not as you know it.

We can not believe everything the media says, if they show a race as dangerous, don't believe that right away, learn truth. Do not become judgemental, and racist, lastly don't form stereotypes or discriminate because of what you see on the news.

Stereotypical thinking of any race and sex is wrong. In Staples essay, he says “I began to take precautions to make myself less threatening...” (Staples, 2). also “I employ what has proved to be an excellent tension-reducing measure: I whistle melodies from Beethoven and Vivaldi and the more popular classical composers. Even steely New Yorkers hunching toward nighttime destinations seem to relax and occasionally they even join in the tune. Virtually everybody seems to sense that a mugger wouldn't be warbling bright, sunny selections from Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*...” (Staples, 2). Both of these quotes from Staples essay shows his attempts to change views of him as a predator or a threat to public space. He does not want people to fear him, he starts small by whistling the classical music hoping to reduce tensions between him and the New Yorkers. Staples begins coming up with solutions to reduce the tensions of these stereotypes.

In Brent Staples essay “Just Walk on By: Black Men and Public Space” he shows the stereotypical thinking of African American males. My view of this is that stereotypes of black men is not just. The media really needs to stop what they are doing, perceiving races as dangerous, and hiding truth, what has the world come to? Lying to the public is not honorable, we as people deserve to know everything that is going on around us. In Staples essay he discusses how in Chicago, the population of people there viewed him as a threat to public space, he also discusses what he wants to do, which is eliminate the stereotypes of black men and let people know they are not criminals, they are not dangerous, African American men are just like every other man in any other race, why? Simply because we are all human. Discrimination and stereotyping of any race and sex is not humane, even though the media may portray a race a

certain way this does not mean you, or anyone else for that matter should believe everything shown.

Works Cited Page

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