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Self Evident Truths

America today has become increasingly obsessed with uniformity. In the declaration of independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote "...All men are created equal...". However, the equality that he intended has either been misunderstood or taken too far. The American Heritage dictionary defines equal as "1. Having the same capability, quantity, effect, measure, or value as another. 2. (Math) being identical to in value. 3. Having the same privileges, status, or rights." Mr. Jefferson intended equal opportunity, rights and privileges. He did not intend for a level of uniformity that has risen in the name equality. The pressure for uniformity has given rise to terminology that is "politically correct". The emphasis on these "politically correct" terms in America stifles our growth towards true social equality.

The "politically correct" terms themselves are part of the problem. The very existence of these terms classifies people into groups. They make people less of individuals by assigning them to ethnic groups, social classes, levels of intelligence, etc. Is it possible that if the terms did not exist one would not notice the difference between an African American and a Caucasian? Probably not, but noticing the differences between individuals is not the problem. The terms do not create as great of problems when they are used to describe the individual. Rather they create problems when they are

used to describe an entire group of people especially when they describe actions, tendencies or statistics that apply to groups of people.

A greater problem with the terms lies not in the differences they represent, but in the differences they imply. The terms were originally created to have no history under which biases and stereotypes existed. However, over time the terms acquire a history, which includes stereotypes that often parallel the stereotypes of the terms they have come to replace. These new terms become “politically incorrect” and they are replaced by even newer terms. This perpetual spiral is not necessarily bad, but it is confusing, unnecessary and avoidant of the true problem with the terms. That problem being the existence of the terms at all. The terms themselves have been categorized. They are all labeled “politically correct”. This implies that they are not offensive which, like most things, is entirely subjective.

The emphasis on the use of the “politically correct” terminology is perhaps the largest problem. When the media and society emphasize or demand the use of the terms, it creates an emphasis on the terms themselves. This in turn emphasizes the classification that the terms represent. The emphasis on classification further emphasizes ethnic and social distinction in the minds of Americans. For example it could be argued that most dogmatic distinctions of African Americans and Caucasians are entirely in the mind. Without an emphasis on these distinctions, the stigmas that these distinctions represent will fade from American consciousness.

Descriptive terms allow humans to classify, and make sense out of the world. The world would be incredibly bland without distinction. Terms that create distinction are necessary, but it is unfortunate that most of the time these terms accumulate stigmas.

When ethnic and social stigmas begin to fade, the mind will have less reason to, and will therefore be less likely to, distinguish between various ethnic or social groups. This will in turn raise the level of social equality by minimizing differences that do not exist outside the human mind. In order to eliminate social inequality, we must eliminate it within our minds. We must cease to allow society and the media to emphasize the differences between ethnic or social groups, in order to raise the level of social equality.