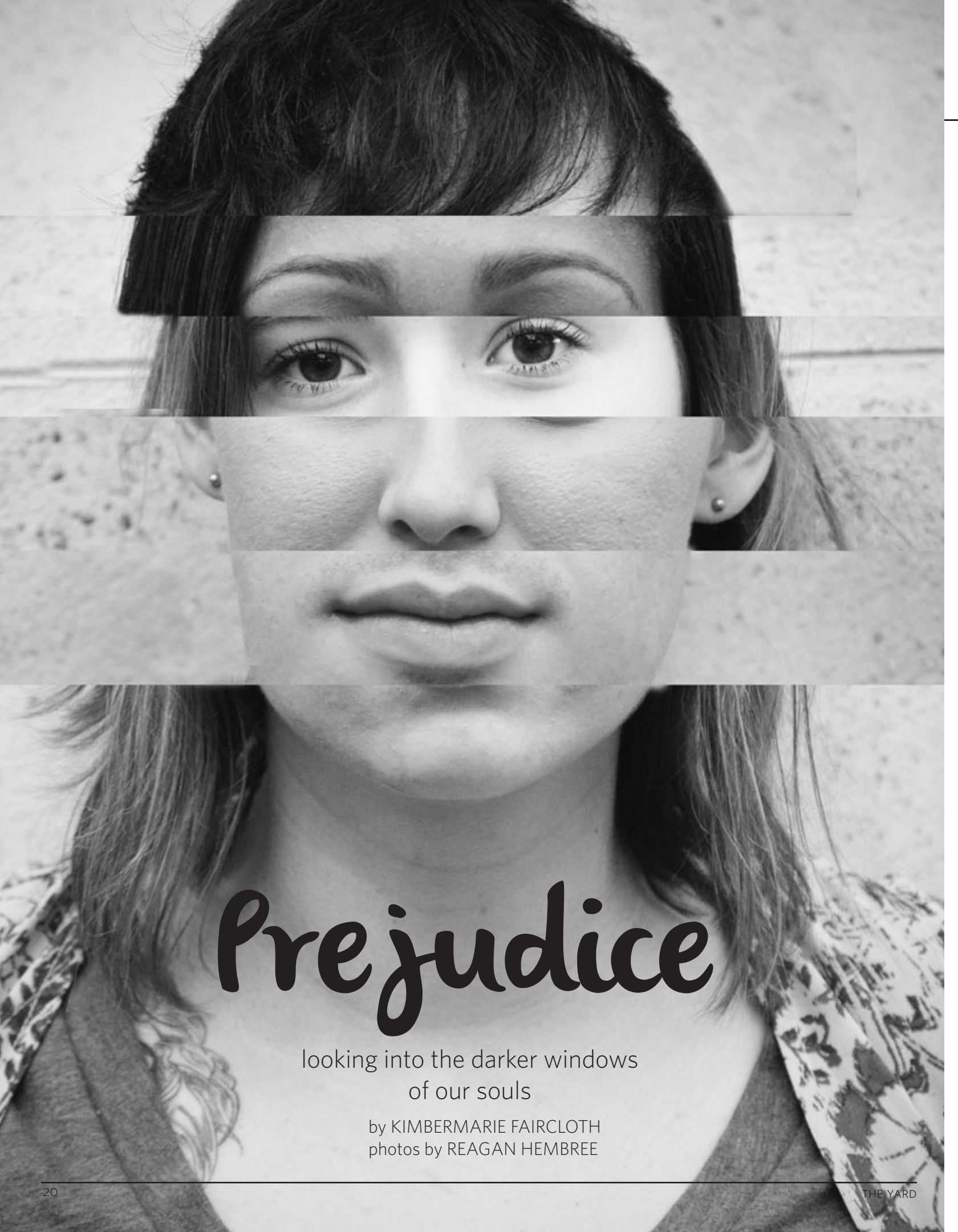




Prejudice

looking into the darker windows
of our souls

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Prejudice

Noun

An unfair feeling of dislike for a person or group because of race, sex, religion etc.

A feeling of like or dislike for someone or something especially when it is not reasonable or logical

Until the year 313 A.D., Christians were persecuted for being Christian. It was illegal to openly worship until the Roman Emperor Constantine passed the Edict of Milan to allow religion and the construction of churches.

Until World War II ended, the Jewish community was one of the largest scapegoats for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, for beginning the Bubonic Plague and for hard economic times in Germany in the 1950s, to name a few.

Until the 1960s, African-Americans were segregated. They were forced to use their own bathrooms, to ride on their own buses and to go to their own schools. After centuries of fighting for freedom from the chains of slavery and racial segregation, racial prejudice is still a fight today that has constructed a barrier between many ethnic and social groups.

Prejudice still exists. It has existed for centuries, transforming year to year, community to community on a gradient of minute, passive-aggressive actions to dramatic and unforgiving tragedies. These prejudices still exist today, but in disguise. In the past few years, we have seen many instances where prejudice has reared its head into history and prompted many questions concerning different controversies: Is every cop abusing his power? Is every African-American deserving of suspicion? Is every Muslim a terrorist? Is every Christian judgmental?

Even under the best circumstances, people still use prejudice to blame, to defend, to praise and to stereotype. Ironically, prejudice is not prejudiced; every soul is capable of it in some shape or form.

So, what do we do?

IT BEGINS AS A CHILD...

Naomi Nudelman, 22, a Jewish Studies and Business double major at the College, recalled a story from her childhood when a childhood best friend confided in her. When Nudelman asked her friend why she was upset, the girl responded, "I'm just really sad because my mommy told me that you are Jewish, so you are going to Hell." Although Nudelman was very young when this happened and is now at a point in her life where she can reminisce about that event with a mature understanding, the hurt still remains.

Children are impressionable; every parent has that omnipresent fear of saying a cuss word in front of their wide-eyed child lest they repeat it like a broken record.

The same applies to ideas. If you live a life expressing prejudice, your children witness it. They soak it in every minute of their childhood and they remember—parents define their children's perceptions until they get to a point when they can see the line between their parent's beliefs and their own.

"The way we are all raised ... produces prejudice in us that we are not necessarily aware of, but that does not mean ... that it can not be brought to light," Alyssa Boyle, 21, a biology major at the College, concluded. Many families rightfully have their own dynamics, their own traditions and their own beliefs and as American citizens, they have the right to live by those parameters and express these beliefs to the surrounding world. But what happens when two different worlds of opinion collide? Do citizens have the right to judge based on a biased opinion because their traditions and beliefs prevail in their eyes? If so, where is the line drawn between expressing those rights freely and impeding upon others?

BIAS MASQUERADED:

"Asians are super smart."

"You're really pretty for a black girl."

"All Muslims are terrorists."

"That's so gay."

"Christians are so judgmental."

The list goes on and on of all the misconceptions and generalizations that have been showered upon different cultures, ethnicities and societal groups. Many prejudices that have been considered outdated still remain in undercover nuances: jokes, assumptions, "microaggressions."

Mercedes Cain, 18, an exercise science and athletic training major at the College, explained that she has experienced bias in ways that are more underhanded than blatant. "People are not outright prejudiced like they used to be," she stated. Yet, special treatment of individuals based on race or other superficialities is still very prevalent. "I feel like people treat me differently when I have braids versus when my hair is straight," Cain said, to cite one example. This confession opened up to the discussion of microaggressions, which is basically a back-handed compliment like the one above: "You're really pretty for a black girl." Why must an African-American woman be considered pretty just for her ethnicity and not by general societal standards?

Another student at the College, Morgan Sweeney, 18, pointed out that there are many instances of prejudice hiding behind jokes. For many, they are just that: jokes. But where is the line? Sweeney mentioned that speaking up when someone has made an untasteful or offensive joke is one of the first steps in recognizing instances of prejudice.

"It's never going to stop if the other person does not know it is a problem," Sweeney said. She also mentioned the individual responsibility that comes with speaking out; she believes prejudice is a "reducible" problem as long as people are willing to educate themselves and others.

That being said, does this mean everyone should refrain from making a discriminatory joke when they feel the urge to tell one? Can you imagine what Saturday Night Live would be like if the cast never made a slightly insulting or incriminating punchline? Many of the comedians we watch today have found a way to take controversial subjects and breach a laugh from them, often putting themselves at risk for it. It seems to come down to an age-old criticism: if you can not take the heat of certain jokes, then you should refrain from surrounding yourself with those people; but if a tree falls when no one is around, does it still make a sound? Is it acceptable for people to be biased as long as it is in private?

Obviously, going up to someone and making discriminatory remark is rude and unsavory; but in the name of joking and poking fun, should an exception be made? If everyone is ideally striving for a prejudice-free world, eradicating potentially harmful one-liners and censoring our statements and hate-speech seems to be the ultimate step.

Right?

TODAY'S WORLD

At the push of a button, anyone can tweet his or her latest and greatest 140-character punchline. In minutes, cars can blast blessed warm-air and de-ice windshields on a freezing morning. Humans no longer live in a world where good things come to those who wait. If a breaking-news event happens all the way across the United States, society is guaranteed minute-by-minute updates within 24 hours.

Much of what citizens catch on the news or see on Twitter and Instagram tend to be the most popular ways of keeping up in a fast-paced world. In some ways that can have its own demons. If the media is fixated on an event, that will be the talk of the town for the next few days until something else coincidentally takes place.

After interviewing a handful of students on their opinions of prejudice and its effects in today's society, many of them brought up the Syrian refugee crisis. The controversy is over whether or not to stop Muslims from immigrating into the States to prevent potential acts of terrorism. With the presidential election coming up later this year, it is no surprise that this debate has risen to a boiling point: America is intent on knowing what their next President has in mind when it comes to the security of this nation and whether or not banning all Muslims is an option.

Many people argue that America would be committing a huge human rights violation by refusing Muslims or Middle Eastern citizens at the border for

fear of terrorism. But then again, if it is in the name of security and protecting American citizens, who is wrong and who is right? It seems safe to say that when it comes down to actually making the decision, no matter how it is resolved, the solution will never satisfy everyone. If we stop the immigration of one specific people, America becomes a nation of bigots. If we do not take any security measurements at all, we put our own security at



ALYSSA BOYLE



SUSAN DEMPSEY

risk. If we decide to close our borders completely, we will seem paranoid and isolationist.

So what do we do?

PREJUDICE: A NEVER-ENDING CIRCLE

“An unknown is always scary,” said John “Trey” Campbell III, a middle grade education major at the College, in response to the question of how to solve, or at the least suppress, prejudice. “Education is key,” he said. Campbell emphasized the importance of teaching children about different cultures and ethnicities. How can students relate to people and cultures they have never even heard of?



STEVE COLE

When it comes to being nervous about specific groups of people, such as Muslims or individuals from the Middle East, Campbell made the point that being paranoid can lead to preparedness, but more often than not it just leads to a sheltered life of limited points of views and biased misunderstandings. Through education, speaking out and introspective analysis, many people will come to find that being open-minded and respectful toward other people's lives and cultures is not hard. Being open-minded, contrary to popular belief, does not mean agreeing wholeheartedly with another's opinion, or even at all. It does not entail becoming soft on your own values or belittling your own traditions—it is simply the understanding that you are



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not the only living being on the face of this Earth; and as nice as that may seem sometimes, to live life with such a one-track view of things begets emotional injury, bigotry and poor education. All of which only serve to hurt yourself and those around you.

We cannot solve prejudice. It will always be here, lurking in the dark corners of our souls, because it is an innate characteristic of human beings. As Campbell eloquently stated, prejudice is a “suppressible” problem; but it is not something that will ever disappear because it is “engrained” in humans. Seemingly, many people today have found that to try and mend the damages humans have created, be it emotionally, environmentally

or physically, we need to hate our past, and thus, our actual being. But what kind of improvements would evolve from a relationship of despise and shame of humankind?

Ideal

Adjective

Satisfying one's conception of what is perfect; most suitable.

[attrib.] existing only in the imagination; desirable or perfect but not likely to become a reality.

An unbiased, non-stereotypical and discrimination-dissolved world definitely seems to be the answer to many woes, but it is also vastly unrealistic. Humans are selfish, territorial, competitive and capable of evil. That being said, humans are also altruistic, sharing, generous and capable of good. To try and convince people that change needs to happen by being ashamed of the fact that we have bad qualities is like slapping a child on the hand every time he does something wrong without ever praising him for doing something right.

Perhaps the “ideal” world we need to strive for is a world where people finally understand that we are capable of just as many good acts as we are bad. If people went out and instead of pointing their fingers at what others need to be doing to make the world a better place instead of what they individually could be doing, there would be more progress than the social regress society finds itself facing more frequently these days. Every time you point your finger, you have three pointing right back at you. Each human being, regardless of race, religion or culture, is just as capable of change as the next. The question is whether they choose to make it a bad change or a good change - or to even try at all.

That in itself is not an easy choice to make. There will be days that humans make a decision with good intentions, but that road leads straight to hell. There are days when humans will chase the coat-tails of a demon and on the way, find the right path. No matter which way we go, both lead in the same never-ending direction, which in itself is history. Readers may come away from this article asking why so many questions have been posed yet unanswered and deem it a flaw in journalistic execution. But perhaps the questions remain unanswered because it is not up to the writer to decide for the reader their opinion on what it takes to suppress prejudice. Perhaps, the writer simply just wanted to make the reader freeze for a moment in our fast-paced and sometimes ruthless world, to ponder what it would be like if more people did just that.