

one. Many of us are programmed at a young age to deal with things in a calm and composed manner, like a "lady." Proper women do not react catastrophically towards problems with aggression or chaos. Females are looked on as being generally vulnerable so they are easier targets. Since they do not usually retaliate, they will not provide any threat to those who pursue such racist attitudes.

If I were male, does it make me less susceptible to racial attitudes and slurs? Males are seen as individuals who are more prone to take action against derogative actions. As women, we must transcend society's expectations and take action, stop the passivity. As girls, some of us are taught to laugh things off. If racist words become jokes, we cannot get hurt. The nervous laugh or giggle of such mockery reduces us to weak waif-like adults. But laughing or giggling to racist comments does not magically change cruel intentions into harmless fairytale fiction. We laugh because we are afraid to offend others or perhaps it is the only way we know how to respond at the moment.

As an individual who wants to make a positive impact in society through knowledge, I seem to be a walking contradiction. Gaining knowledge as a precursor for action is ideal. But I do not want to stop at such an initial stage. The primordial desire for equality beats with my heart and I use whatever knowledge I have in my possession as empowerment. Just as we learn about life and others attitudes through experience, those with discriminatory attitudes can learn about different cultures through experience. We should not only gain knowledge from being aware of others attitudes, but also gain knowledge on how to react when such discriminatory instances occur.

The shock of discriminatory actions may paralyze us initially, but unless we make known the atrocity of racism, we remain passive and awareness is wasted. Being assertive and at the same time reasonable, with our newly gained knowledge and awareness is empowering. If we do retaliate in a violent way, we can be labeled and the label will be reasonable because of our actions. If everybody who encounters racism is stronger and stands up for herself, perhaps individuals with racist attitudes will slowly realize people have equal rights regardless of skin tone.

The solution does not require us to gather as one to berate the individual aggressively but to use our experiences to become stronger. Each of us might be able to do only something minor but if all those who have experienced some discrimination do this little something, we can have a big impact. If we remain silent and laugh politely, we are not only lacking in self-defense but also indirectly confirming that racist individuals are right. This "action" can be anything from defending one's right of equality to reminding others how similar to each other we really are. Knowing that others are experiencing similar prejudices is important for our growth and support.

Society has certainly come a long way from the times of the CPR construction, the Head Tax and the *Exclusion*

Act. However, the racism battle is being fought every day of our lives. Issues such as biased media portrayal of the Chinese in Canada, and discrimination in social institutions have ignited Chinese Canadian social movements. Racism erosion is a long process and society still has a long way to go.

This is a call to all those who encounter racist attitudes or actions. The knowledge and awareness of vastly differing perspectives of others is a beginning of something potentially powerful. From that point on, we decide whether to utilize it in strengthening ourselves and educating others or to remain vulnerable to future discrimination. Let's work to counter racism and nurture equality in a land that is meant to be glorious and free.

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KAREN U. LEE

Insider-Outer

In the meeting I sit
caucasian academics
quiet, passive
the visible minority, I listen.

Discussions prevail
a caustic remark
"all the asians look the same"
politics brings me to silence.

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