

Speaking Out with Art

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*Speaking Out with Art*  
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My mother told me: "People here often have the perception that because you are Chinese, you are considered quieter, shyer, and less capable. You have to work harder, be more outspoken - show and prove that you are not. Do not let others and their misconceptions and stereotypes of you steamroll right over you."

As a person of Asian ethnicity, I know how it is to be faced with inequality. Perhaps I have not been faced with the extreme degrees of bias and unfairness that obstructs and haunts many others in much harsher environments than I have lived in, but I know how it feels to be a minority, a subject of belittlement for my race, culture, personality, and views - things that are a part of me, and things that I cannot change to suit the whims of others..

Change rolls around slowly though, especially over topics which many associate stigma with, and we cannot expect that an overnight turnaround will happen. However, little by little, small changes by small changes, we may find ourselves able to overturn such stereotypes and truly free ourselves and all of the people in the world of the bias that we all face.

Homophobia resonates in my area, perhaps more strongly than all other struggles in bias and stereotypes. One might think that California, the first state to legalize gay marriage, would be the most open minded. If this is true, and California is truly the most open minded state when it comes to gay relationships, then America, the land of the equality, fairness, and freedom, has failed in its quest. The word gay is used as a derogatory adjective everywhere, and faggot is thrown around so casually, one almost might forget that it is demeaning to the people around us. In fact, I do think we have forgotten that, and it has just become another joke in a sea of others.

All words hold power, and the negative impact that such derogatory insults have cannot be undermined.

Art knows no bounds. This I truly learned, when I stumbled upon a comic, depicting a man and a woman, neglecting their child. People say this is right, it was captioned. The next image was of two men, shown nurturing their child with care and loving, with big red marks over it. People say that this is wrong. And perhaps it was here where I first began to realize why there is such outcry and such call for change when it comes to gay laws. It is because people should be free to live how they are, as long as there is no negative impact on others, and being gay is not equivalent to shame. The depiction of the oppression that non-straight people feel was just put out there, simply on a plate for me to view, and I realized: society is wrong. A picture is worth a thousand words. That simple comic did for me what a thousand gay-rights propaganda essays and posters did not. It made me *understand*.

You do not have to relate directly to a case. You do not have to be black to feel the injustice of the Ferguson shooting. You do not have to be Asian (or another “ethnic” race) to feel the prejudice in businesses and job opportunities. You do not have to be gay or lesbian to feel slammed with pressure and negativity for being the way you are. But all of us have our own talents, be it writing, speaking, acting, singing, painting, or sculpting. We have to use our gifts for the world, and for others, to make it a better place - not only for others, but also for ourselves.