Sexism Essay, Research Paper

Sexism has always been a problem in Western society. It has been a problem that many people overlook, simply because they think it does not actually exist! However, sexism is present in our current society today, and is proved perfectly by Alleen Nilsen in her quote stating, ?Anyone living in the United States who listens with a keen ear or reads with a perceptive eye can come up with startling new insights about the way American English reflects our values.? Every society has certain common beliefs regarding the ways each sex should behave. In Western society, for example women have traditionally been considered more tender and sympathetic than men have. Men have been regarded as more competitive and not as emotional as women have. Our language supports this outdated view today. Although feminists tend to be the only people fighting against sexism, this false ideology needs to be changed. People need to become more sociological in their thinking and realize this is a problem that we all should be working to fix. Being of the female gender myself, I understand this problem fully through experiences in my own life. The two main reasons I feel this ideology needs to be changed is: females no longer should have to contend with these outdated stereotypes set up decades ago, and men should not feel any intimidation for their roles becoming more sensitive or caring as individuals. Basically, I feel that as cultural changes have taken place, the language that molds us as youngsters and adults, needs to reflect the new attitudes toward the roles of men and women today in society.

Everyone, from infancy on, learns what the accepted sexual role should be for his or her gender. Growing up, I can remember, family members playing rough with my brother, and gently and cuddly with me. My father would watch and see the disappointment in my face, come over, toss me in the air just to let me know I could be tough and play rough too. I was a little ?tomboy?; the word in itself signifies a sexist word. The definition of this type of girl was the girl that runs around wild, basically acts more masculine than what is considered appropriate for a little girl. Although I never liked this word, I was often referred as this type of girl. I found this quite offensive, probably because of my upbringing. From the minute I can remember my father and mother, taught me to be strong, self-sufficient and think things out more logically and less emotionally, or like society deems, more masculine. People would always say, ?She should be wearing more dresses, sitting more ladylike, I should not talk so tough, or get into so many arguments with boys. Many felt that girls shouldn?t play with the boys so much. I found this quite confusing. I thought I was doing nothing wrong, but as I got older I discovered that society did see differences in men and women besides their physique. Since I was a girl, society expected me to act certain way. I was suppose to be less aggressive and more submissive, not have strong opinions, be considered weak and needing a man to help me do things no matter how simple they were. I have refused to yield to such criteria, and am quite happy being the independent woman that I am today, that very same little girl someone called a ?tomboy?!

Roles in society have become increasingly flexible. Men and women can hold jobs once considered inappropriate for their gender, however the language that surrounds us does not support this view. Men are just as subjected to sexism by society and need to fight for the changes to occur. As stated by Nilsen, ?If a boy has a name that society considers to be girlish, they often become self-conscious, and either go by abbreviated names or change their names.? My brother?s middle name is Loren and is a perfect example of this sad fact. When he began school, all of a sudden his name became an issue. The other children decided what was considered to be an acceptable or unacceptable name. Loren was unacceptable for a boy. The children would tease him and tell him it was a sissy name. (Sissy would be another one of those sexist words!) At one point, it bothered him so much, that he came home and announced he wanted to change his name to Andrew. Andrew, of course, was viewed as a more acceptable masculine name. He never did change his name. He still doesn?t really like the name, but it is his and he deals with it. The question is, however, should anyone have to go through such an ordeal? No male (or female) should have to deal with humiliations just because they have a feminine name (or masculine name). The name does not make the person.

Alleen Pace Nilsen?s essay, Sexism in Language, conjured up some really strong feelings and a bit of hostility too. I thoroughly enjoyed reading her views and it made me realize a lot more, about the society I live within. Language has many connotations in it that is not fully realized by those who use it. Sexism is definitely a problem that needs to be worked on, so that society can avoid the emotional problems that arise in women and men from its use.

Bibliography

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