



The Best of
Brave New Word
March 2016 -
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About Us

Brave New Word is a blog where our diverse groups of creators - all current undergraduate college students - come together and give our take on the world today. We call ourselves the Kill Joys because as our generation comes of age our causes to end racism, violence, sexism and bias in general are constantly being dismissed by not only most of the older generations but some of our fellow millennials. Brave New Word is focused on giving our generation a voice and a space to let the world know that being 'politically correct' or a 'kill joy' is hardly an insult but a compliment and an acknowledgement of unconscious bias

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A Personal Story

Being different in a society full of standards and stereotypes is not an easy task. A guy needs to be tan and muscular to fit in the Brazilian standards of male beauty. So, anything different than that may be used for bullying and shaming. Skin color and body shape are the most common sources for bullying. However, differently from body shape, skin color is associated with race. The Brazilian beauty standard is to have dark tan skin. Thus, both white and black guys are passive to hear insults related to their skin color.

For me, insults such as, white rat, white candle, Gaspar the friendly ghost, transparent, Dalmatian, Gringo, etc, were really common. Believe me, I've even heard things like "Oh God, look how white that guy is" (with a disgusting intonation). It might sound like impossible for an American to believe, but that's what happened to me throughout my childhood and adolescence.

Of course this kind of bullying and insult also happens to black guys. And based on my life experience, it is even worse for black people because these insults follow them even in adulthood. Although I still feel like people look at me and judge me for my skin color, I do not hear those kind of insults anymore.

Brazilian media shows these verbal insults against black people as the worse form of racism. But the same media do not show the same kind of verbal insults against white people. That kind of bullying is a traumatizing experience for both white and black people. I'm 25 years-old and I'm still embarrassed to be shirtless in a crowded beach.

So, Brazilian media reduces racism to discrimination. It does not help people to see how big and complicated racism is. By showing and discussing only about verbal insults suffered by celebrities and soccer players, Brazilian Media induces people to create a concept of racism totally different from the real definition. It makes the race problem in Brazil much smaller than it really is. That's probably why so many people in Brazil say that there is no racism in our society.

Racism is not only that prejudice against skin color showed by media. Racism is a whole system that sets a race as superior or dominant. It affects people in many different ways and levels, mainly in the social-economic aspects. So, have Brazilian media ever discussed about racism deeply?

The 'Eat Pray Love' Fantasy

Nothing gets me more mad than a Julia Roberts bad film. Not saying I don't like her at all (Mona Lisa Smile is a great film!) but god has her agent put her in some bad films recently (Timothy Green comes to mind). However, I think the worse movie she has been casted in was EAT PRAY LOVE. MY GOD that movie makes me angry. Typical clichéd unhappily married woman goes to Italy and India to try to find herself and tries to come back a better person. I don't know the real story behind this so I'm just commenting on what the movie gives me. Not that there's anything wrong on wanting to leave a marriage but why does one need to go on this international journey to find oneself? Because in reality everyone eventually settles into a routine no matter where you are. Escaping won't change the problem. Not saying traveling isn't a good thing, I love traveling, but using other people, other cultures as a tool to make yourself feel special to me, is just wrong. And Eat Pray Love isn't the only one to do it, at the end of Masters of None (another show I love/SPOILER ALERT) Dev and his girlfriend (separately) go on 'life changing' journeys to Italy and Japan respectively. There's nothing wrong with that except they're doing it so they can feel as though they're living their life to the fullest. I just don't get why they feel that another culture can change their life when in reality you'll always be who you are. It's the Eat Pray Love fantasy that gives us shallow and superficial posts about studying abroad, finding yourself, and coming back a 'new and cultured' person when in reality you're the same damn person you've always been. This phenomenon usually happens more often when one goes to a '3rd world country' which is what I will be discussing next.

The labels of 3rd and second world are really problematic. Mainly because it's saying that there's only one road to progress and only one standard of living when in reality people live however best they can wherever they are given the circumstances. Yes of course there are basic human living conditions that everyone should have access to but don't such as running water, food, shelter, clothing, education, medical care, electricity etc. however not many people in the world have access to these things but calling them 'lesser' is wrong because it's not their fault and you going there and using their poverty as a tool lift you up and say to yourself 'wow im so lucky to have been blessed with what I have I'll take it for granted again.' Is wrong. Rather than trivializing what they don't have and labeling them lesser because of it, think about what they do have and how to help them maybe get what they need. Also realize that there are different living standards throughout the world and some people can be just as happy with nothing than you are with things that cost their life savings. Realize that we're all sharing the world together and that there is no 3rd or 2nd world but only this one earth that we all should strive to make better rather than using someone else's struggle as a way for you to have an ego trip.

Lastly the problem of the term 'American.' In the US we don't call ourselves United Statesians but American which is a huge problem because America is not a country but a continent. The people who we're sharing the continent with have other names for us rather than American but as a United Statesian because we don't represent all of America so why are we calling ourselves American. Using that name to exclusively reference the US without giving a damn about the rest of the continent is really misleading and trivializing. So let's start trying new ways to reference ourselves and if United Statesian doesn't catch on maybe just 'I'm from the US.'

What do we need superheroes for?

As a geek extraordinaire who spent many Friday nights reading comics and reminiscing with BBC characters, I want to talk about a topic near and dear to my heart: superheroes. Specifically, I am talking about the classic, comic book inspired cape and spandex wearing superheroes. Now growing up (and still now), I latched onto superhero stories. Even with their limited and often problematic representations of women and people of color (and nearly total lack of LGBT+ characters), I still couldn't help but love the Marvel and DC Universes (I won't make this divisive by naming favorites). They gave me a sense of belonging, hope, and protection that I so desperately wanted from the world around me. They taught me how to be brave and take risks, even if it was only in my head, and they taught me the value of all life.

That being said, I cannot help but think now that I might have been missing something in superhero depictions. Superheroes always tow this line between human and god- flawed and emotional like people, but somehow also better than us. However, it becomes only inevitable that their self-righteous independence clashes with the world around them, and the lines between good and evil blur. Heroes start fighting amongst themselves, and the audience realizes that there are many ways to solve certain issues, some less effective than others.

But what if all superheroes have it wrong? There has to be a reason that there has been nearly 100 years of Batman, but Gotham seems to have just as much crime as ever. Superheroes are warriors, soldiers, fighters to the core (no matter how much they want peace). There is never an issue of Batman where Bruce Wayne sits down and really thinks about why there is so much theft and gang violence in Gotham. What does that say about the accessibility and standard of the education system? What is with the ridiculous wealth gap that must exist? Why do comics pretend to live in a post-racial, post-feminist society?

Addressing just a symptom of the problem can never fully eradicate it. I'm not naïve enough to think there can be no violence at all, but there are definitely ways to drastically reduce the rates of certain types of oppressions and violence. A symbol or martyr can go a long way for a movement in terms of motivation, but that's it. We need the nitty-gritty, day-to-day struggling that isn't glamorous at all to really improve a society. Superheroes can keep protecting us from the supernatural and disturbed, all the while showing us why we deserve to be saved, but we have to take the next step and save ourselves. And maybe we will be the heroes that don't get dramatic stories, but we just might get the lasting peace.

On Being an Ally (aka. How Yoda was Wrong)

As the proper young adult that I am, I have interred many life lessons from movies and television. Sometimes for better, sometimes for worse. Most of the time, for somewhere in between. As ashamed as I am to say this, I got into Star Wars pretty late all things considered. So when I heard this one quote from Yoda in *The Empire Strikes Back*, it hit me pretty hard. Yoda quite famously says, "Do or do not. There is no try." Simple, yet poignant. Quite frankly, it is a call to devote yourself fully to a task, to dive right in and let go of your insecurities. If it means that much to you, find a way and make it happen.

The more that I tried to live my life by this, however, the more panicky and self-defeated I became. Tasks just felt bigger and more overwhelming. If I started something, I had to finish it and finish it well. I couldn't fail. It was not an option. So most of the time, I couldn't even bring myself to start.

In terms of social justice, this mindset goes from disheartening to crippling. Being a white, queer, abled, woman, I live in several different advantaged and disadvantaged groups at once. Most people do. So while for some groups I have to fight back as the oppressed, for other groups I have the opportunity to be an ally. Though it may sound nice and pretty on paper, I want to validate that it takes a lot of work in real life- work that is draining, uncomfortable, and sometimes frustrating. Being an ally means first and foremost recognizing your own privilege, which is a battle in and of itself. Privilege, being unasked for and invisible, can only be countered with education and open conversations about oppression with all groups involved. You have to ask those uncomfortable questions, make new relationships that might feel weird or awkward or even scary, and try.

Yes, I said it. The dreaded try. Completely changing behavior and thinking patters that have developed over a lifetime is an intimidating notion. But the good news is, you do not have to be perfect. You do not have to get it all right in one go. You just have to try and keep trying at every new roadblock. Moments of confusion and confrontation are opportunities for change and personal growth. Our first thought is often what we are conditioned to think. Therefore, judge yourself by your second thought. We are all learning together and, trust me when I say, actively trying to respect and understand difference is the best thing you could ever do as an ally. Privilege is power, and it can be used for good as an ally, but only if we are bold enough and forgiving enough to try.

Can America be in the Heart?

It seems as though this is an easy question. Of course, it is, "America" is something anyone can embody, ideals of democracy, freedom of speech, equality and capitalism. However, how can it be in the heart when in the US it's a crime to be black in America and has been since before the founding of this nation? It amazes me how some people use this term 'America is in the heart' in order to say that 'hey we're already all equal, what's all the fuss about?' Saying that "Americanism" has never been based in legislator but by how you feel is a huge out that the US government has used in order to trick ethnic and racial minorities into submission. Because the US promises the 'land of the free and home of the brave' and that's what gets people to believe, through all the cynicism, that in the US there is hope. But that hope is just a tool used for propaganda.

This patriotic ethos has deep roots when it comes to the wars that the US has fought in. Starting in the revolutionary war for 'our' independence African American slaves were rallied up to fight against the British and French in hopes that afterwards they will be freed from slavery and be equal with white men in this 'new' nation. Their dreams were crushed and slavery and racism continued for centuries to come.

Having a dual cultural identity has never been so damning than in World War II with the Japanese internment not only in the US but in Canada. But because I know more about the US internment that is what I will be focusing on. The Japanese were interned in what primary documents called 'concentration camps' but they were not death camps. This is no way to trivialize their experiences but to create a difference between prison camps and death camps. Afterward, the eligible Japanese men were asked if they wanted to enlist in the US military. You can see the problem here already, they were interned wrongly (the second generation of Japanese Americans were born in the US thus; they couldn't be interned legally unlike their first generation parents who were not citizens) and then asked to fight for a country that clearly didn't want them. Some said yes and formed the 100th infantry but some also said no and were labeled conscientious objectors. The ones who said yes thought that they could prove their "Americanness" by fighting 'equally' with other American soldiers but the Japanese were segregated from the rest of the troops as a 'special' unit. And after the war, though they were able to get their land back and were paid \$20,000 it didn't make up for the fact that they were put in the middle of sand and dust storms for over 3 years just because they looked like the enemy. The ones that said no didn't say no because they loved Japan the country but because Japan the country was embodied in their first generation parents, and fighting for the US would mean going against their parents homes. This caused not only a bigger 'generational' gap but a gap between the second generation Japanese who fought and who didn't fight. Japanese Americans had to choose between their cultural identities as American or Japanese clearly

stating one couldn't be either and proving 'America' is not in the heart but if you're willing to die for it.

What I wish People Knew About Eating Disorders

In my recovery thus far, I have entered into residential treatment twice, been rushed to the hospital once, been in two different intensive outpatient programs, and tried three outpatient therapists. Throughout all of this, I have shared stories and bonded with so many empathetic, insightful people. But beyond just battling the same illness, we have all also faced many of the same invalidating, discouraging comments from supports and strangers alike. Here are some of the main things I wish I could tell to those people:

1. Eating disorders are not a choice or fad. We did not actively chose to develop eating disorders. They form slowly over years and years of just simple, small behaviors.
2. Eating disorders are serious and real. Of all mental illnesses, they have the highest mortality rate.
3. You cannot tell if someone has an eating disorder just by looking at them. We come in all shapes, sizes, genders, races, and sexualities.
4. We are not a punch line or a joke. Really, it's not funny.
5. The lines between forms of ED (anorexia, bulimia, binge eating, etc.) are not as clear-cut as they seem. People can move between symptoms over time and may not fall cleanly into any group.
6. Stop telling us to just eat. It hasn't worked before, and it won't work ever.
7. Recovery is not linear, nor is it short.
8. Recovery is also hell. It is like making an alcoholic live in a non-stop frat party, all the while forcing them to have a "healthy" amount of alcohol. So when we say we are trying our best, even when we slip up, believe us.
9. Do not jump to give advice. Listen with an open mind, validate, and ask them what they need from you. Leave the rest up to the professionals.

There is much more I could add to this list, but I hope it can help start a conversation and help people reconsider some of the popular myths (and I do mean myths) on eating disorders.

On Political Correctness

The phrase political correctness has been around for hundreds of years. It is only within the last few decades, however, that it has taken on the use and connotation that it has today. I feel that the phrase is now used as a weapon- a way to invalidate a conversation as being overly pandering or censored. In that sense, I understand the sentiment. We need to be able to say what is on our minds in order to have open, honest discussions about loaded topics such as race and gender. Ignoring oppressions or pretending that we live in a perfectly equal society only lets our current inequalities fester, silencing and vilifying the victims at the same time.

That being said, political correctness is often invoked in the complete opposite situations. Calling people out for exclusionary language or jokes is a form of addressing inequalities, not covering them up. It is a fact in our society that certain groups are privileged over other groups. One of the main benefits of privilege is that it acts invisibly (to the benefiting group/individuals) to normalize certain settings and narratives, while writing out others. This is where political correctness comes in again. It is vital to actively fight against this blindness. In the day to day, it often manifests as speaking out against a racist joke, questioning why there are no individuals with disabilities in a specific campaign ad, or advocating for more dynamic female roles in sci-fi films.

In this sense, political correctness has everything to do with being inclusive, fair, and representative, and nothing to do with being overly sensitive. It is not about “learning how to take a joke” or being a “fun-sucker.” It is about wanting the world around you in the form of language, media, and politics to be representative of the people who inhabit it and their real lives.

Personally, I think that jokes are the best when they don't play off of discriminating, unjust stereotypes and don't have to make anyone else feel bad to be told. So maybe instead of it being a fault on my part as a listener for not laughing, the joke teller just isn't funny. Trust me, making the joke or movie or television show more inclusive won't somehow compromise its integrity or ruin its value; it will only widen its viewer base and let us all feel good when we walk away from it.

Generations are a Social Construct

When I say that generations are falsehoods I don't mean that they don't have a huge impact in our everyday lives and even historically but what I do mean is that we've imposed the idea of generations onto society in order to romanticize the past and look down on the future (think *Brave New World*, 1984, *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*).

Generations and generational problems do exist. In WWII Canada and the US both illegally interned Japanese American born citizens but they also legally interned the second generation's parents who weren't US citizens. Both 'generations' took this internment in very different ways because the government imposed the generational gap as a means of citizenship. The older Japanese population who weren't citizens were used to being treated as unequal to whites whereas the American born population were more outraged because they've lived the majority of their life trying to be 'American.' But even then the older or first generation of Japanese, and Asian Americans in general had to adapt and acculturate to America whether they liked it or were conscious of it just like the second generation. So much for the stereotype of immigration stories to the US is that the older generation is stuck in the past and the second generation dislike their parents for not understanding the culture when in reality this simply isn't the case.

How many times have we 'as millennials' have heard how 'self centered' and 'self obsessed' we are with our selfie taking, different forms of social media accounts, and vlogging? I hate this so much how we're casted as these people who just spend time on ourselves when the internet is so much more than just posting selfies. In the 'past' wealthy monarchs hired painters and sat for hours to have their huge portraits done and 'photoshopped' them to the beauty standards of the time. However, this was just for the wealthy and only a select few could have this luxury. It was seen as vain and still is but it just goes to show how we're not more vain than we were 'back then' but just more people have access to cameras and the internet and makes it seem like a bigger deal.

In addition, I think a lot of people of the 'older generation' not saying all of them but some, don't want to embrace technology because it can deromanticize the past. The internet exposes so much more than TV and movies because the internet is mass producing media outlet with millions and millions of users each with their own opinion. Not only that but a huge source of information about not only the present but the past. So many videos focus on how good it is to live now and embrace ourselves for who we are while at the same time saying that the 'good old days' for most of us weren't really the 'good old days.' This scares a lot of older users off even if they know how to use the internet because their time period is being smashed left and right by facts.

So next time someone says, 'oh this generation everything sucks' remember there is no such thing and it's perfectly okay to like things that come out after you're 30.

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