

## Prejudice and discrimination.

### What you need to know:

- ✓ The difference between **prejudice** and **discrimination**.
- ✓ Different types of prejudice.
- ✓ Why people are prejudice.
- ✓ Tolerance.
- ✓ What can be done about prejudice?
- ✓ What has been done about prejudice?
- ✓ What religion says about prejudice and discrimination.

### What is prejudice?

**Prejudice** means to think badly of someone because of their race, religion, colour, gender and so on. It is based on any good reasoning and can be extremely destructive when it inspires actions. An action inspired by prejudice is called **discrimination**.

A person who discriminates on the grounds of prejudice tends to treat everybody of a particular group the same, regardless of their individual qualities or failings. All religions are against prejudice although there are plenty of examples of religion seeming to be prejudice, especially with regard to their attitudes towards other religions and women..

### Different types of prejudice:

*Racism:* is the attitude that people of a certain race are inferior. People with this attitude tend to treat people from this supposed inferior race badly. It may even lead to murder. If done by a country, it can be very destructive, as it has been in countries like Kosovo and Iraq, where a great many people from certain races in these countries have been murdered. This is called 'ethnic cleansing'.

*Sexism:* If a person is discriminated against because of their gender (that is, whether they are male or female), this is called sexism. It has been common in the past for women to be discriminated against by men who have the power to do this. This has led to women being left to look after the home whilst their

husbands have done 'more important things'. As a result, many women have been denied the chance to develop and use their talents for the good of all.

*Religious prejudice:* Although all religions teach about love, sometimes their attitudes towards other religions are prejudice. This comes from an opinion that their religion is superior. Religious prejudice, however, can also happen when a person with no religious beliefs is prejudiced against one or all religions.

*Social:* this is usually against those who are poor.

*Ageism:* some elderly people feel they are discriminated against (as do some young people) due to their age.

*Homophobia:* This is when a person feels they are discriminated against because they are homosexual (gay).

### Why are people prejudiced?

Some people believe that there cannot be any good reason for prejudice. However, people have given the following reasons so you should be able to understand some of them:

- ✓ They may have had a bad experience at the hands of someone from the group that they are prejudiced against.
- ✓ A victim of prejudice themselves.
- ✓ Learned attitudes from the home.
- ✓ Lack of education.
- ✓ A group may be used as 'scapegoats'. This means that they are blamed for a particular problem and are mistreated as a result. Remember, a good example to use is the use of the Jews in the Nazi regime. They were blamed for the situation in Germany after WWI and as a result led to their destruction within WWII.

### Tolerance:

This is the opposite to prejudice. It means that we accept people for who and what they are, and that we accept that they are the same as we are.

### Religious responses:

Religion is against prejudice and so it should follow that all religious people take this line of thought and action. In the past religion has not always followed their own code of conduct, especially with regard to women. Traditionally women

have not been allowed to be religious leaders (this changed in the Church of England in 1984 with the ordination of women) and have not been respected for their opinion.

Attitudes in most religions are changing, but they still exist (for example, in the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Judaism and most Islamic sects). Differences between religions have often been emphasized and fought over, but nowadays several groups exist to understand and encourage tolerance towards people of other faiths.

There are two main figures that are well known to the world whose religions inspired them to protest against prejudice. Look at the table below to help you with this information. For the exam I would try to look in to one person in more depth<sup>1</sup>.

Name:	Martin Luther King:	Mohandas Gandhi.
Religion:	Christian	Hindu
Dates:	1929 - 68	1869 - 1948
Country lived in:	USA	India
Prejudice opposed:	Racial	Social - the caste system
Methods:	Peaceful protest; civil disobedience; political	Peaceful protest; civil disobedience; political
Most remembered for:	Protest marches; 'I have a dream' speech.	Identifying himself with the poor - leading them.
Death:	Assassination.	Assassination.

Christian teaching about prejudice and discrimination:

Christians believe that God created everyone equally, in His own image. Jesus showed no prejudice in treating women and Gentiles (non - Jews) the same as male Jews. Jesus and St. Paul made it clear that the Kingdom of God is open to all. They instructed people to love one another and to treat people with care and respect.

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<sup>1</sup> Two good web sites to help you with this are:  
<http://www.mkgandhi.org/> ( for Mohandas Gandhi).

<http://www.stanford.edu/group/King/>  
 (for information on Martin Luther King)

REMEMBER: These notes can be tied in with the racism notes that you have in your folder. Make sure that these are condensed and in a format that you understand. If you need help with this please ask<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> My e-mail address for school is: [awhite@johncolet.co.uk](mailto:awhite@johncolet.co.uk)

The School phone number is 01296 623348.

These can be used when you are on study leave.