

動物方城市組 第一名 / 黃佳卉 (中文一)

Consider Nick's experience and this conversation from the film.

Nick: If the world's only going to see a fox as shifty and untrustworthy, there's no point in trying to be anything else.

Judy: Nick, you are so much more than that.

In your opinion, is it possible to break free from negative stereotypes that society places upon us? If so, how? If not, why not?

The Harsh Reality

In the following writing passage, I will give two reasons for why I believe it is impossible to break free from negative stereotypes that society places upon us.

Stereotype. A fixed, over-generalized belief about a particular group or class of people. By itself, stereotypes are pretty harmless but they can bring about negative consequences because stereotypes can breed prejudice which will in turn breed discrimination. But this is wrong. It would be unfair to assume that everyone from a group behaves in a certain way, even if it is true that a majority of them do. Besides that, just because a certain behavior is associated with a certain group of people, it doesn't mean that that behavior is limited to them as anybody can behave in that way too, as Judy later realizes. Even bunnies can become savages despite not being predators. There is no such thing as a 'biological component' or 'DNA' that drives and affects our actions. Everyone is a single, unique individual. Everyone is different from each other. We have to recognize that and try to get to know and understand each other instead of judging people by their appearances and blindly putting labels on people we don't even know.

Despite knowing that stereotypes are wrong, why do people still do it? Olive Schreiner once said, "A child sees everything, looks straight at it, examines it, without any preconceived idea; most people, after they are about eleven or twelve, quite lose this power, they see everything through a few preconceived ideas which hang like a veil between them and the outer world." Many have sung praises of a child's innocence and ability to see things for what they truly are. So

why do we lose this innate ability? In my opinion, we lose this ability from the very moment we are born, due to how parents and society treat different genders differently. So even as a child, we already start stereotyping genders: for example, thinking that girls should be neat and tidy but it's alright for boys to be messy and untidy. We also learn to stereotype from the media and daily interactions with other people. In other words, stereotyping isn't something we learn consciously; it is rather something we learn on a subconscious level, which we don't have any control over.

As such, it is very hard to break free of stereotypes as they are something ingrained in our minds. Some are so deeply rooted in our minds that we couldn't even break free if we tried. For example, in the movie, Judy hates being thought of as another 'dumb bunny' and tries hard to prove her worth. She wants to break the idea that bunnies should just become carrot farmers. As she herself is also a victim of stereotyping, she tries hard not to stereotype others. So it is ironic that even she falls into the trap of stereotyping. She says that it burns her up to see people with such 'backward attitudes towards foxes' and yet she walks around Zootopia carrying a fox repellent, because deep down inside she actually also thinks that foxes are sly creatures and one should always be on their guard against them too.

Besides that, how do we break free of the negative stereotype placed upon us if we don't even have the chance to? The scene of young Nick crying outside the Junior Ranger Scout building after being bullied just because he was a fox was really disheartening. He was once like Judy, full of hope and faith in the town that promised 'anyone could be anything'. He left his hometown and came to Zootopia hoping that things would be different and that he could start a new life. But he soon realized that he had been too naïve all along. Nothing has changed and he is still just a 'sly fox'. When he says 'If the world's only gonna see a fox as shifty and untrustworthy, there's no point in trying to be anything else', it really makes the viewers wonder. How many times did he try to be good and trustworthy, only to be met with distrust and suspicion? How much did he suffer throughout the years before giving up on trying to prove himself and changing others perception of him to become who he is now? When no one believes in you, where do you find the strength to keep on believing in yourself?

If stereotypes are held by only a minority of the population, there is a possibility that we might be able to break free. But when it is held by the majority with fixed, unchanging views, all hope is lost. There's a reason people always say there's strength in numbers. As Dawn Bellwether says in the movie, "90% of the population united against a common enemy. We'll be unstoppable." In conclusion, I think it is impossible to break free of the negative stereotypes that society places on us.