

## How Does It Happen?

*An analysis of any problem calls for an understanding of how that problem came to be. In the following four statements—two from girls and two from boys—high school youngsters examine the social structure of our land and try to discover what intolerance is doing to us and why it ever got started in the first place. In their attempt to see the problem whole, these young people reflect an emotional maturity teen-agers rarely are given credit for having.*

THERE ARE BLACK squares and white squares on the checkerboard of our country. Who put them there? Were things always so sharply divided by these clearly defined colors? Why do we hate the Negroes? When I say "we," I mean the white race. I have looked for the answers to some of these questions in myself. I am not exempt from prejudice; I often feel resentment and malicious thoughts towards the Negroes. I fight against it. Where and when did I get these bigoted views? I don't know. My fellows don't know. Nobody knows.

I wasn't born with them. I might have been taught them. How about other Americans? Our southerners say the Negro is inferior; the northerners say, not so. But just the same, they won't give him a decent chance. They may not like to lift the bandage from the stinking and festering wounds that may be under it. The southerners also are hiding—hiding behind their white superiority claims. They're afraid to give way. They're not gaining material things by lynchings, by not allowing the Negroes to sit next to them in the trolleys, the movies, the trains—the churches. No! Not even to allow them to commune with high things like that. They're so small.

What inbred fear do they carry in their hearts? It's not an obvious thing, and they heard it from their fathers, and their fathers before them. What did they tell them?

The Negroes are slaves, no matter how you disguise their status. We brought them over from Africa. They were kings, rulers, and rich men; we made them slaves. Look out! They're always plotting for revenge. Look out! Don't let them learn to read and write. Don't let them have enough to eat. Look out! Don't let them laugh. Don't give them justice. They're dangerous.

Was this the fear that came from the Dark Continent with the slaves?

This is 1945. What keeps the white man's mind full of these forebodings? Even here, in the North, the flickering repugnant gases filter through. A Negro can't get a good job because he is classed as dishonest, untrustworthy, shiftless. How can a person pull himself from a pit by his own boot straps? Shout! Give the blacks a square deal! And yet—there's that lingering, that hanging back, that feeling of pending ostracism by that fellow—that one over there shouting, "Nigger lover!"

Why does he say that?

"I don't like niggers."

Is that why?

What forces this card out?

I don't propose any gigantic plan to have the checkerboard blotted out, to have the colors running every-which-way. Mine is just a plea for self-examination. Just unlock that little door and take a peek inside. No one else can do it for you.

A FEW WEEKS AGO there was a small article in the newspaper. It was not war news of political importance, yet, it was very important in its way. It showed the attitude of many people toward one minority group. The article was about a soldier in the American Army, who had risked his life in one of the hardest battles of this war. This soldier entered a barber shop to get a shave and a haircut. The barber refused to serve him and told him to get out. Why was the soldier refused? Because he happened to be of Japanese descent.

That soldier was an American. He was fighting for his country whose individuals and groups had denied his race, many of whom were citizens, the privileges of a free country. Many of these individuals or groups may even be unaware that an entire Japanese-American division is now serving in Italy.

**THE WAR HAS INCREASED** race tensions but has also made for tolerance. In our city they are preparing to celebrate the return of a Negro hero home from bombing Japanese in the South Pacific. This would have been impossible in the other war.

**I HAVE NO PREJUDICES.** The Japmens are nice people to. But we had to have war. I Like the way they look and how frinley. But we had to have war. I had no prejudices. The Jue [Jew] are very nice people. I see how nice they keep their house. And as little boy where my mother work sent me a lot of toys.

**THE PEOPLE of the United States** should be made to realize that we are fighting a war, a bloody war to end the doctrine of racial superiority. When we persecute another person just because of his color or beliefs, we are helping to destroy all we are fighting for.

At the beginning of the war in the Pacific all the Japanese on the west coast were moved inland. Moved from their homes and farms to cramped quarters in some isolated places. Now that the traitors have been weeded out, these people wish to move back to their former homes. But many west coast residents are saying, "No, let them stay where they are; we don't want them back here!" Another example of intolerance.

An American Legion post on the west coast recently erased the names of former members because they were Japanese. There came a strong protest from American Legion Headquarters, from the War Department and from many servicemen overseas, but this post still refused to restore those memberships.

Tolerance is one of the most important virtues in a democracy. I think that if all the different peoples had practiced a little tolerance, the world would not be in its present predicament. People must learn to live with others, not only those in their own community, but all over the world, if we ever want to have lasting peace.

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## VICIOUS CIRCLE

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When you walk through the halls at our school, the negros bump up against you, but you're the one that has to say, "I'm sorry." In some cases the whites are in the wrong but most of the time the Negroes feel they are superior to the whites. (*White child*)

I think that most white people think they are better than Negro's. The reason I feel the way I do is because you can see and tell by their face's that they look down on us and would do something about it but this is not the South. (*Negro child*)

The Anglo-Saxon think they are superior,

**FOR MY PART** I think most prejudice starts when some ignorant people classify a whole race or nationality of people by some unpleasant happening; to explain, I mean that you might see a headline in a newspaper, "Two Negro Boys Caught While Stealing." Right away people say *All* Negroes are thieves. An Irishman upstairs may come home drunk—again—all Irish are drunkards. A Jewish storekeeper might have

short-changed your sister—all Jews are cheats. Examples of these things may be applied to every nationality, religion, color or creed. If only people would stop and think for a few minutes, and try to figure out a way to help these people instead of condemning them, then there would be no hate or wars in this world.

When several girls and I went into our new class in high school, we looked around at our new classmates. We saw that five of them were colored girls. Mentally we crossed them off of our list of possible friends. But, inside of a week, we found that these girls were very friendly, had wonderful senses of humor, were very intelligent and they were even more likeable than some of the white girls in the class. When it was time to elect class officers, we knew that these girls were to be trusted, and we liked them well enough to elect them to be our class officers along with other white girls.

This is only one example of how one can overcome prejudice, if each one will go half-way and try to understand another.

but they don't realize that we belong in the same race. (*Spanish-American girl*)

I don't like the Jewish people because they think they are better than the Irish people because God was born in Jerusalem. (*White girl*)

Most of them [Negroes] think they are better than us, and that we should give in to them. This, I don't and won't do and believe! We should have our own places and things and of course so should they. No one should be the superior, God made us all equal! (*White child*)

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