Seeking Inclusion

I have always been an avid reader. While preferring fiction, I also felt that reading stories about people’s lives helped me as a counselor to learn about other life experiences and to better understand the reasons that people made the choices that they did. I became more open, tolerant, and less judgmental. Now I realize that I was seeking inclusiveness.

For a fuller understanding of the importance of inclusiveness, we also need to see what exclusiveness is like. I recently read a Danielle Steel novel “The Long Road Home”. The story takes place in the US in the 1950’s and some of the factors of her exclusiveness reflect the times, but not the effects. I will try to provide a summary of her world.

A happy couple have a girl. The mother is immediately not only uncomfortable but finds she does not really want to be mother. She provides only minimum care for the infant. As the girl begins to be able to communicate, the mother is always finding fault with her behavior. Having no other relatives and not allowed to have any interaction with her peers, she simply goes to school, attends to her work and returns home. The mother also begins to physically punish her for some of her behavior. Eventually the mother goes too far, and the father takes his daughter to the ER. She is treated, the doctors are concerned, but do not say anything. Shortly afterwards he leaves and has no contact with his daughter.

The girl’s only understanding about herself is that she is doing something wrong. The mother meets someone else. The mother tells her daughter that they are moving to California, but on the day that is to happen, she takes her daughter to a Catholic orphanage. The mother pays for her stay until is 18, but never makes an inquiry. Nor does the father. While the sisters wonder about this, they say nothing. The girl is treated well there and is truly loved, but the sister’s wish is for her to join them. Of course that is what she does.

While she thoroughly enjoys being a novice and is constantly praised for her work, she remains exclusive in believing that she has done something very wrong. Her involvement with a young priest leads to her being banished. She is sent out into a city she knows nothing about with the clothes on her shoulders and $50.00. Luck finds her seeing a border house with a kind owner and an even kinder retired male border. Both help her to increase her knowledge of the world. Still a conman takes full advantage of her. Nevertheless the boarder was able to make it possible to rid herself of the conman. This finally allows her to understanding the truth about her parents and herself, accepting that she was a good person, inclusiveness, and shrink the exclusiveness.

A second book “Hate Crime” by William Berhardt has a psychiatrist as a witness to help the jury understand how someone can commit a hate crime. At one point he provides his opinion. “ But I think in the long run it has to with the subject…how to say it… exposure to ideas. Never once have I encountered a well-read man who was also a hate-monger.”

We need to not only seek inclusiveness, but embrace it. Door County provides so many opportunities to expand ourselves. There is a variety of theater, music, art, science, and knowledge. Please take advantage and you will find yourself more civil.

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