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### Divisions in our Society

It is human nature to feel threatened by something that we don't fully understand. From the day we are born, we are brought up in a world that is run by fear. Survival is a term that we are all familiar with but have yet to realize how strong of an impact it has on our lives. Though humans have evolved and progressed to the point where we don't often think of our lives as being in constant jeopardy, we still worry about how we can survive socially. Since we all expect and plan to be alive for years to come, we focus most of our energy on how we fit into society. When we become intimidated by things that are different from us we set up barriers, both socially and physically, we alienate those who are unique, and we divide ourselves from anything that doesn't reach the standards of social norms. Though it is becoming more common to celebrate differences, most people are wired to have these negative initial reactions to divergence. What is it that causes humanity to fear themselves and inevitably create disunity? After much contemplation, I determined that the divisions in our society are sculpted by the environments that we grow up in.

As a child, we learn how to distinguish ourselves and we discover our place in the world. For example, someone growing up in the slums of India will have a different perspective on humankind than someone being raised in an affluent community in the United States. At this point in our lives, our minds tell us that we are different from those who don't live like we do.

Our own thoughts betray us and cause us to believe that separation is real. We become convinced that we aren't like them and they aren't like us and that we are just fundamentally different. Feelings of uncertainty arise and we lose sight of the fact that we are all one big human family. Now, we are unable to relate or empathize anymore and we fall to marginalizing them. All these feelings and thoughts can arise in our imaginations because the environments we are brought up in motivate that type of response to differences. When we come into this world we are innocent; born knowing only that our mothers will help us survive and teach us how to adapt to our environment. There is an instinctive need to protect one's family in order to insure that their blood line is continued. This innate disposition is not only human nature but nature for all living things. It was manifested out of our experiences with our environment and has shaped how we react to new and unfamiliar things. The complexities of the human mind have created mental barriers based on past experiences and histories with other humans. We no longer feel comfortable with people who don't look like us, who don't believe the same things we do, who don't act like we do, and who don't think like we do. What defines us as people is the kindness of the human heart and our ability to empathize with others. When did we lose that?

Humans are human because they have limitations. We have the ability to feel so many different types of emotions and the capability of feeling them all at once which can lead us to sometimes overthink situations. We grow up with societal insecurities that make us afraid of things that are different from us and causes us to fear being labeled as "different." These insecurities within ourselves can only do harm. I have experienced it first hand and can attest to the fact that being insecure only clouds a person's vision and furthers the divide between people. Whether it's appearance, belief, or culture, the people of today's society always find a reason to

place judgement on someone. It is absolutely senseless that we feel the need to define someone just because we don't agree with what they identify with. The only reason we see the differences from person to person is because we were taught to see them.

Divisions in our society are inevitable and I have come to accept that. However, what ultimately divides us is our inability to have compassion and understanding for each other. There will always be two sides to every story but who are we to say which side is the right side? In order to have productive conversations and debates, we must be able to recognize that those divisions do in fact exist but remember to always keep an open mind. In the end we are all just people and though we are far from perfect, that is what makes us human. As Morrie Schwartz put it so simply in the book *Tuesdays with Morrie*, "We all have the same beginning—birth—and we all have the same end—death. So how different can we be?" The answer of course is not that different at all.