

Supporting the Enemy

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September 30, 2008
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According to renowned poet Dr. Seuss it is important to “Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don’t matter and those who matter don’t mind.” People do not realize that they will often change who they are in order to accommodate the social trends that majorities of people adopt. Their personal decisions are subconsciously being influenced by the nuances of society. Conforming to society’s pressures can cause an individual to suffer negative and long-lasting effects. Supposed standards that society declares to be true can cause an individual to believe that ignoring them will make them inferior, such as is exemplified in the poem “Warren Pryor”. Likewise, the visual “Torches of Freedom” showcases one of the many methods that large business corporations (who contribute to the shaping of society) use to manipulate their consumers, and subsequently raise the sales of their products. Unfortunately, it is in every individual’s interest to suffer through great lengths in order to pursue the idealisms that society creates for us, and this is best illustrated through the short story “House”. Victims who fall under the pressures of society will always have to suffer through the negative consequences that follow. This is clearly demonstrated through the poetic works of Alden Nowlan.

“Warren Pryor” is a poem that provides examples of what can occur when an individual succumbs to the pressures that society places on them. The lyrics discuss the story of a young graduate who pushes aside his own dreams in order to satisfy his parents’ society-induced dreams. The first stanza reads, “His parents boarded him at school in town, slaving to free him from the stony fields [lines 2-3]”. It is made clear that society and its principles have convinced Warren’s parents that their son would be more successful, and henceforth happier, living in the city, where he can invest his time on working in the corporation fields as opposed to the family

farm. Unfortunately, seeing as Warren is built for the chores of a farm, he begins to feel like “a young bear inside his teller’s cage [line 14]” and his parents’ decision to follow the trends of society cost him his happiness, harming instead of helping him. Not only do his parents get affected by the principles that society lays out for them, but Warren himself, gets affected as well. He gets the impression, from society, that young individuals must adopt the same opinions as their parents’. Had he taken the time to think about what he wanted, and realized that all his parents wanted for him was to be happy, he might have spared himself the wasted time studying and improved his knowledge of life on a farm. Warren’s adaption to the incorrect society leaves him with none of his original desires. Regrettably, these negative consequences affect the bank he works at as well. Warren’s distaste toward his job could affect his performance which would cost the bank a lot of money in the long run. Just as the consequences of conforming to society’s rationales are evident through the analysis of Alden Nowlan’s poem, so are they evident through the analysis of the marketing campaign “Torches of Freedom”.

The visual, thought up by marketing campaigner Edward Bernays, illustrates how corporations manipulate their consumers to help improve the sales of their products. The advertisement features an attractive woman wearing very little clothing with puckered red lips and a wavy bob-like hairstyle. A heading reads “An Ancient Prejudice Has Been Removed”, referring to the right for women to smoke in public. This campaign was called “Torches of Freedom”. The idea was very appealing to women in the 1920s, because it taught them to flaunt their new freedoms by lighting a cigarette in public whenever possible. Bernays was able to further the success of a cigarette company with the help of Freud’s psychological techniques. By using the beautiful lady as the Lucky Strike Cigarettes spokeswoman, Bernays was able to

convince the female public that inhaling the product's deadly toxins would help make them look just as appealing. However, the advert attracted the female eye, not only because of their desire for beauty, but for the idea that smoking in public would allow them to display their right for equality in the world. Many women followed suite thinking that they were standing up for the rights that they were entitled to. It wasn't until several years later, when people discovered the negative and long-lasting effects of smoking, that this campaign was considered another one of society's manipulations. Although this visual was a big contribution toward the development of a new and better way of life, it unfortunately also harmed the populace by creating what later turned into a big health-affecting addiction. Societal pressures can seriously harm the people who give in to its principles, and this is presented through the short story, "House", just as it is through the "Torches of Freedom" visual.

"House" exhibits an entertaining representation of how people can get negatively affected, should they resort to following the trends of mainstream society. The story accounts the journey of a four member family who follow the father's dreams in an attempt to fit into their society. Jane Rule, author of the short story, introduces Harry, the father, with him complaining about his wife's singularity. "Other women *want* to buy houses," he complains. "Other women *want* their kids to have a yard to play in. They like to reupholster their *own* furniture. [Page 21]" The pressure that society places on him leads him to believe that his wife is "abnormal". Through his eyes, his wife is not as respectable seeing as she does not meet the stereotypical standards of an ordinary housewife. This causes him to act negatively toward Anne. He also forces his society-influenced dreams on his family, who do not agree with them. Throughout the story, Harry dreams about owning a bigger house with a garden to match those that his superiors own. After

achieving his dream, he realizes that owning a bigger house was not as much of a desirable dream as it should have been in his mind. Societal pressure subtly makes Harry conform to its principles as he learns that what is considered normal for some people, will always be considered abnormal to others. Unfortunately, he is left with a huge debt, before he can learn so.

The short story “House” effectively describes the negative consequences that can occur should a person fall under the harsh pressures of society. Similarly, the visual “Torches of Freedom” sets a substantial example of how society can manipulate the minds of individuals to accommodate the desires of larger and more dominating figures, just as the words of “Warren Peace” showcases how society can convince individuals to believe that ignoring its principles will make them inferior. Those who conform to the rules that society creates for us can suffer from long-lasting and unfortunate effects. Therefore, it is important for an individual to understand that the ideas that society makes seem ideal are not necessarily beneficial for everyone. What might be beneficial for one person could be detrimental for the next and that to avoid these dangerous encounters, a person needs only to remember to influence society themselves, rather than be influenced by it. Should an individual master the art of doing so, he or she will be sure to lead a happy, unique and successful future.

Works Cited

SHORT STORY:

Rule, Jane. “House”
Short Stories II.
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PHOTOGRAPHS:

http://images-cdn01.associatedcontent.com/image/A1111/111197/300_111197.jpg