

Writing Assignment #2

Please provide a one-page written response to each of the following three visualizations regarding race, gender and sexuality issues.

A. RACE VISUALIZATION

I want to invite you to participate in an exercise in imagination that concerns the world we inhabit. It will give you the opportunity to experience a different "reality" than the one you live with every day. Please concentrate on how you are feeling, not what you think. Don't rationalize or analyze or intellectualize, simply feel. Ask yourself, what are the emotions affecting you. All that is required is that you imaginatively enter this new world and allow yourself to experience it. Please relax, get comfortable, and keep your current surroundings from being too distracting. You may read the visualization or have someone read it to you as you use your imagination.

Please relax and imagine the world that I will be describing. You live in a world where people of color (POC) have the control. African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans and other POC are the leaders, they make the laws, they control the economy. POC are the majority of our senators, our congresspersons, the heads of most all the major corporations. They are our university presidents, our school administrators, most of our church leaders. The President of the United States (and all previous presidents) is a man of color and 90% of his cabinet is composed of POC.

Our neighborhoods and all our communities are made up of POC. There are small isolated pockets of white communities usually in the poorer sections of the towns and cities.

POC are everywhere. When you go to your bank, you will know that a person of color is in charge and will make decisions about your loan. When you take your clothes to the dry cleaner, your shoes to the repair shop, when you put gas in your car, it is a person of color with whom you are interacting for these services. Indeed, almost everyone you encounter in the course of your day-to-day routine is a person of color.

Your local supermarket stocks food that reflects the diet and customs of POC. You have to search to find goods that are more to your liking ...although recently some of the major food chains have set aside one aisle for the kind of foods white people eat.

Drug stores carry medications and products geared toward POC. Bandages, for instance, are available only in shades of brown. The color "flesh" is a range from tan to black. Cosmetics are made only for skin tones ranging from yellows to browns. It is very hard to find products for the "white" skin.

As you turn on the TV, you see POC. The ads in the newspapers, TV commercials, and fashion magazines show POC. TV sitcoms, dramas, soap operas, and family shows depict the tragedies, comedies, and ordinary lives of POC...occasionally letting someone white be a part of the experience of POC. At the movies, POC have most of the leading roles...and the supporting roles. It is not common to see white actors (except in the role of a criminal)... and pretty rare for there to be a "white" movie. Most POC would rather watch their own people on TV and in the movies, and since they control the industry...they are the producers and directors and the script writers...that's the way it is.

When you turn on the news you learn about POC. When you see newscasts about crime and drugs in the inner cities, it is white people you see. In fact, when newspapers report crime, they always point out the race of the perpetrator is white. White people complain that the news and media are biased against them. They are allowed to complain. POC believe in free speech...but their complaints are seen as whining and mostly they are not taken seriously, so very little is ever done about the complaints.

POC are considered the model for being handsome and beautiful. Dark hair, dark eyes, and all the various shades of skin from yellow to red to tan to browns are seen as beautiful. Women of color are considered to be the most desirable and have always been held up as the standard of female attractiveness. White people are seen as pale and unattractive. Once in a while, a white person comes along who has dark, curly hair and resembles a person of color...usually biracial...and they might get a job as a model or actor...but usually only if their features could pass for POC.

POC are not only considered to be the most attractive, but also are the most intelligent, most industrious, and the most creative. You know very little about white history...contributions of whites to the development of this country or this world. You know a lot about the history of POC. All through school, the teachers paid more attention to the students of color. They were seen as the brightest and most gifted. Teachers reinforced them for their achievements and pretty much ignored you if you were white, even if you did as well as the students of color...it was a "fluke."

Counselors have even conducted research confirming the inferiority of white people. White people just can't seem to get it together. Scholars have tried to figure out why. White people say they know what the problem is...it is racism and discrimination. Most POC just don't buy it...they claim that everything is equal. All this business about racism really irks a lot of POC. After all they have done for the white people. If white people are so unhappy here, why don't they just go back to Europe where they came from.

Allow yourself to spend a few minutes continuing to imagine this world you live in. Notice what feelings and thoughts come up for you, and write a one-page response to this visualization. Please submit with admission materials.

B. GENDER VISUALIZATION

I want to invite you to participate in an exercise in imagination that concerns the world we inhabit. It will give you the opportunity to experience a different "reality" than the one you live with every day. Please concentrate on how you are feeling, not what you think. Don't rationalize or analyze or intellectualize, simply feel. Ask yourself, what are the emotions affecting you. All that is required is that you imaginatively enter this new world and allow yourself to experience it. Please relax, get comfortable, and keep your current surroundings from being too distracting. You may read the visualization or have someone read it to you as you use your imagination.

In this world you are entering, the word "woman" is the term that is used for humanity. Womankind refers to everyone. "Man" is included in "woman" and everyone knows that the word "woman" means everyone.

The courses you took in school have titles like "The Herstory of Women"; "Women and the Biosphere"; "Woman and God". Our Bill of Rights states that "all women are created equal".

Recall that everything you have ever read all your life uses only female pronouns, "she and her", meaning both girls and boys, both women and men.

Consider the meaning of this basic fact of language to you as a woman. Think of it always being this way, everyday of your life. Feel the ever presence of woman and feel the non-presence of man. Absorb what it tells you about the importance and value of being a woman ...of being a man.

Recall that most of the voices of authority that you have heard on the radio and seen on TV are women. Remember that you have 94 plus female senators out of 100 representing you in the Senate. Know that only 28 members of Congress are men (We call all people in congress "congresswomen", of course, even the few men). Just as we refer to all of the committee chairs as "chairwomen"... no matter what their gender. It is understood that this world includes men, and policewomen, firewomen, mailwomen, and so on.

Consider the fact that women are the leaders, the power-centers, the prime movers. But remember "behind every successful woman there is a man".

If you are female, when you were first born, everyone was really pleased; it is more desirable to have a little girl than a boy. As you were growing up, the books you read had stories of girls doing exciting things while the boys watched or cried or asked for help. When you watched TV, you identified with all women. Captain Marvel, Superwoman, all the heroes who saved the day were women. It's no wonder that the little boys wanted to be little girls too and do the things little girls do.

In church the talk is of God the Mother. The minister, priest, or rabbi is a woman, the ushers are women, they lay leaders are primarily women (actually they are called lay women ...even the male lay leaders). You sing songs like "Rise Up O Women of God" and hear sermons about sisterhood.

In school you were given lots of attention for your ability (the boys were given attention for their appearance primarily) and you were told that you could be anything you wanted to be. After all, look at the Presidents of the United States (all women of course) who had started out from a background just like yours. You could be a doctor, an astronaut, a truck driver, a pilot, an attorney, president of IBM or any big company an electrician, the pope, or anything in the world you wanted to be.

As a woman, your name doesn't change if you enter into a marriage partnership; your husband's name changes. Your children have your name, so you carry on the family name...which is of course the name of your mother and your grandmother, etc. As an adult, you are always referred to as "woman". The men, though are often called "boys"...for example, in medical settings, the nurses are referred to as the "boys" as are the receptionists and the secretaries are the "boys in the office".

Being a female is greatly valued. Men try to take on the characteristics of females because they are rewarded more for them. Most women don't want to be like men, though. Male characteristics are seen as less valuable.

Most of the men don't argue with the way things are. If they do, women might stop taking care of them and everyone knows they have to be taken care of and they need women. After all women write the laws, run the government, control the banks and other institutions. Women run the world (but tell the men that they do through sayings like "the hand that rocks the cradle rules

the world". Do you know that men did not even get to vote until approximately 80 years ago. They could not understand the real issues. Oh well, those were the good old days.

Allow yourself to spend a few minutes continuing to imagine this world you live in. Notice what feelings and thoughts come up for you, and write a one-page response to this visualization. Please submit with admission materials.

C. SEXUALITY VISUALIZATION

I want to invite you to participate in an exercise in imagination that concerns the world we inhabit. It will give you the opportunity to experience a different "reality" than the one you live with every day. Please concentrate on how you are feeling, not what you think. Don't rationalize or analyze or intellectualize, simply feel. Ask yourself, what are the emotions affecting you. All that is required is that you imaginatively enter this new world and allow yourself to experience it. Please relax, get comfortable, and keep your current surroundings from being too distracting. You may read the visualization or have someone read it to you as you use your imagination.

In the world you are imagining things are very different than the world you are used to. Because it is different, it requires you to stretch your experience. Let yourself experience and imagine as fully as you can, rather than judge what comes up, just notice that you have the feeling.

Imagine for a while that you live in a society in which the majority of the people are gay and lesbian. The entire society is set up for homosexuality. It is the way things are. Children (from adoption, artificial insemination, etc.) are raised by parents who are both women or both men. Your parents are gay, your peers are all gay. When you were younger, you were not sure you had ever met anyone who is not gay or lesbian. BUT, you are heterosexual.

Daily you "hide" and try to "pass" for lesbian or gay. You talk about the person you are dating making sure that you use a pronoun of the same gender you are. You have to make sure you don't "slip" and use the wrong pronoun. If you are a woman you are very afraid they will find out that you are in love with a man. If you are a man, you fear that they will find out that you are in love with a woman.

You only have a couple of places in the city or town where you live that you can go with your partner and "be yourself". Those places are designed for heterosexual people. Sometimes you are afraid even to go there. What if someone "outs" you? What if someone is in there "spying"? You have trouble trusting that you are safe even in the places where others are "like" you.

Your colleagues have pictures of their same sex partners on their desks. If you were to put a picture on your desk of your partner, you would be accused of "flaunting" your heterosexuality, and you might well be fired.

Lots of people around you tell "straight" jokes and expect that you will laugh. Everyone knows that heterosexuals are perverts. People also talk about who you are--a heterosexual--as only about what you do sexually with someone. They don't have any idea there is much more than that. You were a heterosexual when you were not sexually active, and even as an adult, you have had times in your life when you were celibate and you are still a heterosexual. Being a heterosexual is MUCH more than just about what happens under the covers in one's bed. You

know that and you don't believe that others--those in the dominant culture--are willing to know that.

Your parents--like most parents--are lesbian or gay, so you can't even share with them your pain of being a member of a marginalized group.

You go to church--where a homosexual minister, priest, or rabbi tells the congregation that heterosexuals are wicked and sinful and wrong--saying that who you are is a sin--your "being" is wicked. You know that you are not wicked and that you did not choose your sexual orientation. You didn't choose to be heterosexual and yet it is hard not to integrate all of the negative messages.

When you were younger, you dated same sex people--you tried to be attracted to them. You really WANTED to be homosexual. You prayed to be different; you even thought about killing yourself when you realized that you couldn't change the fact that you were heterosexual and the world hates heterosexuals. You got a lot of pressure from family and friends to date and marry someone of the same sex. They are always trying to fix you up.

The media reflects pretty exclusively same-sex couples. Men on the screen and in the magazines are kissing men--women are kissing women. All of the stories told to children center around men finding men and women finding women to love. There was no one when you were growing up who would talk about the fact that there are some people who are NOT attracted to the same sex. You had no one to tell you how a heterosexual is supposed to feel or be. There were/are no role models.

In this world you--as a heterosexual--must ALWAYS be aware of what you are saying, of how you act, of who you talk with, of how you walk, of how you dress, of how you talk. You have to closely study lesbians and gays to try to act and walk and talk like them. You don't hang out with heterosexuals in public--just in case someone might "peg" you as heterosexual. You wonder "will I EVER be free to openly love my partner?" "Will I ever be free to be who I am without fearing that I will lose my job?" "Will I ever be free to share my life openly with my parents and my siblings?" "Will I ever be respected for being who I am--the whole of who I am?" You wonder....

Allow yourself to spend a few minutes continuing to Imagine this world you live in. Notice what feelings and thoughts come up for you, and write a one-page response to this visualization. Please submit with admission materials.