Effects of Discrimination at How One Appear to Others in “The Dollshouse” and “What Do You Remember of the Evacuation”

The constant fear of how you appear to others can create a different outlook in life. But,

What are the effects of discrimination on the characters? “The Dollshouse”, written by Katherine Mansfield, tells a story of a group of children name the Burnells who lives in a society separated by what their class is, and they judge them based on how one may appear to others. The poem, “What Do You Remember of the Evacuation”, by Joy Kogawa, is a poem set during World War II where the poet experiences discrimination towards her culture and she starts to feel shame of herself and wanting to be accepted. Both “The Dollshouse” and “What Do You Remember of the Evacuation” tells a story of how one may be effected by discrimination based on one’s appearance. However, “The Dollshouse” differs in how one is effected by class distinctions and how they might appear to others; meanwhile, “What Do You Remember of the Evacuation” tells a story about when going through extreme discrimination of one’s culture, may lead in shame of their own identity. Regardless, they both show how one feel shame, and lack of acceptance to anyone who has more power. In both of the sources, they show how traumatizing discrimination can have on oneself.

In both sources, they tell a story of how one feels shame due to the effects of discrimination. In “The Dollshouse” the Kelveys feel shame of the social status they are set in the society. During school, Lena Burnell had come up to Lil Kelvey and said, “Is it true you’re going to be a servant when you grow up, Lil Kelvey?” (Mansfield, pg. 168). Lil never spoke back to her, instead she stood there: “Dead silence” (Mansfield, pg. 168). The moment when Lena says those things to Lil, she chose not to answer and had pulled a “silly, shamefaced smile” (Mansfield, pg. 168). The constant treatment the Kelveys receive from the Burnells, made them feel a shamed of everything about themselves, how “they were the daughters of a washer women and a jailbird” (Mansfield, pg. 166). They are not as fortunate to receive a wealthy job, which establishes the kids being humiliationed to have parents that are not like others. In contrast, in the poem “What Do You Remember of the Evacuation”, the poet establishes the feeling of shame from the way her culture was treated by the Caucasian group, resulting in her wanting to be white. Being surrounded by people who supposedly have more power, and superiority over others in the society, being constantly reminding that your culture is wrong, she begins to feel less and less love for herself and wants to be white to gain social acceptance. The Caucasian group feel discomfort: “Who said, ‘Don’t insult me’ when I proudly wrote my name in Japanese” (Kogawa, 32-33). When Joy did something that she had though was right and wanted to show her culture through writing, she immediately got put down by the white people. When the war ended, the discrimination continues to the point where she feels a shamed of her own identity and doesn’t like being herself. When Joy states, “I prayed to God who loves/All children in his sight/ That I might be white” (Kogawa, 37-39). She feels as though that her culture and her self-identity is a shame to everyone, including God, who she thinks does not love her the same as everyone else. Ultimately, the two stories give us an insight as to how the protagonist encounter shame from the mistreatment of others

Similarly, the two sources demonstrate the idea that a lack of acceptance as an effect on the characters when there is discrimination. In the story, “The Dollshouse”, whenever the Burnells pass by the Kelveys, they would ignore them like there is no one there, they were “shunned by everyone” (Mansfield, pg. 168) including the teachers. Many of the Burnells were not allowed to speak to the Kelveys. Even the “teachers had a special voice for them, and a special smile for the other children when Lil Kelvey camp up to her desk with a bunch of dreadfully common-looking flowers” (Mansfield, pg. 166). The author states, “They walked past the Kelveys with their head in the air, and as they set the fashion in all matters of behavior” (Mansfield, pg. 168). From the way the Burnells treat the Kelveys whenever their around, they make themselves appear more superior than them, and since the Kelveys are in the lower class, it is obvious that they have a lack of acceptance from the society. Even though when it seems like the Burnells do not accept the Kelveys, they also experience it themselves. When Kezia and Isabell had seen the dollhouse, they decided to spread the word and invite others to see it. Once Isabell and Kezia were done explaining the dollhouse to the other kids, Isabell selected “Emmie Cole and Lena Logan. But when the others knew they were all to have a chance” (Mansfield, pg. 167). The only people she had not given a chance to were “only the little Kelveys” (Mansfield, pg. 167) as they were “moved away forgotten; there was nothing more for them to hear” (Mansfield, pg. 167). it is clear to say that Isabell only chose older siblings to get the chance in seeing the dollhouse, and she did not hesitate to not include the younger ones in the family. Whereas, in the poem “What Do You Remember of the Evacuation”, the discrimination during war towards the Japanese people, was enough to say that the Caucasian group in B.C continue to discriminate Kogawa and her culture. When war took place, the Japanese “families were made to move in two hours/Abandoning everything, leaving pets/And possessions at gun point” (11-15). The white people did not want to encounter with the Japanese people, because of their culture and color. It resulted in taking them away and forcing them to abandon possessions behind. The poet states, “When war was over but Lorrain/And her friends spat on us anyway” (35-36). After the war ended, they had not stop throwing discriminatory statements about Kogawa. This had lead her to the point where she “prayed to God who loves/All children in his sight/That I might be white” (37-39). The lack of acceptance from the Caucasian group in B.C for her culture, resulted her in praying to God that she feels a shamed of her own culture and wanting to be white because, she thinks being white is normal, and that it will help her be accepted by the society. To sum up, the sources demonstrates how the lack of acceptance can be the effects of discrimination.

In conclusion, there are various way in how discrimination can affect one person. In “The Dollshouse”, the Burnells are obsessive over how one appear to others, whereas, the poem, “What Do You Remember of the Evacuation”, Kogawa experiences extreme discrimination of her culture, leading her to feel shame of her own identity. in “The Dollshouse”, one in the lower status may feel shame due to their social status, and lack of acceptance for one who is different. In contrast, “What Do You Remember of the Evacuation” show how one establish shame in their culture from extreme discrimination, and the lack of consideration from the Caucasian people due to the fact of an event that has caused such hatred against people who different in culture. Regardless of the differences between the two sources, effects of extreme discrimination and the constant reminder of how you are different can have a huge impact on one’s outlook on their selves.