

58 Years to Go
By: Sydney Lawrence

“The year was 2081, and everyone was finally equal,” (Kurt Vonnegut). We have 58 years to go. We have 58 years to change, for government to shift, for individuals to make a stand, for every aspect of life to change. For acceptance to prevail at last.

For now, we continue that change, continue to work towards complete acceptance. In my life, I grew up thinking we were equal. That was, until I got older, and I realized how different people truly were. I had lived in a blind, cookie-cutter world, and a door had opened to the differences that made the world a better place.

Everyone is different in some way, shape, or form. Some people have mental / physical disabilities, people have different skin colors, and people have different backgrounds with different religions and different ideas.

People tend to have the misconception that acceptance and equality can only happen when everyone is the same, but this isn't true. Acceptance can only be achieved when everyone is treated fairly no matter how different they are.

I have always been treated fairly, even though I'm not like everyone else. I have a speech impediment that doesn't make speaking to people the easiest thing in the world, but in school, the people around me never made fun of me because of the way I talk. In other places, in other parts of this country, this state, I would have been made fun of, bullied, for something like this, like so many other people in the world. But I was treated equally, a luxury not many people have the privilege to experience.

And this is the problem. Being treated equally shouldn't be a luxury. Escaping the wrath of bullies shouldn't only be for those who are lucky. This should be extended to everyone, no matter what differences they have, no matter how old they are or where they call home.

But there will always be stereotypes and social stigmas that precede us when we meet new people. This is why it is so important for everyone to get together and share their experiences so everyone can better understand each other, and it's much easier to treat others equally when you know what they've been through, that they don't fit the stereotypes too many believe true.

It isn't just me who has felt the impact of this. The people I call my friends have their differences. I have one friend with ADHD. She's going to be a doctor, and she's much smarter than I could ever hope to be. She is treated as an equal, by me and by others around her, even though she's different, and I can only hope that nothing is ever a barrier holding her back because of her ADHD.

I have another friend who's blind, and she's an inspiration to me and to the other people around her. She never lets it hold her back, and no one treats her any differently.

Sadly, Goshen as a whole isn't as accepting as I've experienced. Specifically, in government, not everyone gets involved. Not everyone speaks up so their voices are heard.

People feel as though they aren't encouraged to speak up and join the conversations, so they tend to take a step back and shy away from telling their stories, their experiences.

There cannot be acceptance of all differences unless everyone comes together and learns to understand each other first-hand.

The CRC principles of cultivating constructive communication and promoting the acceptance of differences go hand-in-hand.

For there to be any hope of complete acceptance and equality in our community, there needs to be communication between everyone in the community because everyone has differences, and it is those differences that need to be acknowledged to bring everyone together in complete acceptance.

We have 58 years to go. We have 58 years for there to be the necessary communication to finally live in a world in which acceptance is felt in all aspects of life, in all forms of government, in all businesses, in all schools. We have 58 years for everyone to feel accepted.