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Harmful Labeling for One is Harmful Labeling for All

Labeling has become a worldwide phenomenon with the internet connecting us all to each other and publishing our comments, photos and thoughts forever. Like the spread of disease, Labeling has become an epidemic proliferated by social media, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Labeling has existed for many years throughout history in many forms, from class structure to slavery, biasness to racism. The definition of labeling, according to DICTIONARY.COM is, " a word or phrase indicating that what follows belongs in a particular category or classification".[i] Forms of labeling have been used by the controlling groups of people in power to exert a dominance over another group of people that they wish to suppress. History is full of examples that shows from the time of the Egyptians, Nazi's and our own American Jim Crow Laws, the harmful effects of labeling to our current day identity politics, gender equality and cyber bullying.

This paper will discuss what it means to label someone and what is the impact it has on people, as well as to offer solutions to what can be done to address the negative impact of labeling. Today, we face these same challenges that have plagued us throughout history in a modern and technological world that expedites all types of labels on people within seconds. Blogs and posts, texts and tweets can instantly "cast aspersions"[ii] and labels on people from race to religion, skin color to sexual orientation, social groups, political affiliation, gender, social class, country of origin to immigration. Dr. Martin Luther King**,** Jr**.** stated it best when he said, " I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."[iii]

The consequences of labeling can have long lasting emotional and even tragic suicidal effects on individuals. "Trolling"[iv] and internet shaming are forms of cyber bullying that we hear of in the news causing teenage suicide to become a more frequent problem from social media. Even if the label that is placed on someone is later removed and stated to be untrue, the mere posting of it can cause emotional damage to someone's reputation among their peers in the community and schools. The First Lady Melania Trump, has focused her cause against cyber bullying with her "Be Best Campaign"[v] traveling across the country and holding conferences and workshops for youth and teens. She stated, "It remains our generation's moral imperative to take responsibility and help our children manage the many issues they are facing today, including encouraging positive social, emotional, and physical habits...".[vi]

Social stereotyping promotes bias ideas and is prejudicial against people based on how they look. Political groups profile portions of our population to create advertisement campaigns, but this practice publically and politically suppresses voices and ideas of individuals. This narrow minded thinking shuts down people from giving ideas and individual viewpoint; this is identity politics at its worst. Immediately labeling a person with political term of Democrat or Republican, Conservative or Liberal, or being called a Communist or Socialist, projects conclusions without listening to free flow of ideas and thoughts which is contrary to our democratic process and debate. We must come up with ideas and solutions to address the negative impact of labeling people in groups. We must all strive to do better by refraining from using such labeling terms which closes off our minds from free and open discussion. We must practice inclusion rather than exclusion because, it is our multicultural and diverse political system, the very essence of our freedom of expression that makes our democracy work.

In our conversations, in our schools, and our communities, we should make people aware of this problem and its impacts; and why need to stop it. For example, if you witness a person using labeling in a conversation, lecture, debate, or just everyday talk, you should make them aware that they need to stop labeling because it is harmful, illogical, and wrong. You should correct them by pointing out the term they are using as labeling, and demand that they correct and retract their statement, as well as apologize for using the labeling term. If they refuse to retract and correct the labeling term in their statement you can end the conversation and resume when they stop using the labeling term: you can or cancel the subscription, boycott the publication, or stop following them on social media. For those suffering from the effects of labeling we should create a hotline to report labeling since it can be viewed as a form of bullying. In schools, work places, social media and government institutions, anti-bullying policies and procedures should be provided and followed to provide protection and awareness to this problem.

Recently, Facebook has been under pressure for failing to provide individual protection and knowledge as to how our personal information on the social media is used and tracked, followed and advertised by essentially labeling us into categories and selling that targeted information. Currently, the social media groups are self-regulated but governmental regulation has been suggested to protect the consumers identity and set basic guidelines to expand the protection of hateful speech and cyber bullying. Identification and awareness of the problem are always the first step in the right direction but providing positive support groups, community organizations, and crisis hot lines to reach out to those in need will all help alleviate the physical and emotional harm from labeling.

The solution is that we can all take personal responsibility for comments and replies we do on social media. First, before pushing send take a moment to think about what type of message we want to convey and how it would affect someone. In the heat of the moment, things may be said that are harmful and hurtful that we regret. I suggest pausing for a few minutes before replying to a text, post or tweet to allow cooler heads to prevail. Sometimes, things are better unsaid than a quick reply with a witty comment which is unnecessary. By allowing time to pass before replying should allow you the time to think of the consequences before you post something. It is difficult to un-ring a bell once it has been rung, and if you still feel the same way about your comment then all you have lost is a brief moment in time but gained thoughtfulness about how your comments affects others. Second, with help of technology, I suggest in the future a phone application that will allow us all to re-read our comments and verify that we wish to send the message as is or edit it, after we have been given a second chance to read it. Finally, I suggest additional social campaigns and propose that we adopt my original slogan and title of this essay : ***Harmful labeling for one is harmful labeling for all !*** We can overcome the use of labeling by promoting education and awareness, conducting community workshops and clinics as well as school essay and speech contests to foster healthy discussions.

The world is large place but with modern technology we can reach every corner of it faster than ever before, we must act now and place protections on the internet, social media from malicious people that troll others looking to shame and label groups by oppressing our freedom of expression. We must reach the conclusion to balance technology and protection by providing easy access to remove harmful and hateful labeling. There is no place for statements of bullying on social media platforms and we must demand immediate and permanent removal.

End Notes & Refernces

[i] Label | Define Label at Dictionary.com
https://**www.dictionary.com/browse/label** *viewed on 2/12/2019.*
Definition of labeling a word or phrase indicating that what follows belongs in a particular
category or classification.

[ii] Cast Aspersions | Definition of Cast Aspersions by Merriam ...
https://**www.merriam-webster.com**/dictionary/cast aspersions *viewed on 2/12/2019.*
Definition of cast aspersions. formal. : to say harsh critical things about someone or someone's
character. He tried to discuss his political opponents respectfully, without casting aspersions.

[iii] Martin Luther King, Jr. - Famous Quotes at BrainyQuote
https://**www.brainyquote.com**/quotes/martin_luther_king_jr_115056 *viewed on 2/12/2019.*
Martin Luther King, **Jr**. Quotes I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in
a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their
character.

[iv] Urban Dictionary: Internet Troll
https://www.**urbandictionary**.com/define.php?term=Internet Troll *viewed on 2/12/2019.*
Internet Troll. An internet troll is an attention whore who posts stupid comments onto websites in
an attempt to get a reaction towards him (usually negative) and in an attempt to get someone else
to acknowledge their pathetic, insignificant lives since they don't receive that sort of attention in
real life.

[v] BE BEST - whitehouse.gov
https://**www.whitehouse.gov**/bebest *viewed on 2/12/2019.*

[vi] BE BEST - whitehouse.gov
https://**www.whitehouse.gov**/bebest *viewed on 2/12/2019.*
Quote. It remains our generation's moral imperative to take responsibility and help our children
manage the many issues they are facing today, including encouraging positive social, ...