

# The Social Experiment

*How people treat you is their karma; how you react is yours. ~ Wayne Dyer*

History continues to repeat itself until we wake up and recognize our part in thwarting the cycle of collective evolution. Until we stop making excuses for our actions or inactions, we will always be a slave to our past thinking, to how we treat each other and ourselves. Yes, although you might not see every aspect of it in our history books, discrimination still lives in the south, in the north and in the hearts of mankind. Most of us are familiar with the issues of the African American. Our black community discriminated against since our earliest roots on this continent, sits alongside the Native Americans culture. What's not in the forefront is that in the 1800's the Irish were the main target of discrimination in NY, due to their steady influx during the potato famine. There are too many to mention them all, but other minority groups were hit hard with the discrimination ax at that same time. I don't want to leave anyone out, but let's jump ahead to the out-of-work itinerates of the 1930's made so by the Great Depression. During WWII had its own discrimination arena, while we were fighting to save the Jewish Community in 1940's Germany, they were key targets of discrimination here, (see Gentleman's Agreement). At the same time, the American Japanese were *relocated* for their own good; *they say...*the list is very long.

I purposely don't watch the news, but every once in a while I stumble across a blatant example of the darkness of our collective shadow and see it is still alive and kicking. This morning I got a disturbing message from a friend on Facebook, with a link that knocked my socks off. The message was simply stated: *This video is freaken awful!* The YouTube video shows an experiment into the social emotional arena of shopping. This microcosm of our humanity plays out scenes that are not new. The video is a simple expose into discrimination practices in a high end shop in NY, it could have been anywhere. Fortunately, the discrimination in this case was fake; they used actors in the experiment. None-the-less, the results were staggeringly real. The witnesses to the events, were not actors, they were real people shopping. For the most part they turned their back on a fellow human being who was obviously being discriminated against, who was in great emotional pain.

The video is entitled, ***Shopping While Black - Social Experiment***

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yAkDHuimJRc> and will no doubt go by way of the rest of the experiments, because it will be dismissed as hype, fading away into oblivion. The truth is we just don't like change, not good change or any kind of change. As soon as we do something to change our lives, those old gremlins start chattering in our ear or we find a person to act as a gremlin for us, to take us back to a more *comfortable place* in time where we know how everything works. This experimenter consciously or unconsciously recreated a scene from [Pretty Woman](#) with Richard Gere and Julia Roberts. In the movie, Julia playing the part of a prostitute who was discriminated against in the same way, by store clerks as she tried to buy a dress in a high end shop on Rodeo Drive. Gere comes to Julia's rescue in the movie. Unfortunately, no one came to this woman's rescue in the video above, a real, true to life

snapshot of society. The social video experiment is not just about racism and discrimination, but more about how so few people stand clearly for injustice carried out by authority figures, in this case, a store manager and her associates.

Discrimination rears its head for anyone or anything different, whether its race, class level, sexual preference, body weight and other physical features. It doesn't matter, if it is different, our collective shadow rears up, blinding truth, and allowing injustice. One lady said it all, "Yes, I saw it, but it wasn't any of my business." In fairness, we saw both ends of the spectrum. Another woman fell apart completely and had to be told that it was an experiment. There are many such stories in our history and several experiments like this one. My first experience with experiments of this nature was in the mid 1970's. At that time, I was preparing for an internship at a local psychiatric facility, so anything related to human relations or behavior got my undivided attention.

I watched the intense 1975 TV-movie, hardly breathing. ***The Tenth Level*** starred [William Shatner](#) and showcased an infamous and now classic 1960's research study on obedience conducted by Dr. Stanley Milgram, a Yale professor. The study measured the willingness of study participants to obey an authority figure who instructed them to perform acts that conflicted with their personal conscience. Volunteers were told by this authority figure to deliver electric shocks to another person as punishment during an academic "test." No actual shocks were given; the "punished" person faked increasingly emotional reactions. Sixty-five percent of the volunteers administered shocks that could be fatal, astounding a generation of psychologists. These were everyday people, and they carried horrendous guilt for years. The study confirmed that over 60% of the population would follow leaders like Hitler, just because an authority figure told them so. What does this have to do with racism? Everything...some people still don't think for themselves, mired in stereotypes, they refuse to get involved, still looking for an authority figure to decide for them. I ask you, have we learned anything over the years about our human condition?

Seems that there is a part of humanity that is stuck in time, and the time has come to decide. The decision involves becoming an awakened participant in life. Fully awake, intellectually aware, and spiritually and emotionally alive. We can't be spiritually attuned without letting go of those past practices in society, within families and community that don't serve our combined good, for humanity, and for our planet. That means thinking outside your familial and societal box for the greater good. Look beyond yourself, if it truly doesn't serve yourself or humanity; then break the chains of your history. What's it going to be? Programmed community robots or thinking adults?

I'm convinced that art and cinema will be the driving force for change in our future. The force that leads the way, displaying our collective shadow for all to see and saying stop to the archaic gremlins in our ears that say he or she is just too different to be one of us. Become a leadership force in your circle that reframes the message of "too different," to "viva la difference." Long live the creative diversity in the world and in that creativity, we will find the strength within us to be the change!