

Front and top page yesterday in the Times-Standard was an article about our county jail and recent efforts to train the staff to become aware of their potential racial bias and be willing ~~to~~ -- for want of a better term: "de-bias."

Bias, my dictionary defines bias as a tendency to hold a preference or prejudice.

Now, the truth is, we all hold certain biases: ~~most likely, many~~ biases. Some people prefer classical music, others jazz and still others rock 'n roll, blues, or no music at all. Some people like the heat of summer; others the cold of winter—still others prefer spring or fall ~~with their~~ ~~generally more moderate temperatures~~. Some like sweet, some like sour, some neither, some both! Some people like the Giants, others the Dodgers; some like football more than baseball or vice versa. So what?! Such biases do not hurt anyone and in the end are innocuous. In fact, bias is part of what makes a person an individual, with certain distinct tastes, preferences and peculiarities. But when it comes to race: bias takes on a whole different dimension. The bias that leads to racial ~~racial~~ profiling, ~~is~~ much worse, racial contempt, is something that afflicts our nation and world.

~~Read~~ At the county jail they're trying "De-biasing techniques" What kind of techniques can be used to de-bias a person? I think that is, uh, a noble effort. But ultimately futile.

Truth be told: we can tell people not to be biased, rail against bias, prejudice and racial stereotyping of every kind, listen to sociologists tell us about race and culture: and I don't think it will make much difference. Because people prone to anger and hatred are still going to be that way; even after de-biasing classes. People inclined to love and patience, are always going to be that way... ~~How to attack bias?~~ w/ or w/out classes.

The best technique for de-biasing is this: Find a person who has made it a way of life to reach across racial barriers, and open yourself to their friendship. One person who reached across racial barriers with incredible effectiveness was Nathan Smith. He had served his country for many years in the US Air Force. Later, Dr. Nathan Smith was professor of African-American studies at Humboldt State from 1986-2001. Nathan was ^{an} African American married to a ~~person~~ woman from the Pacific Isle of Tonga. He had an international mindset and love for people of all nations, races and social status. ~~He was a parishioner and personal friend. I always enjoyed~~ ~~many~~ ^{many} times of personal conversation ~~in many settings~~ with Nathan. ~~enough to find that.~~

Nathan was a very other-centered man. ~~Always~~ ^{had} keen to take an interest in others and their family members and interests. He ~~had~~ ^{had} experienced racial prejudice here and there, but never became bitter. ~~He rarely focused upon racism, and told me personally that he never accused anyone of racism; instead, his focus was on others and doing his personal best, whether in the Air Force, prison setting, family or university.~~ ^{through his many years,} ^{although he fought for social justice,} ^{justice to}

Nathan Smith will be missed by many. A celebration of his life will take place at 11:00am Monday January 8th, at the First Presbyterian Church of Eureka. Nathan would want all to be invited: so you are.

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment