

How living in a multicultural society has had a positive impact on me.

Well, having been challenged to write this blog, my first challenge was the fact that I grew up in Blackpool. Back in the 1980s and 90s Blackpool wasn't a particularly multicultural place to live. At all. Like most people my age I grew up playing out on the street with my friends. We were all White British Christians and spent most of our time playing 'Kirby' and kicking a ball about, to the disapproval of the grumpy, elderly neighbours. It wasn't until I was about 11 that I had much experience of a different culture, and what that might mean in terms of diversity and relationships, or the impact it could have on my own life.

Beej, who remains one of my closest friends to this day, arrived in Blackpool from the Philippines, speaking little English and without a single familiar person except for his parents. Beej joined the Catholic school my neighbourhood friends attended and was soon adopted into our friendship group. Until today I haven't ever really thought about what the impact of this friendship might have had on my life but looking back now, I realise that it was huge.

Of course I had heard of racism and thought I knew the meaning, but wasn't fully sure what this actually meant until I saw it happening first hand. Being Filipino Beej looked different. He was smaller than the rest of us (and to be smaller than me at that age was saying something!), darker than the rest of us and stood out from the crowd. There were times when other kids would say things and call him names based on his appearance. One that somehow always stuck with me, 'Why are you sending Christmas cards, you're not English?' It never really seemed to bother Beej at all, but now I find myself wondering if it did... and I'm certain that it would have done. *As a side note towards this particular prejudice Beej is Roman Catholic, the main religion in the Philippines, and not that it matters, but he does celebrate Christmas! They don't have a turkey on the Christmas dinner table, or a Christmas tree in their house, but despite the cultural differences the same religious festival is celebrated, and they do have a Santa Claus!*

As a young boy I didn't really think too deeply about any of these things but I realise now the lessons that I did learn. Seeing a close friend treated like this taught me some very important lessons. Tolerance and respect for others being a huge one. I knew that as long as I lived, I would never treat someone badly for being 'different'. Thanks to Beej, I grew up without prejudice towards others and with a respect for people of other cultures. Most towns and cities we visit these days see a rainbow of people from different backgrounds who eat differently, dress differently, worship differently and talk differently to the next person we pass. The things we can learn and experience because of this are amazing. And if we all choose to embrace these differences, we can all benefit. Also thanks to Beej, I am happily married to a self-confessed foodie. Before Beej came into my life I was quite a fussy eater. After spending many afternoons at his dinner table this was no longer an option. Beej and his family taught me to love food and try new things, which is lucky because my wife would never have married a fussy eater!

- Mr Floweth

A Multicultural Society - Task

Having a range ethnic groups within a society bring more benefits than drawbacks to a country. To what extent do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own experience or knowledge. I have set this task as an assignment, so you will be able to submit your response through Google Classroom.