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The inclusivity myth

by BRIAN LOCKHART

How many times have you seen an organization, whether public or private, claim they are an ?inclusive' institution?

That is usually followed by some statement, with a huge list of different types of people they welcome.

Sometimes the list gets a little too long and I expect them to list zombies, gargoyles, and fairies, as being welcome to their party, club, or hiring list.

I consider myself to be a rather inclusive type of person. If I'm throwing a party, which is rare, but could happen if I had a bigger house, and an invited person shows up with an uninvited guest, I would be more than willing to welcome them to the party. I'm a ?more the merrier' type of person and would welcome a person to my home if they are a decent person and want to be there.

I might draw the line if a woman shows up with her new boyfriend who is still wearing his prison-issued jumpsuit.

How inclusive has the world really become? A lot of people talk a good game, but the truth is the world is not inclusive, and it never will be.

Many churches proclaim ?everyone welcome' on the sign on the front lawn ? and they mean it. Anyone is welcome to come inside and take part.

However, many other religions practice the exact opposite.

You aren't welcome unless you're a certified, baptized, or a divine member. That includes several mainstream or fairly large religions that are totally exclusive.

I've met members of religious groups, who would barely acknowledge I was in the room, while others refused to interact with me at all because they knew I wasn't a member of their religious group.

I'm glad I wasn't brought up in that type of church group.

Country Clubs and other social clubs routinely practice exclusion ? and they do it openly. Try looking at the membership requirements of any of these types of clubs. You have to answer a lot of questions to prove your worthiness to hit a golf ball around a course with any of these people.

First, they want to know how much money you make, then they question who you are socially connected to. After all, they don't want you if your connections won't also help them.

Many of these clubs claim to have eliminated restrictions based on ethnicity, social status, or religion years ago, however, drop by the club one day and see who's really there.

Private schools can also be very exclusive.

My best friend, when growing up, transferred to a rather prestigious private school the year we entered Grade 7.

I recently went on that school's website and looked under ?applications' just to see what they required.

This school is still over the top when it comes to requirements. Just having the money to pay for tuition won't get you into this school ? not by a long shot. There is a long list of personal questions, and that's just the online application. From there, there is a long interview process.

The one question that really made me laugh, was the suffix after the applicant's name. As in, ?Are you Thurston Howell, II, III, or IV.

I guess being fourth in line with the name Thurston bodes well for you.

Several years ago, I read a rather lengthy article in a Toronto newspaper about a local service club. They are well known and worldwide. The interview was with the current president of that local chapter.

She explained that members of the club are all professionals ? whatever that is supposed to mean. Many people are very professional in their job.

However, in one of the last quotes of the article, she said, ?We don't want just anyone joining our club.?

I couldn't believe that a service club, who supposedly raises money for charity, would have such an arrogant attitude toward others. They seemed like the type of club that would raise money for a homeless shelter, and get their photo taken while making a presentation, but then look at a homeless person with disdain when actually seeing them on the street.

I should point out, that particular club has changed their tune over the past few years, and now has a more open policy when it comes to accepting new members. It seems they had started running out of new members because no one wanted to join a club with such a snobby attitude.

I really don't care if a country club doesn't want me as a member. As far as I'm concerned, any club or group can be as exclusive as they want to be, it doesn't bother me at all.

Exclusivity exists everywhere, even in those institutions that claim to include everyone.

I'll just follow the Groucho Marx philosophy ? ?I wouldn't want to be a member of a club, that would have me as a member.?