

“First-Year Writing Seminar: The Podcast,” Season 1

Episode Transcript: Morgan Douglas on “Taking Seriously the Perspectives of Others”

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Hello everyone and welcome back to “This I Believe,” I’m your host Morgan Douglas. Today we’re going to be switching things up just a little bit. If you’re a frequent listener, you know that I usually have others recant their stories of what they believe, but this week I’m going to give it a shot. Now, before we get started, I want to issue a disclaimer for potentially sensitive subjects that will be mentioned throughout this episode, including abortion, religion, and prejudice.

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I am a current student at Cottey College and we follow what some might consider a code of ethics. This is referred to as the “AAC&U Character Traits Associated with the Five Dimensions of Personal and Social Responsibility,” and in it, it gives five main points, or dimensions. The idea behind this is that if followed, you will become personally and socially responsible. I’m here today to argue on which dimension I think is most important. I believe that dimension four, or “Taking Seriously the Perspectives of Others” is the most important dimension because without it, you can’t grow in your opinions or have diverse perspectives, which is needed to prosper in a diverse world.

One of the main reasons I chose dimension four was because of the character traits that were associated with it. Some of those included: open-mindedness, social/cultural awareness, and truth seeking. These three traits stood out to me the most because I thought that they truly reflected the changes of my perspective on various aspects throughout the course of my life. Because my parents are divorced, I don’t see my dad nearly as often as I do my mom, who I live with; nevertheless, my dad had a substantial impact on my development. This is a good thing in some ways because he taught me to behave and give proper respect, among many other positive traits, but the downside to this is that my dad is extremely conservative. As I entered my teenage years, I was constantly being asked my opinions on political topics that I knew virtually nothing about, and naturally, I just started to agree with his perspective. From the ages of about 12 to 15, I had a firm belief that abortion was murder, that immigrants were bad, and that Christianity was the only acceptable religion. I cannot express how ashamed I am to have believed that way for so long.

It was about the age of 16 that I realized that my father’s sheltered way of thinking may not be correct. I was deep into social media at the time and I began to notice more and more posts about the inhumane treatment of immigrants and their children. I immediately questioned both my dad and the news source. I knew that my dad usually watched conservative news outlets, so I started my own research behind this issue. I compared the information given on conservative or republican news sources versus liberal news outlets, and figured out the real story behind immigration. It became immediately clear to me that my dad was believing a fallacy- these immigrants are just simply trying to find a better life for themselves and their families. The opportunities they are given are little to none, so most cross the border not out of selfish reasons, but for survival. This is an excellent example of being a truth-seeker,

one of the character traits mentioned in dimension four. Even though it took me a little longer than it should have, I was determined to not just believe what I was hearing and I did my own research to find out what the truth really was.

My view point on religion and abortion were directly related to one another. I was a devout Christian in my youth and I attended church almost every Sunday. There were many sermons that preached about how abortion was wrong and it was taking a child's life. Even when I was younger, I always wondered how that logic applied to cases where a woman was raped, if she had been drugged when impregnated, or if it were incestual. For a couple of years, I went along believing this lie. I thought that women shouldn't have the right to choose what happens to their body, despite the fact that I am myself a woman. Finally, hearing the personal experiences of others, I realized that no one should have the right to choose what happens to someone else's body, especially in those certain situations. A lot of times, at least from the stories that I've heard, the majority of women who have gotten abortions don't do so just because they don't want the responsibility of a kid. These women do so because they can't afford to raise a kid, the health of the mother or child would be compromised, or for many other valid reasons. I feel that this is an excellent example of how I used empathy, or the ability to understand the perspective of others and what they are going through, to help me realize that abortion is not anybody else's choice besides the person it is directly affecting, and that it's quite necessary in certain situations.

My relationship with Christianity, is most closely related to dimension four because of the open-mindedness I now have with it. Granted when I was younger, I used to believe that there was no point for any other religion because Christianity was the one true religion, but I don't believe that anymore. I now believe that I will continue to practice whatever religion I believe to be true, and anyone has the opportunity to do the same, or not if they so choose. That is the whole point of freedom of religion; some people take that for granted to push their religion onto others, but what it really means is exactly what it says, the freedom to practice whichever religion you believe to be true. There should be no judgment or consequence based on your religious practices, I firmly believe that if you're happy in your beliefs and no one else is getting hurt, that is all that really matters.

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With dimension number four, it is very critical for us all to remember that no one is necessarily correct or incorrect, but it's up to each of us and our informed and educated opinions to decide what we believe is right. Another important aspect of this dimension that is sometimes overlooked is that it's okay to be incorrect in your assumptions or that you were brought up a certain way, as long as you actively take steps to educate yourself. Without dimension number four, I think there would be even more conflict and misunderstanding in the world, and that no one would take anyone's opinion seriously. This is why I believe dimension four is the most important.

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