



“The Human Library” by Azmerrah Teav
1st Place, Informal Essay 10-12

The Human Library

Don't you just love books? Libraries are full of interesting books. In Denmark, however, you would not only find "normal libraries," you would also find something called a Human Library. In a Human Library, you can borrow a person instead of a book. For thirty minutes, you can hear their life story. Every person has a title, such as "Mother of Two," "Marine Biologist," "Fashion Designer," and so on. I think the Human Library would assist people's understanding of personal histories, provide much-needed connections, and support an atmosphere to inspire others. The Human Library has the potential to help people move forward from the past, to process the present, and envision and be encouraged concerning the future.

Firstly, the Human Library has the potential to help people move forward from the past. The Human Library would help people learn about both personal and general history. It may also help the listener to understand that others have had difficult pasts like their own. It lends strength from the sharer to the listener. Another example of how the Human Library can serve its patrons, is that even though you could research about the past online, it would be much better to talk to someone in person. Yet another reason why a Human Library would help resolve the past is that listening to others and not jumping to conclusions would help stop bias and prejudice. Additionally, you will find that listening to the same story but told by different people will yield different points of view. For example, if two people talked about their growing up, and if one person grew up with not enough and the other grew up with plenty, you would hear different points of

view, outlooks, and perspectives about their childhoods. Of course, they would have both faced challenges or struggles of some kind. In my opinion, this sharing of the past would not only benefit the listener, but also the person telling their story. By revisiting their past, it can help promote the healing of those past hurts.

Secondly, a Human Library has the tools within itself to help people process these present times we are living in. During this time in 2022, with Covid-19, it has been very isolating for many people. It is a time we really need connections and real life relationships to help us and others not feel so alone. The Human Library would help people make connections with others. Zoom and FaceTime can be good methods if you are talking with someone far away, giving a friend in quarantine a thoughtful hello, or reaching out to an individual dealing with depression. Even though you can use Zoom or FaceTime, seeing and talking to someone in person and face-to-face at a Human Library would be better. It reminds me of when my mommy gave me an assignment to interview certain people in order to help me make connections and develop my boldness. By interviewing people, I was able to communicate with and get to know a NASA employee and an entrepreneur ice cream truck lady. I also got to meet and fellowship with refugees from Afghanistan who fled their country only months ago, during the chaos of their changing government. And because almost thirteen years ago, my mommy married my papa, a Cambodian refugee who escaped the Khmer Rouge, I got to meet him as well. I have met many interesting people, but not many kids get those opportunities to, like me. However, having access to a Human Library, both kids and adults would get more opportunities to meet interesting people like these.

Thirdly, a Human Library would inspire and encourage others concerning the future. In a Human Library, you would be able explore different jobs and find out how many amazing occupations there are. Just imagine you're browsing through these intriguing titles: "Animal Rehabber," "App Developer," "Babysitter," "Candle Maker," "Circus Performer," "Citrus Farmer," "Dog Groomer," "Door Dash Driver," etc. After your talk and investigation of the skill or occupation of your choice, you may want to hop over and visit, let's say, Denmark. So, you're planning that trip to Denmark, and you want to be prepared. You may want to check out a book called "World Traveler" or "Retired Missionary." Perhaps "Flight Attendant" and "Professional Organizer" might be useful resources for you to glean from. Dive even deeper in your research for your trip by checking out such titles as "Photographer" and "Restaurant Owner." You may be surprised to discover valuable lessons and tips that would be beneficial for your upcoming adventure.

In conclusion, The Human Library has the potential to help people move forward from the past, to process the present, and envision and be encouraged concerning the future. I think we should totally have a Human Library here in Oklahoma. The Human Library definitely brings a new meaning to the old saying "Don't judge a book by its cover." And you certainly won't want to do that when the book is a person. So tell me, reader, would **you** put yourself on the spot as a book on the shelf, so to speak, for someone to borrow? **You** have a story that no one else has. **You** are valuable and have priceless lessons woven into **your** story that can help to reconcile the past, brighten someone's day, or teach a truth. As my brother once said, "Don't be shy; just give it a try." Go for it! Someone out there needs **you**.

