

Unlearning What I Used To Know And Believe In

Throughout my lifetime, there has been a continuous process of change and development, both in my physical and mental state of being. Of course everyone has, after all, every being grows and changes as times go on, but nevertheless one must notice their own changes to see what needs to be unlearned.

To me, unlearning is a process of being informed and understanding why an old belief is no longer valid in the modern era and therefore critically challenged. I was never exposed to such challenges before entering university. However, I have always been driven to question what is right and wrong.

Before moving to Canada, I had not heard much regarding Indigenous cultures and peoples. It changed after the confirmation of the mass graves in Kamloops during the summer of 2021. This shocked me and provided a different perspective on my known Canadian history; the ones taught and shared at a mainstream level. Taking the action of learning about Indigenous history and other information became a necessity for me. Through this, I unlearned the stigmas surrounding Indigenous peoples which are harmful and pervasive. Being significantly exposed to different understandings enhances the unlearning experience. It is not only limited to ignorance but the personal misunderstandings of other ideas that I encountered, thereby relearning them and realizing that my old apprehension was incorrect and needed to be updated.

Furthermore, I unlearned the rigid definition of masculinity. Growing up, I used to adhere to all the traditional traits of toxic masculinity, such as being aggressive, getting into physical fights, believing men and women need to have distinct roles in society, etc. I have come to realize at a point that it was an unhealthy and condescending perspective to carry when living in

a changing world. Masculinity is a socially constructed concept and should be up to the individual to decide their personal relationship with it, which is a conclusion I have been drawn to.

What I have come to recognize is that unlearning is an essential step toward decolonization and destigmatization. An important result of my unlearning journey is that, recently, I have accepted that when an individual is presented with ideas that are understandable, one does not necessarily always have to agree with them. This is a dichotomy that I did not believe existed and aided my process to comprehend different ideas. A benefit of unlearning is that it also helps bring the privileges people have to light and it relies on individuals to make the change. At times, unlearning is an arduous process but still nonetheless important to progress within communities and for a better world.