



Laboring Results

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And the Oscar for Best Movie Goes To--- *Crash* of Racial Stereotypes and Humanitarian *Babel*.

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Last year we saw *Crash* running away with the Oscar, and was acclaimed for not only the best movie of the year, but for its exposure of race relations, bias and stereotypes in American society. Again this year, Hollywood, has by accident, created incredible teaching tools that can be used to raise our unconscious biases and stereotypes which can lead us to recognize unique, individual features of others.

Crash is a movie that makes us take a second and third look at our own biases. *Crash* involves several stories with an underlying theme of biases and stereotypes that exist in today's society: the white veteran cop who has a bias against Blacks, a Caucasian gun shop owner who has a bias against Persians, a Caucasian District Attorney's wife who has a stereotype of Latinos, Black car thieves who have a bias against Caucasians, a Black police detective who has a stereotype of Hispanics, and the list goes on. Each of the characters who acted upon their own biases is transformed in this movie to a hero, when they set aside their bias and get to know the others' uniqueness.

This year, we see a universal view of this transformation in *Babel* where people from different countries are transformed from acting on stereotypes to embracing people for whom they are. Will *Babel* follow on the heels of *Crash* and win the Oscar for best picture? *Babel* begins in the remote sands of the Moroccan desert, a rifle shot rings out--detonating a chain of events that will illicit biases and stereotypes such as the shooting of the American Tourist in Morocco is thought to be caused by a terrorist followed by the hunt for the perpetrator, a nanny illegally crossing into Mexico with two American children in order to engage into a night of partying and drinking at her son's wedding, and a Japanese hearing-

impaired teen rebel who is shunned by peers because of her disability. Separated by clashing cultures and sprawling distances, each of these four disparate groups of people is nevertheless hurtling toward a shared destiny of isolation and grief caused, in part, by a stereotype, but in the end are reconnected through understanding and appreciation of the others' uniqueness.

Researchers have found that human beings have unconscious biases. Studies conducted by Stanford University, have concluded that even when we think we are compensating for our bias, it is not something we can easily remove or factor out of our decisions because it operates unconsciously. We are far better at spotting bias in others than in ourselves. Researchers in the Stanford University study concluded that there is an assumption that our own golden rule of objectivity works well for ourselves- but others' rules do not work for them. *The Bias Blind Spot: Perception of Bias in Self Versus Others (2002)* The same person who is fairly objective when judging himself or herself may be highly biased when assessing others or vice versa. And contrary to expectations, a successful career built on making carefully reasoned decisions may only reinforce the illusion of objectivity, for example attorneys.

We obtain biases and stereotypes from our surroundings, family, friends, neighbors, music, television, movies and what we read, as well as our own experiences. These experiences begin when we are very young children. The rules from our culture are not what is written but are learned from those around us, and as children we accept these unwritten rules without question. In order to eliminate a bias, we have to begin to raise the unconscious to the conscious level and begin to recognize our biases. Self awareness of how we react to "others" is vital to breaking conflict generating patterns caused by a bias. We should not be intimidated by engaging in a discussion regarding biases and stereotypes. We should recognize that familiar scripts do not apply, and modify our communication behaviors accordingly. Attention must be paid to the unique, individual features of others.

How can movies, like *Crash* and *Babel*, be used to help us get in touch with our unconscious biases? Do not be intimidated by engaging in a discussion regarding the biases and stereotypes that are portrayed in these movies. Explore the transformations that occur with each character as they begin to set aside their stereotypes of the other and they begin to recognize the unique and individual features of others. Begin to pay attention to how we communicate with the ethnic and racial groups that are depicted in the Movies. Broaden our understanding and enhance our sensitivity toward these races and ethnicities. Avoid generalizing about a culture based on past information or observations; apply information only to the situation in which you receive it. Make opportunities to interact with

people with different cultures, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and abilities. Finally realize that transforming attitudes and behaviors can be challenging and takes time. *Crash* and *Babel* were not filmed in a day.

To ask a question, to request more information on dispute resolution services send an e-mail to emoreno@eampc.com or log on to www.eampc.com. To unsubscribe please send an e-mail to emoreno@eampc.com and type remove in the subject line.

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