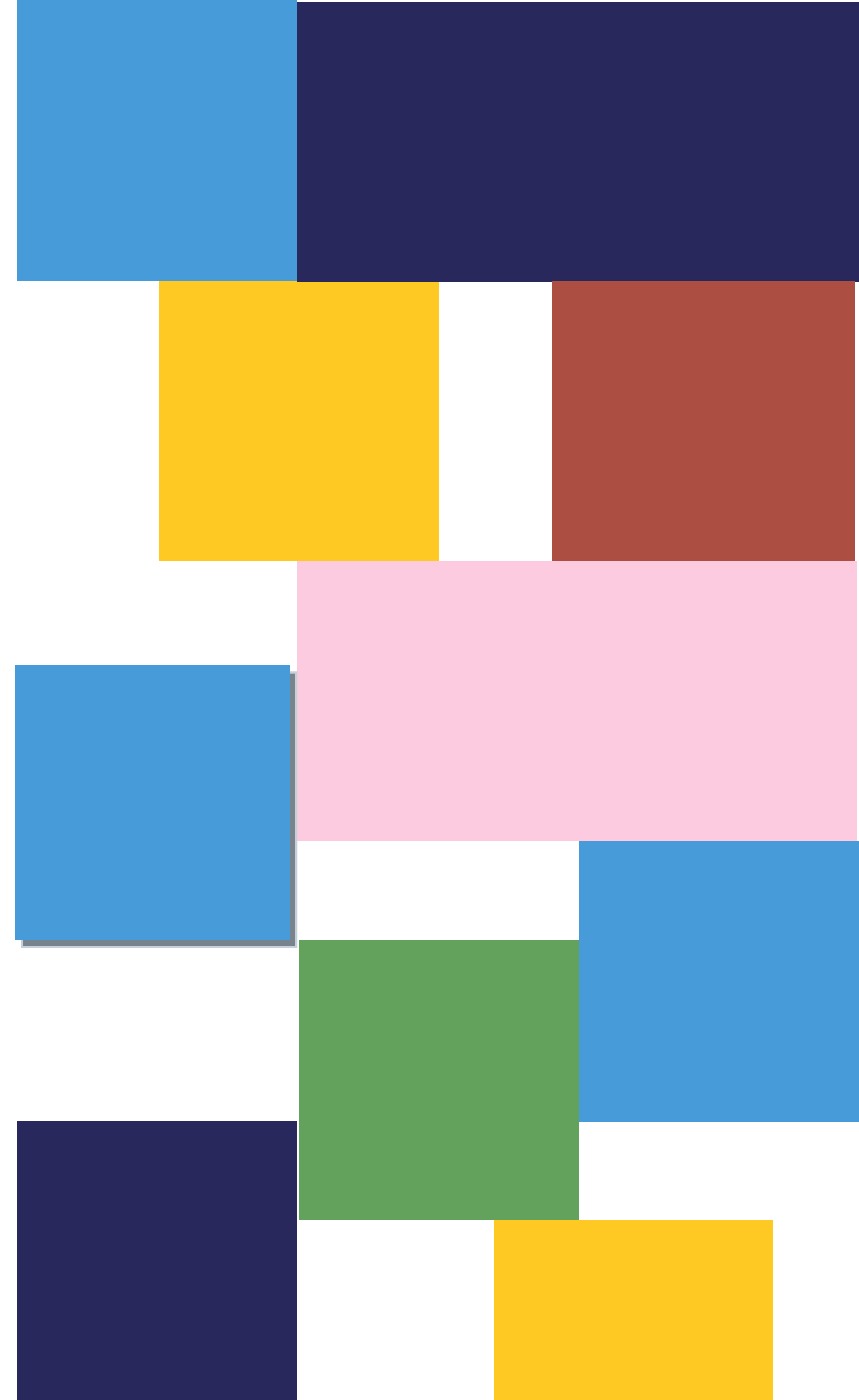


# Challenging single stories

Inspired by the TED Talk:





# Challenging single stories

FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF SANTA MARIA

TECHNICAL INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL OF SANTA MARIA

Career and Technical Education Courses in:  
Electrotechnics  
Mechanics  
Web Development

Subject: English Language - Lower Intermediate Level  
Teacher: Raquel Bevilaqua

This book is presented solely for educational purposes.

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**This book presents texts about single stories written by high school students from Technical Industrial School of Santa Maria (CTISM).**

**A single story can never capture the whole picture. Because of this, a single story is able to narrow down our view of people and reality. As the Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie said, a "single story creates stereotypes".**

**However, how can we challenge a single story? Tough question. Maybe we can start by thinking about, sharing and questioning our own single stories.**

**That's what these brave students do here. They share and challenge single stories.**

# **About**

**"The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."**

**Chimamanda Adichie**

**"Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize.**

**Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity."**

**Chimamanda Adichie**



Source: Google Images

**Some years ago**, I met a Colombian that teaches English at my English school. One day, he told us that when he was planning to come to Rio Grande do Sul, he heard some stories about the traditional Southern drink mate, or 'chimarrão', as this drink is also known in our region. He was also told that all gauchos always drink mate.

However, when he got here, he discovered that not all of us like to drink mate. One day, we invited him to drink mate. He tried it and really enjoyed.

# Don't you like 'mate'?!



Source: Google Images

Andressa Fouchy Schons

# Do they have feelings?



Source: Google Images

**Bruno Camargo Machado**

**When I was a child** I studied at a school called "Ceduca". It was really nice, I had a lot of friends and I played with them all the time. At that time, I believed that there were two types of people in schools: the teachers and the schoolchildren. Maybe for being a child, I used to see teachers as a different kind of human. For me, they were like super-humans, who were above all the kids. And, at Ceduca, there was a teacher that everyone liked, because she had a good relationship with all the kids.

However, one day, she made something wrong, so my classmates and I began to mistreat her. I can't remember the motive, but we were really angry. Maybe it was just because we were pampered children. Anyway, with all the confusion in the classroom, suddenly, she began to cry. I had never seen a teacher crying before. She told us that she should not be doing that, but just could not hold her sadness. So, that was how I bought the single story of the teachers. And that was how I discovered that, even being forced to hide them, teachers do have feelings.

# The Choice

The **Federal University of Santa Maria** has two secondary schools: Politécnico School and Technical Industrial School of Santa Maria (CTISM). Unfortunately, CTISM is not very well-known by people in general.

When I finished elementary school, I had to choose between CTISM or Politécnico, and all my classmates at that time chose Politécnico. Most of the students have an idea that Politécnico is better than CTISM because they don't hear so much about CTISM, and they don't even know the courses that are offered there.

I chose CTISM because of the course (Web Development), and after my first year there, I realized the school is really good, and I identify a lot with my course.



Source: Google Images

Camille de Ávila Voigt

# Stereotypes



Source: Google Images

Camille Hilgemann Almança

**One day**, I was talking to a friend of mine who had just returned from an exchange to the USA. She told me that when she got there, people already knew she was a Brazilian, so they started asking her about samba and soccer. They also asked her to speak a little bit of Spanish.

However, other questions they asked let her even more surprised: they asked if in Brazil there are buildings or just forest and woods. Then, they finally asked her if Brazilians have monkeys or any wild animals as pets.



"A few years ago, I visited **Mexico** from the U.S. The political climate in the U.S. at the time was tense, and there were debates going on about immigration. And, as often happens in America, **immigration** became synonymous with Mexicans.

There were endless **stories of Mexicans** as people who were fleeing the healthcare system, sneaking across the border, being arrested at the border, that sort of thing.

I remember walking around on my first day in **Guadalajara**, watching the people going to work, rolling up tortillas in the marketplace, smoking, laughing. I remember first feeling slight **surprise**. And then, I was overwhelmed with shame. I realized that I had been so immersed in the media coverage of Mexicans that they had become one thing in my mind, the abject immigrant. I had bought into the single story of Mexicans and I could not have been more ashamed of myself.

So that is **how to create a single story, show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become.**"

Chimamanda Adichie



Source: Google Images

# Capixaba's Accent



Source: Author (based on Google Images)

**Eduarda do Amaral**

**On a sunny day at school**, I was talking with a classmate of mine, and he asked me if I was from Santa Maria. So, I replied to him that I was born in Espírito Santo and I moved to Santa Maria when I was twelve.

Suddenly, he came up with the following sentence: "I knew it, you have a Northeastern accent!". Then, I had to explain that my hometown is actually in the Southeast of Brazil, and that we are called "Capixabas", not "Nordestinos". He was amazed.

It does not seem to be a big deal, but it was really funny at that time because of his reaction. Now, every time I meet someone new, the first thing they notice is my accent! And then I have to start explaining what happened. Unfortunately, it is quite rare for people (teenagers at least) to know where Espírito Santo is located. So, occasionally, I have to explain that, too.

**Since I was a child**, I love Fanta. At all family lunch we used to drink one bottle of Fanta. This soda was the family children's joy. My parents always bought two flavors: "Fanta Orange" or "Fanta Grape". So I grew up believing that two soda flavors were the only options in the world.

Suddenly, I was watching a video on YouTube, and I had a surprise, there are lots of different soda flavors! You have no idea about my face when I discovered that; my life has never been the same anymore. So, of course, I was searching about it. There are more than ten kinds of soda flavors!

Now I don't go shopping looking for "Fanta Grape", I go shopping looking for "Fanta pineapple, Fanta apple, Fanta cherry, Fanta strawberry, Fanta mango, Fanta peach..."

That video has made me think: did everyone know about all these Fanta flavors? Do other countries know about this variety of flavors? Why did we know only about Fanta Orange and Fanta grape?



## A single story of Fanta



Source: Google Images

Igor Taetti Rossato

# A single story about Brazil



Source: Author (based on Google Images)

**Two years ago**, in 2018, I traveled to Portugal with my mother. I lived there for two months and fifteen days. It was an incredible experience, because the Portuguese are very friendly, helpful to tourists, and most of them seem to have an open-mind, mainly because of the country's cultural diversity.

However, when referring to Brazil, many Portuguese people said that they would never come here because it is an extremely violent country. This is the single idea that many of them had about our country. I realized that everything they watched about Brazil on television and on social media was violent situations and disasters, which occurred mainly in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro at that time.

Unfortunately, this is a single story that many people around the world have about Brazil. They remain unaware of the natural and cultural wonders that we have in this country.

Isabelle Zimmermann Dockhorn

# My childhood

**When I was a kid**, I loved playing Barbie dolls and watching movies about her, and I kept imagining myself as one. I loved to dress all in pink like a Barbie doll. While I was growing up, I realized that there were no Barbies like me. I was always a child considered overweight by others, and sometimes I was bullied for it.

But one day I asked my mother if other kids calling me chubby was normal, unfortunately, she said it wasn't cool and called the school. Then, suddenly, after a few days after that call, a psychologist came to my school to talk and explain what bullying was, and that talk made my colleagues apologize to me.

This information made me think at that time: why was Barbie doll considered a standard body? Why did many children or young women want to look like Barbie? What made my colleagues think it was right to call me fat?

I think it is important to tell my story because we are currently living in the digital age when most standards are imposed by the growing media. I intend to make girls and boys of different ages aware that the history of Barbie doll is not unique, and that they do not need to follow that standard to be happy, and that often society creates unnecessary stereotypes to be followed and this can cause certain disorders such as bulimia, anxiety, among others.



Source: Google Images

# QUESTIONING SINGLE STORIES

How are stories told?

When are they told?

*nkali*

= power

Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person.

Who tells them?

How many stories are told?



Source: Google Images

Chimamanda Adichie

# A single story of my “generalizing view”



Source: Google Images

Lorenzo de Araújo Klat

**When I was a child,** I used to believe that many places in the world, especially in Brazil, had definite pre-conceived characteristics. I had a “generalizing view” of some places. An example is the Northeast region of Brazil. I used to believe that much of this region was like the “sertão” I had learned about. I’ve already talked to many people who, like me, have this idea, too. I thought that there were only small houses there, people in typical clothes and typical vegetation. When I studied the Northeast region for the first time at school, I got this impression, unfortunately.

After some time, I traveled to some places in the Northeast. When I was getting to know this region, I realized that I had developed some prejudice about it. There are places like the ones I imagined (unfortunately, many people live in precarious conditions), but there are also totally different places. The Northeast region is very large, there are many different and beautiful places, with many different characteristics. After getting to know the Northeast region of Brazil better, I started to think more about everything before falling for any stereotype or prejudice.

# The problem about single stories



Source: Google Images

To prove the difference in treatment received by a poor child and a rich child inserted in similar contexts, UNICEF launched an impactful social experiment: "Can you see this little girl on the street?"

**Luiza de Senna Iensen**

I discovered the danger that the spread of a single story causes in a community very early, when I was about 9 years old. I was always considered a child prodigy (about school intelligence) and from a very young age, I understood the difference in treatment between me and my colleagues by my teachers.

In every school class I studied in, there were always students considered problematic, and they presented a pattern: they were usually the ones who showed less interest in classes (and nobody was interested in the reason), whose clothes and language were seen as unpleasant (mainly by authorities and older people), poor and, almost always, black. The difference that I could notice between me and other colleagues was even more explicit when it came to "problematic" students, and it started to bother me a lot since I became aware about it. Often, these students want to learn, but the teacher does not want to teach, for believing that it is not worthy. Usually, there is a discourse behind such an attitude that reads "in a few years, that kind of people will want to get into the world of crime, as usual", projecting on those children a preconception and a terrible social stigma, and doing nothing to help those who, for some reason, might walk that path.

When I realized how different realities exist in such a small environment, I knew that if I wanted some changes I would have to step forward. Then, I decided to start a math class for my colleagues and discovered personalities with really fascinating mathematical reasoning.

On the last day of school, a classmate of mine came to thank me for being one of the few people at school to really look at him. Then, I could understand how bad it is like to have a single story about someone, and especially when this single story is about children. So, to paraphrase Bertolt Brecht, I came to the conclusion that we can change reality only when we are instructed by it.



# A wonderful city, full of thousand charms



Source: Google Images



Source: Author

Nicolide Mello

**A few years ago**, I traveled to Rio de Janeiro. As the song says: “a wonderful city, full of thousand charms ...” I was a pre-teen and knew little about the city. I didn't even use to watch the parades on TV. I knew it was something big, but I didn't have the dimensions of how much. I expected that Rio de Janeiro would have only Christ the Redeemer and the sugar loaf, and I could not imagine a city beyond that.

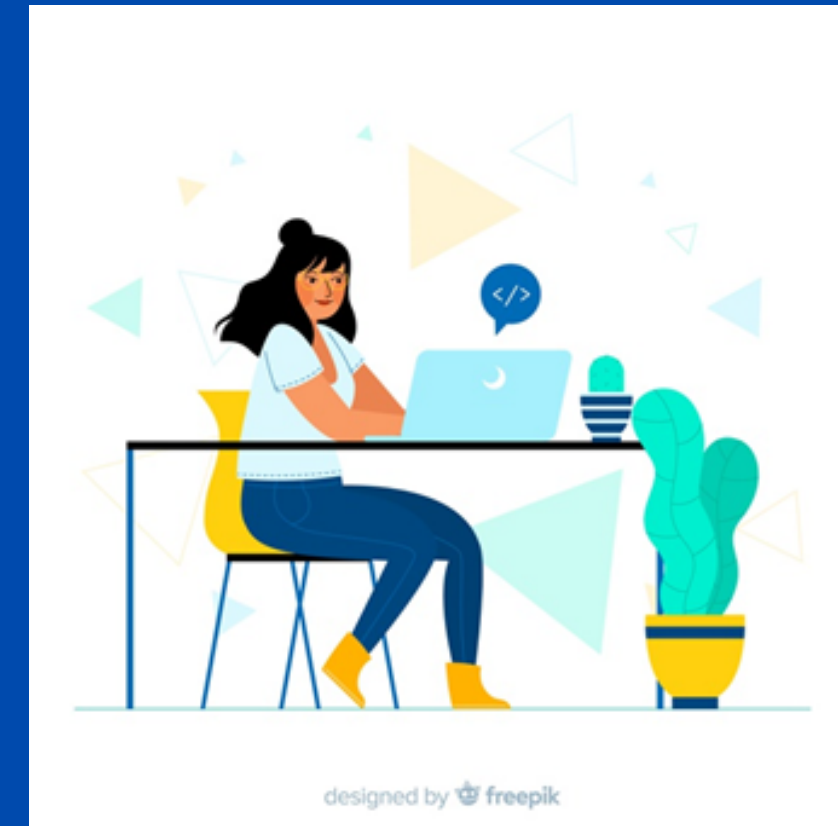
When I got there I was surprised, it was a tremendous and incredible shock. We stayed in a hotel near the Arcos da Lapa and the Selarón steps, and it was just beautiful to look around. Copacabana beach is the most beautiful place I have ever been to, and I am very passionate about the beach.

One day, we were walking near Arcos da Lapa when I saw a group of capoeira, and I was fascinated by the music, the dance and the energy. But I also got surprised. As far as I am aware, capoeira is a fight and it is also marginalized. I know it is an African-American martial art. But, at that occasion, I didn't see any black people fighting in that performance.

**Some say that code languages**, such as javascript, might be the new universal language. Why, you may ask. It's because technology is becoming the most important aspect of our lives as the years go by. As I grew up, I started to be told that computers weren't something that I should be interested in, even with all the daily technological revolutions that were happening as I was getting older and leaving the child me behind. I was told, I saw, I heard and I believed that this wasn't for me, a girl. Even though I showed interest, and liked the idea of becoming a programmer or learning about it, I was discouraged, and told to not like it. In the meantime, I worried about other things, like being the best of my class, studying my brain off to ace that math test or memorize those irregular verb tenses and conjugations, and in the end, I was doing what I was supposed to do from the beginning. All what I had done in these years was basically, me reaching out to what I always aspired to do. Trying to memorize irregular verbs tenses and conjugations I learned without knowing how to easily retain patterns recognition that are now just so useful to me. I also learned the math necessary to comprehend the mathematical bits of coding, in other words, the protocoling and the data structures of the computer sciences I already knew from basics school subjects.

I was privileged to have a quality education, but I just keep thinking where we as humankind would be if computer science would be taught at school. Girls like me, encouraged to follow their dreams, all students learning all this, that is so much like the poetry from the literature classes, and the grammar from the Portuguese classes, and the math classes. I was a programmer, too, and I didn't know it.

# When you're born being a girl



Source: Google Images

Rafaela da Rosa Soares

# The Brazilian Stereotype

**When I was younger**, a few years ago, I was exploring a website with friends of mine, one of these websites that make it possible for us to talk to people around the world.

While we were navigating on that website, we met a boy, I don't remember exactly his name, but he was from the USA. This boy seemed to be the same age as we were at the time, about 13 or 14 years old.

Suddenly, at the moment he knew that we were Brazilians, he immediately started speaking Spanish! Then he asked us if we were related to Neymar. It was really funny at the time, we had a lot of laughs. We realized that the single story he had about Brazil was that stereotype about soccer, samba and speaking Spanish.



Source: Author

**"So that is how to create a single story: show a people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become."**

Chimamanda Adichie



Source: Google Images



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