

## Prejudice is as Prejudice Does



By Anna Von Reitz

I was six when I came home and blurted, "Marlene Meyer called me a Kraut!"

My Father blew coffee through his nose and sputtered, "Sounds like she's got a bit of "Kraut" in her, too!"

The emotions were passing so fast on his face I couldn't tell which to believe: ---anger? ---amusement? ---sadness?

Gentle sadness won. He rocked my curly head with the splayed fingers of his enormous hand and said, "Jah, you are my little zowerkraut! Wear it with pride!"

So I did.

To this day, if anyone calls me a "Kraut" I just pile more of it on my bratwurst and smile.

My Mother, always the more devious and political thinker in the bunch, also heard about this dust-up with Marlene. She sniffed and said, "Always remember that when you label someone else, you also label yourself."

I tucked that away for future reference and found it to be true.

For the next few years I continued to observe the process of labeling people. There were, of course, "Rat Finks" in my day. Nobody knew what a "Fink" was, but it had a suitably unsavory sound, especially when coupled with "Rat" so we said it anyway.

Forty years later my son informed me that "Rat Finks" are extinct---without ever being on the Endangered Species List---and that "Losers" now abound.

I remember distinctly the first time I ever heard the word, "Nigger". I was ten. I asked my Mother--- "Do all these people come from Nigeria?"

"No, dear," she answered wearily, "Only some black people come from Nigeria." She had a vague, troubled look on her face and she also observed, "When you label people it says more about you than it can ever say about them."

That also turned out to be true.

People can throw labels at me all day long and never impact my inner peace. So don't get upset when I am called names and people try to disparage me personally or accuse me of doing things I am not doing and saying things I am not saying.

In the end, it doesn't matter what other people think of you. It only matters what you think of yourself.

If you can look at yourself in the mirror each day and know that you are a good person, that you are working with good intentions, that you are trying to accomplish something meaningful and not just for yourself, then you have what you need to go forward no matter what anyone else thinks or does or says.

Knowing this little secret makes it easy to throw lies and insults aside. It also clears the way to look each man or woman in the eye and see who they are without labels, too.

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