



Staten Island Advance

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Contempt causes bias attacks

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I am angered and saddened by the hate crimes taking place on Staten Island. According to Joe Malvasio's June 12 article, ("City Officials Discuss Spate of S.I. Bias Attacks"), the coalition "We Are Staten Island" wants to "open up dialogue and combat the mentality that leads to violence."

As a Staten Islander, I feel it is crucial for your readers to know that "the mentality that leads to violence," is explained by Eli Siegel, founder of the philosophy Aesthetic Realism, as contempt, "the addition to self through the lessening of something else."

Contempt for difference is what motivates bias attacks. It is the feeling that one is superior to another human being because of skin color or ethnic background, and therefore, one has the right to hurt that person.

In order for prejudice in all its ugly forms to end, people need to study what Ellen Reiss, Chairman of Aesthetic Realism, explained in *The Right of Aesthetic Realism to Be Known*:

"Racism won't be effectively done away with unless it is replaced with something that has terrific power. What needs to replace it is not the feeling that the difference of another person is somehow tolerable. What is necessary is the seeing and feeling that the relation of sameness and difference between ourselves and that other person is *beautiful*. People need to feel, with feeling both intimately personal and large, that difference of race is like the difference to be found in music: two notes are different, but they are in behalf of the same melody; they complete each other; each needs the other to be expressed richly, to be fully itself. It is possible for millions of men, women, and children to have an emotion about race that is like an art emotion. And it is necessary."

Studying these words can have Staten Islanders feel our diversity makes for our strength.