

When first arriving at Ft. Concho in San Angelo we were debriefed about "The guests" at the fort; the "guests" were the women and children from the El Dorado Ranch. During the debriefing I learned that these women and children came from a culture very different than ours. I heard that they would likely not talk to us, make eye contact with us, and that they were brainwashed.

Within the first two days of being among the women and children from El Dorado I learned through observation and interactions that the initial information we received was false. The women and children did make eye contact; they did interact and talk with us. Two things struck me immediately:

These women had excellent parenting skills; the children interacted with the mothers and other adult women with respect; when behavioral corrections/discipline was necessary, the mothers got eye level with the child and talked to them in a tone and manner that was the same as any other conversation they might have; not once during the two weeks I spend among these women did I hear yelling, screaming, or raised voices toward the children.

The women carried themselves with confidence; they were polite and respectful; they displayed what we would consider a great deal of self-esteem.

An incident happened that helped me understand how brainwashed we all are; in my professional opinion brainwashed is the same as conditioned and/or socialized; and we all have been socialized/conditioned in our respectful cultures, subcultures or societies.

A woman requested to be escorted across the parking lot (from the shelter) to the make shift clinic where an EMS vehicle had pulled up because she believed a child of a close friend was hurt. When we asked CPS staff permission to escort the woman we were told no, she can not go there. We told the woman she was not allowed to leave the shelter area. I later regretted having asked the CPS worker for permission to begin with; I wished I had simply accompanied the woman across the parking lot to the clinic.

This incident made me aware of how conditioned/brainwashed I am. I was obviously afraid to challenge the rules because it might have painful consequences for me. I actually pictured myself being stopped by a law enforcement person and possibly removed from the premise and/or accused of interfering with legal proceedings.

The entire experience at Ft Concho and the Coliseum was sure-real; at times it felt like these women and children were prisoners;

I heard some people wonder out loud if this was Nazi Germany? The thought had struck me too. Is this what it was like for the

People in concentration camps in Germany? The women and children from El Dorado were basically lied to and deceived on several occasions.

I often felt helpless; I also felt in awe of the grace, and self-confidence in which the women behaved. My culture, my society could learn from these women and children; they have my at-most respect.