

EXAMPLE ONE

John Naisbitt, the author of *“Megatrends. Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives”* states that “In the United States, we have the richest mix of ethnic groups, of racial groups, and of global experience that the world has ever known and it is the richness of this mix that yields our incredible creativity and innovation. We have not even begun to experience the real potential of our fantastic human resource mix -- our competitive edge in the global economy.” The human resource mix that he is referring to is diversity: the filling inside the American pie. This filling may seem like a new flavor to many Americans; however diversity has always been here and continues to change our country. And over the past few decades the urge to embrace diversity has become prevalent, and has prompted change across the country.

Diversity just like any other filling requires all flavors to come together in order to make an excellent pie. In order for all the flavors to work well together we must first let go of the past. This can be difficult since many people base their perceptions of others on past experiences and this affects their attitude toward others. It is important for us to realize that the past will only affect the future if we continue to empower the experiences that we’ve gone through. Releasing these feelings of resentment will enable us to develop open minds and change the lens that we use to view people.

Once we change the lens that we use to view people through we must remove any sense of superiority toward others. No flavor in the pie is better than the other, and understanding this will allow us to experience the real potential of all our counterparts. Whether the difference is in race, religion, or gender, seeing each other as equal will enable us to respect each others ideas, preferences, and ways of life. In addition we will be able to increase our knowledge and understanding of the differences among one another.

EXAMPLE TWO

Growing up in the suburbs of Philadelphia, I was never exposed to any kind of real diversity. In elementary school, junior high, and high school, diversity in my community meant having a 95% white, middle class student body with a few token minority or ethnic students thrown in the mix. At Penn State, although there have been great strides in promoting diversity awareness and creating a diverse student body and atmosphere, my first three years were a similar experience. My exposure to diversity changed this past fall semester when I studied abroad in Jerusalem, Israel at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Spending five months in a completely different environment with an incredible span of cultures, identities, customs, and languages was a truly mind expanding adventure and an unbelievable growth experience.

As an active member of the Jewish community and youth groups throughout high school, it had always been my intention to study abroad in Israel for a semester while attending Penn State. From the stories told to me by friends who had studied there previously, I was anxious to finally make the 12 hour plane ride and leave America behind for a while. I had traveled to Israel on an organized tour previously so I knew what to expect in a tourist sense; however, I was not mentally prepared to be a member of society. Before I left, people raised an eyebrow when I told them my plans for fall semester, especially since I left in the beginning of August during the height of the war with Lebanon in Northern Israel. I knew though, that within Israel and especially Jerusalem, I would be safe and I had nothing to be afraid of. What I soon learned was that the most challenging experience would be dealing with the stereotypes – pre-conceived notions about the Arab and Muslim communities and their role in society.

To be honest, prior to my experience in Israel, I used blanket statements when talking about the Muslim community and Arabs within Israel. These statements were generated from all of my previous “experiences” with these groups. I wore my opinions on my sleeve and didn’t care what others thought, because I had all the answers. I found out through living in East Jerusalem in a predominantly Arab neighborhood that my previous “experiences” were based on stories and other people’s opinions. My political views on the peace conflict in the area were not what changed, but rather my outlook on the individual people in I had the opportunity to know.

EXAMPLE THREE

“People often ask me the question, ‘So what are you anyway?’. I say, ‘I’m a human being. Why? What are you?’” This quote came from a fifteen year old young man named Derek (“Voices from *What*

Are You?”). What makes the recited question so very typical is the race of this adolescent. He is half African-American and half European-American. The intrusiveness of the aforementioned question is only surpassed by the inescapable repetition with which it is asked. In our nation today, there are entire populations of people being asked to account for their mixed race in every facet of life.

It is generally understood that race is a personal characteristic we should embrace and take pride in. However, many people, like Derek, encounter a unique set of circumstances that hinder effortless acceptance of race. It is in the midst of such circumstances that one can truly understand the stark confusion of living as a multiracial individual. The goal in the following paragraphs is to present a realm of incredible beauty, while revealing the actuality of its constant struggle; unveiling the mixed reality that comprises the life of the multi-raced.

What does it mean to be multiracial? A formal definition would claim that *multiracial* means to be made up of or having ancestors of several or various races (“Multiracial”). Multiraciality includes individuals who are biracial, as well as those whose race is a combination of more than two races. Yet if each person were to go back several generations, we would all essentially fulfill this concept of multiraciality. After all, it was mere decades ago when “one-drop” of another race in one’s blood would deem a person as a member of that race (“One-race theory”). Is multiraciality, therefore, an arbitrary matter of opinion and choice?