



The state of diversity in our country and in our organizations is at a point of crisis. I use the word “crisis” quite specifically. We are at an incipient point of history. We have the opportunity to either move into a new future where we constructively deal with the inevitable and irrevocable movement to a more diverse society and an ever changing world. Or we can slouch toward a future where we decline into a deeper and deeper sense of tribalism, one that threatens to tear our society apart. Demographics show that the United States is undeniably more diverse than at any point in history. Yet, we are bedeviled as individuals, families, organizations, and nations in our attempts to be more inclusive, tolerant, and accepting of fundamental human and cultural differences. We are at a crossroads between a time of incredible opportunity and potential peril as we attempt to move forward in our efforts toward building and sustaining greater diversity and inclusion.

Major worldwide demographic shifts are challenging our cultural literacy and understanding of people from various backgrounds. More profoundly, the economic, psychological, emotional, and physical security we have derived from a strong collective national identity is more strained than ever. The current Iraq and Afghanistan wars, immigration issues, religious polarization, a faltering economy, and the struggle for public and private institutions to assimilate large numbers of new citizens



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from unfamiliar backgrounds make this journey even more tenuous.

Change is constant. Yet in times of turmoil, we all seek familiarity. We cannot recover the past. Attempts to do such are futile and stifle our ability to grow our wealth and expand our consciousness. As the author Thomas Wolfe wrote, “You can’t go home again.” Perhaps a better way to say it would be, “You can’t go home in the same way again.” A more prosperous and peaceful world requires us all to embrace new partners with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Public and private institutions and their leaders and stakeholders must strive to include those who traditionally have been disenfranchised on the basis of race, gender, disability, sexual and religious orientation, and age. Only then can we move past our natural discomfort in confronting difference and foreignness to find “a new way home.”

Consider these projections from the U.S. Bureau of Census: By 2020 and 2050, the Caucasian population in the United States will drop to 64 and 53 percent, respectively. In the middle of the next century, the African-American population will nearly double its 1995 size to 61 million. The racial ethnic groups with the highest population increases will be those of Hispanic-Latino and Asian and Pacific Islander origins, with annual growth rates that

may exceed 2 percent until 2030.

The opportunity is unquestionable. As a professional in the diversity field for almost 25 years, and as someone who has been personally involved in diversity issues for more than 40 years,

THE IMPOSSIBLE TO IGNORE REALITY OF GLOBALISM

- *If you're one in a million in China — there are 1300 people just like you. In India, there would be 1100 million people just like you.*
- *The top 25 percent of the population in China with the highest IQs consists of more people than the total population of North America. In India, it's the top 28 percent. India and China have more honor students than Americans have kids.*
- *In 2006, there were 1.3 million college graduates in the United States, 3.1 million in India, and 3.3 million in China.*
- *100 percent of college graduates in India speak English.*
- *In ten years, China will become the number one English-speaking country in the world.*
- *If you took every single job in the U.S. today and shipped it to China, it would still have a labor surplus.*
- *In the next eight minutes, 60 babies will be born in the U.S., 244 babies will be born in China, and 351 babies will be born in India.*
- *Through radio, it took 38 years to get information out to 50 million people. Through television, that number was cut to 13 years. Through the Internet, it takes four years;*
- *There are now 600 million Internet devices in the world.*
- *In 2007, one in eight married couples met online — many chose people from different countries.*
- *Daily text messages now exceed the population of the planet.*
- *Two billion children live in developing countries, with one in three never completing the fifth grade. Feeding and educating these children has become a global health and economic challenge.*

today's conversation is extraordinary. Our changing society and the current political and economic climate underscore the unprecedented importance of evolving the present diversity conversation.

True. There are detractors who steadfastly believe that diversity is simply a liberal social agenda. They fear the “Balkanization of America.” The good news is that businesses and organizations throughout the country see the evidence. They recognize that the changing demographics reflect an extraordinary, even revolutionary occurrence. Census bureau statistics tell us that when the 200 millionth American was born in 1967, 78 percent of Americans were white. Over the next 40 to 50 years, 90 percent of our population growth is expected to come from people of color.

More than 90 percent of Fortune 500 companies have diversity programs of one kind or another. The Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) has become commonplace in corporate America, higher education, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies. Many companies have actual diversity departments. Many CDOs are now part of the C-Suite team providing input on overall corporate strategy, and not just serving as a public relations tool. A decade or two ago, gatherings of diversity professionals would include dozens of people, now they number in the hundreds.

When I ventured into the “diversity business” in the early 1980s, we had to work hard to make the “business case” for diversity. Now, the business case is obvious to anyone who looks around the workplace: increased diversity of the workforce, cost impact

of diversity-related employee retention issues, and a diversity of products and services tailored to marketplace and workforce needs. Businesses are investing hundreds of millions of dollars into their diversity efforts, and not just to protect themselves from lawsuits. Today, the business case is so glaringly apparent that only those who choose to overlook it fail to see it or understand its bottom-line impact on lowering costs and increasing profits.

The face of diversity is all around us. It is in the increasing presence of women, people of color, and people with disabilities in the media, politics, and entertainment. It exists in laws that rigorously police overt discrimination and in educational programs that teach students about history in from new and different perspectives.

Diversity also became a focal point in a presidential election that not only had the first candidate of color representing a major party, but also the first serious run for the presidency by a woman, as well as the second female candidate for vice president. The diversity imperative has given way to a burgeoning field of diversity consultants, like me, available to help people address all manner of diversity-related issues and challenges.

Shifting the Focus from Diversity Content to Diversity Context

So what, then, is the crisis? It would seem that this would, or could, be the golden age of diversity. For all of our impassioned, well-intentioned efforts, consulting, training, Top 50 lists, and maturing diversity departments, the cold, hard reality is that we have not achieved the kinds of results that we have committed to