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*America, The Beautiful! America, The Diverse!*

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Georgie Anne Geyer, an American journalist and columnist for the Universal Press Syndicate wrote, “We should not and cannot challenge all our differences. Each of us brings from our background things which we should share. There is good in diversity.” In examining the meaning behind Geyer’s words, individuals regardless of who, where, what, why or how they are, should be accepted for the special individual that they are. And it’s important to note that individuals are not so different from each other, as they are different like each other. Yes this very diverse global society that we live in would be a much better place if we truly believed what Ms. Geyer said in that there is good in diversity. Unfortunately there are many who have difficulty adapting to change.

Change can be a smooth or radical transition. Speaking of change, the United States of America has experienced more demographic changes than any other world power. Every nation has had its immigration and emigration problems. But the mass immigration that took place to the United States is unmatched elsewhere. In the more than 350 years since the English established their first permanent settlement at Jamestown, some 45 million people have migrated to these shores (Kopan, pp. 37-38).

What’s succinctly evident for articles written by Carnevale’s *Diversity in America*, in *Hindsight*, Kopan’s *Melting Pot: Myth or Reality?* and Castaneda’s *Persisting Ideological Issues of Assimilation in America* is that the United States was historically shaped by its diversity melting pot, seasoned with cultural pluralism. It is still being shaped by the persisting ideologies of the dominant group (only in power, privilege and control, but not in number) and how they feel that the real dominant groups (all non WASP populations) should assimilate. Those who supported Americanization too frequently assumed that American culture was something already complete, which the newcomer must adopt in its entirety (Kopan, p. 43).

The question that may need to be asked is, “What is being American?” What is most interesting and sometimes disturbing is how the first American immigrants, once settled became separatists, prejudice and discriminatory to the indigenous people and new immigrants, (American Indians, Africans, Asians, Southern Europeans, etc.). Castaneda (1971) brings this point home today by stating that “today, their descendants look down upon the Puerto Ricans, the Mexican-Americans, and the Negroes, (African-Americans in 2010) who, as the most recent immigrants or migrants are often considered inferior and a threat to what is American, whatever that means” (pp. 44-45).

The United States has multilayered and culturally diverse immigrants. This is evident in Kopan, Castaneda and Carnevale’s articles. What is also evident is that their historical perspectives paint a very conversational, contemporary and still a confrontational picture of diversity in America.

As I reflect on the insightful pieces of work presented, it’s important to mention that today’s leaders must be ever so diligent and committed to managing and valuing diversity. Whereas I fully understand the social construct by which America was developed, I as a leader today truly believe and plan to advocate for cultural pluralism. I’m reminded of a stanza in the poem, *The Enemy Within* that states, “It’s time to lay aside our differences, discard those stereotypes, generalizations and tunnel vision glasses, but not give up your own culture” (Canida, 2000). We may remain diverse in our ethnic, racial, or religious backgrounds but simultaneously find a common identity as Americans and abide by the rules of our society (Carnevale, p. 15).

Finally, “We need each other. And we must care for one another. Today, we do more than celebrate America; we rededicate ourselves to the very idea of America...An idea ennobled

by the faith that our nation can summon from the myriad diversity the deepest measure of unity”

(Clinton, Inaugural address, January 20, 1993).

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