

Office of Cultural Diversity

Springfield Public Schools

Dr. Nate Quinn,
 Coordinator of Cultural Diversity
 Ms. Gwen Marshall,
 Cultural Diversity Specialist



Diversity Quotes

The real death of America will come when everyone is alike.
 - Ellison, James T.

Diversity: the art of thinking independently together.
 - Forbes, Malcolm S.

Ultimately, America's answer to the intolerant man is diversity, the very diversity which our heritage of religious freedom has inspired.
 - Kennedy, Robert F.

Men hate each other because they fear each other, and they fear each other because they don't know each other, and they don't know each other because they are often separated from each other.
 - Martin Luther King, Jr.

Heritage, Diversity, Integrity and Honor: The Renewed Hope of America

The Library of Congress, <http://hispanicheritagemonth.gov>

Each year, Americans observe National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15, by celebrating the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America. This year's theme: *"Heritage, Diversity, Integrity and Honor: The Renewed Hope of America."*

The observation started in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week under President Lyndon Johnson and was expanded by President Ronald Reagan in 1988 to cover a 30-day period starting on September 15 and ending on October 15. It was enacted into law on August 17, 1988.

The day of September 15 is significant because it is the anniversary of independence for Latin American countries Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on September 16 and September 18, respectively. Also, Columbus Day or Día de la Raza, which is October 12, falls within this 30 day period.

Race Talk When Diversity Equals One

<http://www.tolerance.org/blog/race-talk-when-diversity-equals-one>.
 Submitted by Pamela Cytrynbaum on August 12, 2011

It happens in every class. We're discussing a text, a publication, a current event, a poem. The content doesn't matter. It's the phrase that counts.

A student comments and uses the phrase "African American" or even "black people." The student is white. The reaction of the class – almost all white – is swift. As if choreographed, all eyes turn to the one student of color. The spotlight of eyes shines down and he or she blinks back as if staring into the sun.

The teacher should use this moment to open a discussion. But let's talk first about what some teachers do: Nothing. In many cases, for many reasons, we miss this teachable moment by ignoring it.

Some teachers of mostly white classrooms who choose to ignore the spotlight moment

offer the following reasons:

"I'm teaching science. It's not relevant to the curriculum. It would be awkward."

"I don't know the student of color well enough. He ignores it so why should I make a big deal out of it?"

"I don't feel comfortable talking about race personally. We discuss it in relation to literature, which is where I'm confident it belongs. I do not believe it's my job to force students to confront personal beliefs in a public way, especially my students, who are from rural, white families where a lot racism is taught. We address it in the context of To Kill a Mockingbird, but not in the context of our classroom dynamic."

"It's too unpredictable. I'm concerned about the racism in my students, that I won't know what to say and that I won't be able to protect the two students of color in the class."

"I don't have enough class time to teach them to write complete sentences. How would I have time to even begin getting into that topic?"

All of these challenges are real and should be heard. For those of us who are comfortable tackling the topic, let's work harder to share strategies. Great resources are plentiful. By calling it out, you take a risk. By ignoring it, you take a bigger one.