

Diversity 5.0: A Way Forward

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Abstract We are at an important time-point in American History where diversity is about to enter its second generation of activity. Diversity 5.0 describes where we are today, and where we need to be to truly emerge as a diverse society in America that values one another.

Keywords Diversity · 5.0 · Excellence · Competitiveness · Understanding

We are now at a time-point in American History where diversity is about to enter its second generation of activity. Its etiology and progression have been eloquently reviewed by Dr. Marc Nivet in his paper “Diversity 3.0” [1]. There he applied an IBM model to describe how our understanding of the meaning and importance of diversity has evolved and progressed. Nivet’s framework I believe is an excellent one and can be used in broad ways beyond academic medicine, beyond the board room, and into all aspects of our society.

Diversity 5.0 builds upon the understanding gained in the treatise of Diversity 3.0. It provides a description of where we are today, in 2014, and where we need to be to truly emerge as a diverse society in America that values one another.

Diversity 1.0 came in the era of affirmative action [1]. Born of the civil rights movement, Diversity 1.0 took on the noble challenge of righting the racial/ethnic injustices of the past through consideration of an individual’s physical attributes (race and ethnicity) in decisions regarding education, employment, and so on. Affirmative Action programs were long on social justice, but did not address the issue of excellence, and thus became a target of retribution and retaliation. While still a noble objective for which to strive, programs of

affirmative action have by legislative fiat seen progressive diminution in focus, effectiveness, and strength.

Diversity 2.0 in my view embodied the concept of the diverse environment. Diversity was regarded as “just the right thing to do”. As the nation possesses broad cadres of diverse people, the argument was that so should environments in schools, work, and so on. A buy-in was presented to the majority, in that it was important for the majority to be in environments where minorities were present, as this would enrich and benefit them as much (or more) than those in the minority. Under the Diversity 2.0 rubric, the concept of social justice was played down, and the concept of excellence was hinted at, but not fully explored.

In the **Diversity 3.0** paradigm, diversity is deemed important for achieving the accomplishment of excellence [1]. The definition of diversity progressively is broadened under the 3.0 paradigm to not only include racial/ethnic diversity, but other individual characteristics that could result in a diversity of ideas. Additionally, Diversity 3.0 presents the concept of the interdependence between institutional strategic priorities, excellence, and diversity.

Where are we now? I believe we have entered the era of **Diversity 4.0**. Diversity 4.0 is Diversity as a Public Imperative and a National Priority. The late Dr. Charles Vest, former President of M.I.T., and former President of the National Academy of Engineering spoke passionately regarding the global competitiveness of the USA. He believed our strengths, which would permit us to continue to successfully compete on the world stage, depended upon our strong science and technology base, our free enterprise system, our democracy, and our diversity [2]. It could be inferred that without all four working well and synergistically, we would not successfully compete in the global marketplace.

In 2043, America becomes a nation where the current majority becomes a minority, and where the diverse racial/ethnic groups become the majority [3]. Few, however, realize

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that by 2018, racial/ethnic groups in the minority are projected to become the majority of those under 18 [3], in other words those that we principally educate. Thus, the imperative to embrace, nurture, and support diversity as a priority for our nation and for our national competitiveness is an urgent one, as we must bridge achievement gaps in education, insure equal access to educational opportunities across a wide spectrum, and perform societal functions mimicking other great and emerging nations of the world.

Where do we need to go? I believe the *future* can be termed **Diversity 5.0**, which is “Diversity as a Destination Achieved only through **Understanding**”. In order to illustrate the meaning of this, I provide this axiom: *Diversity is commendable, so long as those who would promote diversity do not forget the injustices that necessitate programs for Diversity to exist*. I am in a way paraphrasing Dr. Martin Luther King, when he was writing regarding Philanthropy.

In the context of racial/ethnic groups, the necessity for Diversity 1.0 to 4.0 is based in large part on past injustices promulgated on racial/ethnic minorities in this country. For African Americans, for example, the degradation of slavery, the appearance of Jim Crow laws, and the resistance, sometimes termed “massive resistance” to new laws offering equal opportunity are part of the legacy to which programs in Diversity attempt to address, now through an emphasis on excellence and very often to the exclusion of social justice.

But the roots of injustice, bias then and elements of unconscious and conscious bias existing now are still present. Can

programs of Diversity ultimately be successful if these issues are not addressed? And can our country be successful if Diversity is not successful?

Diversity 5.0 calls for us to promote and sustain Diversity, but to also understand underlying causes that may inhibit Diversity from being successful. Solutions can vary and may take the form of unconscious bias training, or it may take the form of uncomfortable, but necessary discussions regarding continued bias occurring due to race/ethnicity. I suggest a process of Truth and Reconciliation be explored. Diversity 5.0 in its broadest sense states that true “inclusive excellence” embodied in Diversity 4.0 can only occur when root issues among people are candidly discussed and addressed.

Conflicts of interest High ethical standards were adhered to in the formulation of this manuscript. The authors (C.L.) has no relevant conflict of interest.

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