Case Study 14.1

Responding to Comment about Diversity in America

Each of these statements is responding to the reality of diversity in America today. Assume that someone made each of these comments to you. Write a brief comment indicating how you would respond.

1. So with all this increasing diversity I am supposed to learn about the different groups in our society. I don’t have time for that. Besides, people in their professions who are directly affected can handle these diversity issues. I prefer not to be involved.

Comment:

2. I really don’t plan on working in an area with a large ethnic or racial population, so diversity won’t be an issue for me, or for my co-workers.

Comment:

3. Don’t get me wrong, I think it is probably a good thing if American youth develops pluralistic attitudes, but my point is that I am more concerned with whether these young people can qualify for college or do a good job in the work force.

Comment:

4. The more time we spend studying multiculturalism, the more we will really be promoting separatism rather than uniting all of our citizenry. I went through the system when there was no multicultural focus and I don’t think it hurt me.

Comment:

5. America is a melting pot. Everyone has an equal chance. If you want to make it in this country, all you need is a little desire and initiative.

Comment:
6. Why make such a big deal out of human differences? We’re all Americans here. Why do we need to emphasize diversity and pluralism? We all just need jobs so that we can contribute to the U.S. economy and NOT have to be supported by taxpayers.

Comment:

7. Why focus on diversity and how everyone in America is different? Besides, more than 90% of all human characteristics are alike, not different. That’s what we should be emphasizing, our similarities not our differences.

Comment:

8. I know the United States is a diverse country, but we’ve been a diverse country for a long time. I think we’ve been doing a good enough job getting along? Why do we need to keep talking about pluralism and forcing people to adopt pluralistic attitudes?

Comment:

Modified from: Fred Rodriguez (1983)
Education in A Multicultural Society

Critical Thinking Question:

1. Why are many people so reluctant to deal with diversity? Why are some people resistant to developing pluralistic attitudes that promote accepting and affirming diversity?

2. How do you think Americans will respond to diversity when people of color become the majority of the population, which is supposed to occur sometime during the 21st century?
Case Study 14.2

What is a Good Society?

Construct a hypothetical society that would illustrate your concept of a “good society.” Begin by identifying what ethical principles would guide all members of this society. As you identify these, you should also describe how these principles will shape the way the society will function. As you are designing your society, you should be thinking about having to live in it for the rest of your life, not just now as a young person but as a person who will age and whose needs will change.

As you are designing this society, you must also understand that although you will live in it, you will not necessarily be the person you are right now; that is, you will have the same interests and personality, but you will not necessarily be a member of the groups to which you belong right now. In other words, prior to beginning your life in this society, you will not know your gender, race, ethnic background, religion, age, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or if you will have a disability.

With these conditions in mind, construct your version of a “good society.”

Based on an activity developed by economist John Rawls
From: Thieves in High Places (2003) by Jim Hightower

Critical Thinking Questions:

1. What aspects of our current American society did you keep in your construction of a good society?

2. What are the critical ways your society is different from the way American society exists today?