

DIVERSITY CAFE

THIS MONTH'S SPECIALS

Juneteenth

Café News

The Black History Committee will be celebrating JUNETEENTH on Tuesday, **June 19, 2012**, at the Public Works Headquarters from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Please pre-order a special BBQ lunch from the Cafeteria. June 19 is **Juneteenth**, also known as **Freedom Day** or **Emancipation Day**, commemorating the announcement of the abolition of slavery in the States of Texas and Louisiana in 1865.

Test Your Knowledge: True or False!

1. A racial group is a group that is socially set apart because of obvious physical differences.
2. An ethnic group is a group that is set apart from others because of its national origin or distinctive cultural patterns.
3. The first alarm clock was made by a black mathematician.
4. There was no Federal ruling protecting the U.S. citizen's rights to marry a person of another race until 1970.

(Answers below)

Café Quote of the Month

"We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color."

-- Maya Angelou

June Café Special

"Distorted Vision: Knowing Your Own Culture in Order to Know Others"

It may seem odd to say that knowing your own culture is an important step in understanding other cultures. Of course we need to learn about the values and beliefs of other groups, but it is equally important to look within and identify what we value, what we need, and how we look at the world.

It is as if each of us is in a fish bowl. The fish swims around inside the bowl and is surrounded by water and glass. The fish is unaware of the water and the glass and most important, does not realize that those two substances distort the accuracy with which he sees the outside world. Our culture is like that water and glass. We see the world through a distorted screen created by our deeply and often subconsciously-held values and beliefs.

The first step in solving this problem is obvious: Learn as much about other cultures as you can. The second is the one that is so often forgotten: Learn how your own culture feels about various issues be it body language, communication style, or any other cultural feature.

So, if knowing one's own culture is not automatic, how can we achieve this knowledge? The answer lies in exposure and observation. First, be around other cultures. It is impossible to do step two if you do not have the opportunity to interact with those who are different from yourself. Second, when around people from different cultures, watch for three things: moments of tension; moments of misunderstanding; and, moments of anger.

When one of these happens, don't panic, observe. Observe yourself and this means observing your culture. "What assumption was I making about the situation before the negativity started?" Those assumptions, just like your behavior, had to grow out of your culture; looking at them will help awaken the cultural self-awareness that is so important in making cross-cultural relationships work. Yes, knowledge of other cultures is important, but looking within has as much to teach us about what works cross-culturally as all the anthropology in all the libraries of the world.

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Diversity Calendar

There are five events celebrating Juneteenth in Los Angeles.

For details about all five, please visit:

<http://www.ourweekly.com/los-angeles/juneteenth-calendar>.

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