

# Celebrating Difference

## **Beyond the Melting Pot**

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# Goal

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- This lecture aims to provide parents, grandparents, mentors, and family members with the vocabulary and contemporary debates around *difference*, *sameness*, *normalcy*, and *diverse identities* so that we can foster open dialogue within our communities and families.



# This again?

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Nearly 18 years ago, Americans debated the food visuals of whether we were a Salad Bowl or, as Samuel P. Huntington famously put it, tomato soup:

“America is...an Anglo-Protestant tomato soup to which immigration adds celery, croutons, spices, parsley, and other ingredients that enrich and diversify the taste, but which are absorbed into what remains fundamentally tomato soup”—Samuel P. Huntington, 2004, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America’s National Identity*

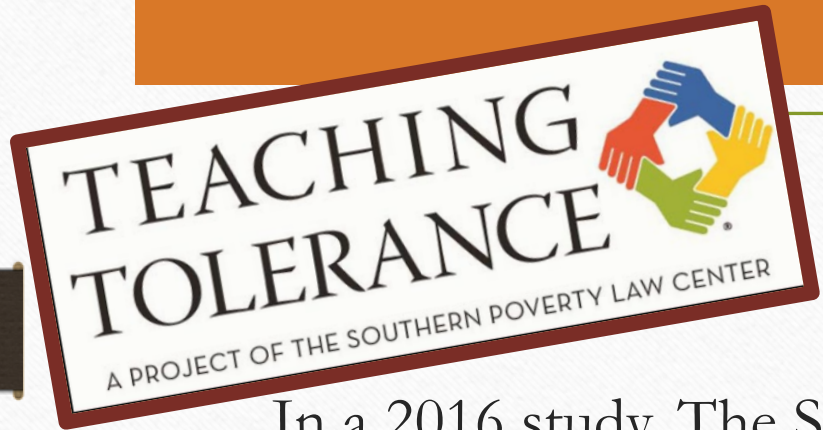


# Why do we still care?





# How Does the Current Climate Affect our Young People?



In a 2016 study, The Southern Poverty Law Center Program, Teaching Tolerance, polled 10,000 teachers, counselors, and administrators about the impact of the 2016 Election Year on schools. They found the election had a **negative impact on U.S. Schools, specifically around issues of difference.**



# Current Climate and School Environment

“There is a lack of trust in the school right now. Many students are unclear as to how to talk to each other.”

— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER, WASHINGTON

## THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO MENTIONED ...

SWASTIKAS	54
CONFEDERATE FLAGS	31
THE KKK	40
“BUILD THE WALL”	476
DEPORTATION	672
NAZI	13
THE N-WORD	117
LYNCHING	7
NOOSE	4
AFRICA (sent back to)	89
SLAVERY (return to)	20

Over 2,500 educators described specific incidents of bigotry and harassment that can be directly traced to election rhetoric. These incidents include graffiti (including swastikas), assaults on students and teachers, property damage, fights and threats of violence.

- Eight in 10 report heightened anxiety on the part of marginalized students, including immigrants, Muslims, African Americans and LGBT students.

- Four in 10 have heard derogatory language directed at students of color, Muslims, immigrants and people based on gender or sexual orientation.



# Defining Diversity

“I have a hard time accepting diversity as a synonym for justice. Diversity is a corporate strategy. It’s a strategy designed to ensure that the institution functions in the same way that it functioned before, except now that you now have some black faces and brown faces. It’s a difference that doesn’t make a difference.”

Dr. Angela Davis, Scholar and Activist





# Working Definition of Diversity for 2018

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The representation and holistic integration of multiple experiences of race, gender, sexuality class, religion, and ability identities into our everyday experiences, media, and discussions.





# Difference in the Western Imagination: Enlightenment Thought

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“To understand political power right, and derive it from its original, we must consider what state all men are naturally in, and that is, a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the will of any other man.”

--John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*



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Enlightenment thought argued that *man* (specifically) possessed reason and *natural law/ natural rights* that are endowed by God.



# Difference and Diversity in the Western Imagination

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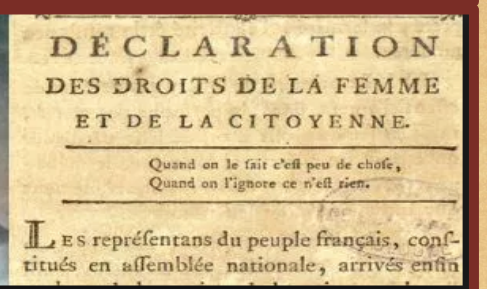
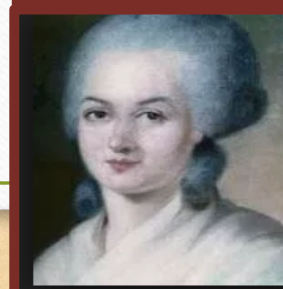
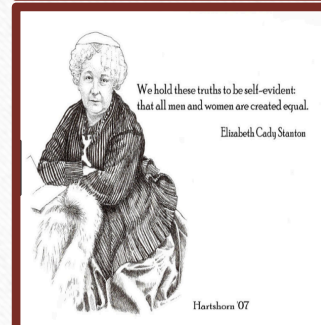
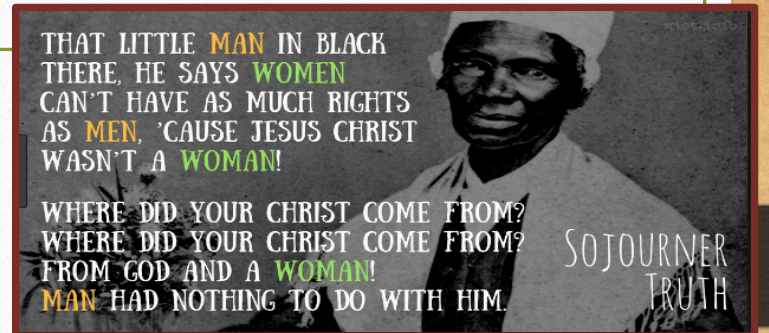
Enlightenment thought also influenced the authors of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, the French Declaration of Man and Citizen, the U.S. Bill of Rights, and others. These, in addition to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, maintain a common core precept that human beings have the same, or universal, rights.





# Paradox: Universality as Sameness

Primary challenges to the model came from a feminist perspective. It is important to note that white feminist perspectives did not always (if ever) include women of color in their work, but that women of color consistently worked with and for white women to achieve progressive representation within a framework of universal white male perspectives and laws.





# CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO DIFFERENCE AND DIVERSITY



"It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength. We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of that tapestry are equal in value no matter their color." —Maya Angelou

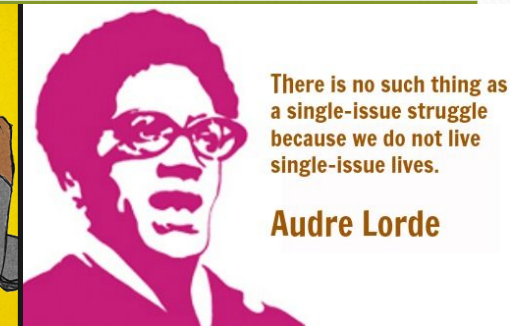


“Dominator culture has tried to keep us all afraid, to make us choose safety instead of risk, **sameness** instead of **diversity**. Moving through that fear, finding out what connects us, reveling in our differences; this is the process that brings us closer...”-bell hooks



# INTERSECTIONALITY AS A MEANS TO DIVERSITY

- Intersectionality was coined by Kimberle Krenshaw, Columbia University Law Professor in 1989.
- a theory by which we observe that certain aspects of human identity do not separately identify them, but intersect. For example, race, gender, class, and sexuality do not exist separately, but can exist in one person at one time, and these can provide multiple fronts on which that person experiences the world.





# Ways to Celebrate Diverse and Plural Identities

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- Invite and allow folks to share their identities with you. Letting folks choose how they wish to identify across race, sexuality, and ability empowers others and sends a message that we respect plural and diverse identities.
- Be willing to allow your children to express multiple facets of themselves, and multiple identities. Encourage children to be open to their peers' exploration and different experiences as well.



An illustration of several hands of different skin tones (dark brown, light brown, yellow, and white) stacked together in a supportive gesture. The hands are arranged in a circular pattern, with some overlapping others. The background is a soft, light purple and blue gradient.

# Diverse Skin Tones

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- Be willing to have conversations about the spectrum of skin color—it's not offensive to note that we are all shades on a spectrum, and that's really cool! None of us is better than anyone else, but we're part of a beautiful tapestry.
- Start with your own family, and go from there. Be careful not to single anyone out or draw people into the conversation who haven't consented and aren't on board with what you're trying to do.



# Building Awareness and Sense of Self

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- Celebrating plural identities will also help boost self-esteem and promote a sense of being more than one thing.
  - For girls, it is often that we are more than “pretty”, or for boys it is that we are more than “strong.” Encourage those diverse descriptors, and encourage children to do the same with their peers.



# Gender Diversity

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Gender Diversity refers to the many ways in which we feel and express our gender.



# Ways to Celebrate Gender Diversity

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One way we can be supportive of gender diversity is by changing language from “boys and girls” when addressing a group of children, and instead finding more neutral language, such as “friends.”



# WE NEED DIVERSE BOOKS

Educators on the frontlines of diversity in education argue that children exposed to diverse characters in books grow up to be more empathetic and less likely to develop low-self esteem when they see themselves represented in literature.

Among books about black characters, the biggest percentage of books (about a third) are biographical, like *Skit-scat raggedy cat*, about Ella Fitzgerald. A quarter of books with black protagonists are about oppression, like *Granddaddy's turn*, about a black boy seeing his grandfather vote for the first time. About 5% are about folklore.

And a full 60% of books about Latino or Hispanic characters are about food or culture, like *What can you do with a rebozo?*, about the uses of the woven Mexican shawl.

“These are important, but not rich, and can perpetuate stereotypes that Hispanic children are different or ‘other,’” says Aronson. “The same is true about African American children; it’s a stereotype—that black children are in a struggle or somehow superheroes and ever resilient.”

# RESOURCES

**WNDB**  
weneeddiversebooks.org

MENU

Imagine a world in which  
all children can see  
themselves in the pages of  
a book.

**embracerace**  
RAISING A BRAVE GENERATION

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## EMBRACERACE! TOGETHER, RAISING KIDS IN A WORLD WHERE RACE MATTERS

EmbraceRace is a multiracial community of parents, teachers, experts, and other caring adults who support each other to meet the challenges that race poses to our children, families, and communities.

TEACHING TOLERANCE

[CLASSROOM RESOURCES](#) [PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT](#) [MAGAZINE & PUBLICATIONS](#) [BUILD A LEARNING PLAN](#)

## EDUCATING FOR A DIVERSE DEMOCRACY

Discover and develop world-class materials with a community of educators committed to diversity, equity and justice.



# What does this mean for us as a Christian Community?

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For the one spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free--and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. –Corinthians 12





Questions?

