

Diversity Journals: One and Two

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Diversity Journal One: Positive Experience

This course has open my eye to how difficult it is to define diversity. After careful consideration, input from my peers, classroom discussion and reading different articles and textbooks, I have a more rounded perspective of the definition of diversity and the angle or framework which I see and understand our unique world. I believe diversity is recognizing differences amongst people, and understanding everyone is unique. Diversity is not limited to gender, age, sexual orientation, race, nationality, disability or veteran status. We are diverse because of our education level, socioeconomic status and our lived experiences to name a few. My definition of diversity is influenced by my personal experience as a young African American, Veteran, Seventh Day Adventist, disabled, wife, mother and so much more.

Based on my lived experiences, I believe I see diversity through a human rights lens. Michàlle Mor Barak (2014) discusses the United Nations: International Bill of Human Rights and Universal Declaration of Human Rights, both documents explain the fundamental freedoms humans are entitled to. The Declaration of Human Rights according to Mor Barak (2014), declares that liberty and equality is a birthright for all human and we are to be free of discrimination based on any differences. The International Bill of Human Rights is relevant to employment and declare all people have a right to social security, right to work, right to equal pay for equal work, right to rest and leisure and the right to a standard of living adequate for health and wellbeing.

I believe I see life and people with a human rights lens because of my lived experiences, which has given me compassion and empathy. As a little girl, I grew up underprivileged. My community did not have electricity or running water. We walked to the river that was a couple mile away to catch water to meet our basic needs. When I relocated to America, I encounter

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discrimination, lack of understanding and acceptance because I was different. I did not speak like my peers, I do not look like my peers, I dress differently, I eat different food, and my thoughts and opinion does not conform to mainstream America. These experience as a little girl has not only made me compassionate and empathetic but has made me resilient for our robust, unique and changing world.

In 2012, I was deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and spend many months in the Middle East. During my deployment, I have a chance to experience a culture that seemed so different from mine at first look. In the Middle East, men and women do not engage with one another unless they are family members. The women dressed from head to toe in long gowns and conceal their faces with khimars or headscarves. My fellow servicemember questions how they could put up with being covered with a hijab from head to toe in 120-degree weather. The food they eat was very different, often spicey, and have odors and smells our nose were not familiar with. Many of my fellow servicemembers maintain their distance from the culture, but I dove in head first. I tried many local dishes including machboos, muttabaq samak, shawarma and Kuwait marabyan. I even had an oppportunity to visit a local mosque. Many of my fellow servicemembers frowned upon the idea of going to a mosque as if it was disrespectful to my own religion. I got all dressed up in my Hijab and entered the place of worship, it is one of the most beautiful places I had ever seen. The hand painting letters and words on the walls, trimmed in gold were breath taken. The carpet that ran throughout the building was the finest Persian rug. This rug was the softest rug I had ever came in contact with. Our guide encourages us to get down on the floor and experience what was by far the most elegant and most expensive rug I have ever laid on.

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What I took away most from my trip to the mosque was to be open-minded and not past judgment without knowledge. As we moved through the mosque and entered the second largest prayer room in the building, our guide points to the chair of the Imam or prayer leader. Our tour guide explains that the last prayer was lead by a female Imam. I was shocked, based on the outward appearance of how Muslim women covered themselves and lack of interaction with men, I did not think they were allowed to lead prayer for both men and women. The tour guide explains that Islam, in fact, placed no restrictions on the ability of women to preach, teach and guide both men and women. My trip to the Middle East and the experience I had in the mosque is definitely an experience that reminds me to keep an open mind and not to judge without knowledge. I learned a lot that day not only about my own preconceive notions but also about the diverse Islam culture and Muslim faith. Below is a picture of me at the Mosque and sitting in the Imam's chair.



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Diversity Journal Two: Negative Experience

As an African American immigrant, I have experienced my fair share of discrimination. I have been discriminated and insulted because of my race, told I am pretty good at that task for an African American, or I am pretty for a black girl. While in the military I was often told I could not take specific assignment because I was a woman. The men do it better mentality was dominant during my time of service. In the military, I operated the .50 caliber machine gun during convoy for my section and carried an M-240 Machine gun and grenade launcher during foot-patrols. These weapons were not seen as ladylike, but are not assigned based on gender but by rank, duty section, and command positions.

I also have been discriminated against because of my age. I am one of the youngest employees at my job site, I am often providing ideas and invoking thought during our weekly scrum brainstorming meeting. At one particular session, I proposed a plan to track employment outcomes at our job fairs. This idea was dismissed without a second thought. About six months later a department manager offered the exact same tracking plan and everyone loved it. Within days I was implementing and executing the procedure, I had discussed months before. When I inquired why the manager's proposal was taken into account and mine was dismissed, I was informed that based on the manager's experience, years of service and maturity, people pay more attention to what she has to say. On the other hand, because I am young, have lots of ideas all the time, I do not always listen to. This situation bruised my ego, but I did regain some satisfaction as some co-workers, pointed out I was the originator of the idea.

At no time is discrimination alright but, at sometimes as a minority you just have to accept the world for what it is. We also have to pick our battles, not every war is ment to be fought. Despite being discriminated against because of my race, gender, and age, I never

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expected to be discriminated against for my military status. In 2011, I was terminated from my position as a customer service resolution specialist because of my military obligation. During my interview for the job, I was very transparent that I was in the military and sometimes activated for short missions. About three weeks into my employment, I received military order to report to duty for two weeks. As soon as I acquired knowledge of the activation, I contacted my supervisor for the collection position and notified her of the orders. The next time I reported to work, I was called into the office and terminated. The justification for the firing was my military obligation was negatively impacting the business. The supervisor stated she would have to hire someone else for the times I was not available, and that was not fair to the company.

I knew this act of firing me based on my military status was illegal, so I sought help. I contacted a military service organization that spoke with the company and explained my rights as a servicemember. The Uniformed Service Employment and Reemployment Rights Act protects military personnel under federal orders while New York offers numerous of protection for State ordered activation (Campbell,2010). The organization contacted my employer and discussed the employers rights and my rights. Eventually, I was welcome back to work. The tension at work was noticeable, I felt as if I was not wanted there, as supervisors engaged and interacted with other workers while ignoring me. Assignments were left on my chair, when I stepped out of the room, and I was asked to communicate by email so there was a record of all conversations. I had enough after about two weeks and resigned. I felt hurt, humiliated and retaliated against. I have come to the realization that discrimination happens and not everyone is comfortable with the diverse world that we live in. Dealing with discrimination has given me a thick skin, push me to stand up for the voiceless and to seek knowledge.

References

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