

Chapter 10

The Diversity Horizon: Looking Ahead

ABSTRACT

As they prepare for graduation, college students often make numerous plans for the future. They consider the job market and prospects for marriage, family, and other relationships. Pursuing a diversity-rich future is also important, and in this chapter, the five interviewees discuss the potential role of culture in their post-college lives. Additional considerations include looking at the world through a global lens, approaching diversity as a value, and engaging the outrage of those who have suffered at the hands of injustice. Though even the best crystal ball cannot predict what will happen tomorrow, today's careful planning with sensitivity towards culture may be sufficient for ensuring a brighter road ahead.

INTRODUCTION

I want to tell you a story – a story of when I was an undergrad student. I had a job working at a restaurant across the street from campus. At the time, I didn't have a car and that was the only job I could walk to. I had about two years of experience by the time I went to apply to this job at this particular restaurant. I was told that I could not apply to be a server right away, and that I had to start off as a hostess like everybody else. And once I started working there, I started noticing that all these people would come and apply for jobs as servers and they would get them right away. But I didn't. I noticed

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that everybody that had been promoted to server was Caucasian, most of them had blonde hair, blue eyes, and there were three hostesses. I was the one that was Latina, the other hostess was Asian, and there was another hostess that was African American. We were not servers. After two years, I gained enough courage to go to my boss [and talk about it]. ~Sienna

Human beings constantly think about what will happen next. We dream up solutions for problems and mull over ways to get what we want. Yet one thing we cannot do is live in the future. We can *plan* for it and make assumptions based on what happened before. But we cannot dip our toe into it – even for one minute – and then come back to the here and now with new insights. After two years of experiencing discrimination in the workplace, Sienna, a faculty member whose video narrative opens this chapter, courageously walked into her boss’s office. She could not predict what would happen when they met. To ensure success, Sienna likely rehearsed what she would say and constructed a preferred future, or “longer-term vision, destination or outcome that can be achieved through careful planning and . . . action” (O’Neill, 2009, p. 2). Fortunately, the discussion with her boss resulted in promotion to a server position – a noteworthy achievement considering that the outcome could have been far different.

Like Sienna before her meeting, students at the end of their college journeys are filled with uncertainty. Only a few years earlier, they frantically attempted to acclimate into campus life and build social and academic capital. Now, they worry about making their mark beyond the confines of the university. For students of color, the challenges before them include managing bias and cultivating their voices in a world of racial discord. Sienna found her voice when she asserted her needs after carefully deliberating on an unjust practice. Narratives like hers provide inspiration for all who strive to do the same.

Looking towards graduation, the five interviewees faced division and political unrest that promised challenges ahead. Yet they had overcome their *own* struggles in college, grown in their identity development, and looked forward with a sense of enthusiasm and motivation for change. In this chapter, we will explore the hoped-for tomorrows of Lina, Darnell, Alice, Sheila, and Talia as they discuss employment, family, and general nuggets of wisdom gleaned from their short but rich lifetimes. We’ll then take a broader view on how their stories and others contribute to preferred outcomes for cultural diversity in college on both personal and global fronts.

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