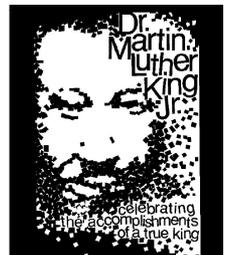


Choices
Diversity
Community
Love
Tolerance
Acceptance
Compassion
Kindness
Understanding
Unity
Columbia
Respect
Harmony

The Rich Tapestry of Diversity

writings from Columbia students

*Columbia Values Diversity Celebration
January 16, 2014*



Diversity

Libby Stiles

Diversity. We have had wars about this one word. Diversity. It's a powerful word, if it can kill thousands of people it is powerful. All the outcomes of those wars are the same. Everyone is different and you just have to be okay with that. If everyone was the same the world would be boring. No art, you would know everything just because someone around you knows it. All our leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, George Washington would just be people who lived awhile ago. Everyone is different, you just have to accept that as a fact.

Mrs. Kunkel, 4th Grade, Shepard Elementary

Different

Rachel Bailey

You could be tall
You could be short

You could be a girl
You could be a boy

You could have long hair
You could have short hair

You could have a wheel chair
You could not have a wheel chair

Everybody is different we will stay different
And nobody can change that we are different.
If you think that is wrong then what if everybody
Was tall or had short hair or if everybody was a
Girl. Everybody is different no matter what.

Ms. Germeroth, 4th Grade, Rock Bridge Elementary

It's not fair...

Cameron Blacklock

It's not fair when people don't get along. Some people make fun of other people who have disabilities. I'm glad we are all allowed to go to school together. It only takes one person to make a difference. Everyone can take time to make a difference in our world.

Everyone can get along. No matter if you are black or white or any race. We should all get along.

Dr. Martin Luther King made peace for the people and allowed us to have equal rights that's why everybody gets along but we should always remember Dr. Martin Luther King's speech. Thank you Dr. Martin Luther King for allowing us to celebrate diversity.

Ms. Germeroth, 4th Grade, Rock Bridge Elementary

Diversity Poem

Maryum Khaja

Diversity means to be different
Like every person in the world
Be nice, be fair, give encouragement
As much as you can in our world

We are all from different places
We all have different races
So even if you're black or white
You will always still have the right
To be a separate human being
And to always be agreeing

Martin Luther King was an amazing man
He gave many speeches which now can
Show how the world has changed
Because of that one good man

Mrs. Brunner, 5th Grade, Islamic School of Columbia

Difference

Annabelle G. Lawrence

Without difference we wouldn't be human.

Without difference we couldn't have feelings.

Without difference we wouldn't be able to follow our dreams.

Without difference we can't be creative.

Without difference we couldn't feel sympathy for others.

Without difference we could never do good things for the world.

Without difference the human race could never exist.

Difference is what keeps Martin Luther King's dream alive.

Ms. Hassemer, 4th Grade, Shepard Elementary

Columbia's Restaurants of Diversity

Elsa Dickerson

If you could open a restaurant in Columbia what type of restaurant would it be? Italian, Mexican, Korean, French, Indian, Japanese, European? You may not realize it but choosing what type of restaurant you'll open, you are promoting diversity!

How do restaurants promote diversity? Well, think of all the different restaurants in Columbia. There's: Bangkok Gardens (Thai), El Rancho (Mexican), Kui Korean BBQ (Korean), The Rome (Italian), Sake (Japanese), and Les Bourgeois Bistro (French), this is only a few threads of the tapestry. The restaurants give you a taste from the place they come from. For example, would you have ever tried a food from Thailand if there wasn't anywhere you could try it? In other words restaurants promote diversity because they weave together all of our cultures and make us different but keep us together.

In Columbia restaurants can promote diversity. People travel to Columbia to taste our colorful diverseness without having to travel to the country from which the food came. Just by picking the type of restaurant to start, you are promoting diversity.

Ms. McCarty, 6th Grade, West Middle School

Cultural Diversity

William Hern

Celebrate the diversity of different backgrounds
Expand our knowledge on other countries
Become aware of people's true opinions
Celebrate the diversity of different backgrounds
Discovering others' cultural dances
Helping friends understand and feel welcome
Celebrate the diversity of different backgrounds
Finding out what people like to do in their free time
Reaching out to help others in a time of need
Celebrate the diversity of different backgrounds

Mrs. Kirkpatrick, 8th Grade, Oakland Middle School

High Steppers

Shanya Brown

Have you ever seen The High Steppers before? If not, after my essay you'll want to! The High Steppers help create diversity because anyone can do it if you just put your heart, time, mind, and effort in to it.

The High Steppers is just a group of young adults to 1st grade, but on occasion there can be younger. There is a 4 year old master drummer and he's good but he's too small to be in parades and carry a drum but he's a little rusty! The High Steppers sometimes travel just to be in parades and step shows. Anyone can be in High Steppers, no matter what color what race, beliefs, religions, because we treat everyone the same with respect. The High Steppers is a great dance and drum line. The High Stepper program is great exercise, good fun, and has some discipline but it's still really fun. The High Steppers also helps build character. Such as leadership, health, life skills, education, sportsmanship, team work, art.

Mr. Roe said, "The best thing about my job is going to practice and having the opportunity to share things that I had as a little kid growing up. To also help a kid with whatever situation he or she is in at home, I do this out of the kindness in my heart. I also did drill

team and it helped me a lot." Mr. Roe still is actively involved with drill team with his daughter Lexi at his side. Currently my brother and I are involved and take lots of pride in what we do, drill team is something we love to do, and watch.

The main thing is that no matter what condition you are in you can join drill team with a good attitude and lots of effort you'll make it just fine. I would love to see you dancing or drumming along with us or watching us cheering us on. Thank you, I hope you enjoyed my essay.

Ms. McCarty, 6th Grade, West Middle School

Can You Imagine

Nate

Can you imagine owning the only Jewish synagogue in town? I sure can't. A lot of kids go there twice a week. It is the smallest synagogue I have ever seen. It is also the best for the kids. Each kid has a chance to lead prayers every week. Around Thanksgiving people from other religions can come and learn how to lead. And they teach us about their religions.

Congregation Beth Shalom is what I am talking about. I go there every Wednesday and Sunday to learn about Jewish culture. We practice our Hebrew on Wednesday. On Sundays we learn about Jewish culture. There is an interfaith Thanksgiving celebration the Sunday before Thanksgiving. People from lots of religions and places come and learn some Jewish songs. After that they teach us songs or traditions from their culture. Every day the Rabi teaches us a story from the Torah.

These are all the reasons I chose to write about Congregation Beth Shalom. I think it is a great place. It supports diversity in a lot of ways. It participates in the Interfaith Thanksgiving celebration. I have a choice to go there every week and I choose to go there. That is why I chose Congregation Beth Shalom.

Ms. McCarty, 6th Grade, West Middle School

Diversity

Mamay Si

I probably wouldn't be the person I am today, if our community wasn't diverse. I might not be here in the first place, but I am here because our community is diverse.

Diversity meant most to me on my first day of school, in 2009.

My neck burned as I walked down my third grade hall. I was so scared and nervous, because I spoke no English and I was afraid that my classmates won't like me. I was afraid I won't be able to make friends. My fears didn't come true though, because my classmates, they were actually nice to me. They didn't treat me different because of my ethnic group, or because of my race. They helped me with the things that I didn't understand, which was more than the things that I did understand. And they treated me equally like I was one of them, and I am thankful for all the things they've done for me.

Sometimes, I sit in my room and wonder, what would it be like if our community, state, or nation is not diverse? I can't imagine. Wars, inequality, injustice, racism, and there would be no peace. We should be thankful that people like Martin Luther King Jr. existed, and we should never forget the stories of the people that lost their lives while fighting to beat racism, and inequality.

Everyone has different opinions, ideas, and different background stories. You never know, you might hurt a person without even trying to. We should all respect each other, because when we all come together, our community will grow stronger, and become a better and happier place for everyone to live.

Mrs. Wahid, 8th Grade, Smithton Middle School

Muriel Battle

Josh Johnson

Dr. Muriel Battle was a pioneer in the desegregation of Columbia Public Schools and in the local community. Throughout her career at West Junior High School she was a teacher, an assistant principal and eventually the principal. All together Dr. Battle spent forty years serving Columbia Public Schools.

Dr. Battle won many awards for her community service and for leading by example for the women in her community. Among these awards are the 1996 Athena award and the Columbia Chamber of Commerce Citizens of the year award, which she won with her husband, Eliot. "I take some credit for removing some of the barriers of gender and race when administrators and leaders are selected."

Ms. McCarty, 6th Grade, West Middle School

The Rich Tapestry of Diversity

Gillian Stiles

We are all a painting
Different colors painted on a large masterpiece
Brought together on one tapestry
We are all a mosaic
Everyone a different tile
Each tile telling someone's story
We are all a quilt
Everyone a piece of patchwork
Each piece sewn together
If one piece of patchwork unravels,
We all unravel down to the last thread
We are all a large piece of artwork
Sewn, glued, and painted together
No matter what color we are, or what our history is,
We are all a masterpiece

Mrs. Kirkpatrick, 8th Grade, Oakland Middle School

Blind Boone and Diversity

Jack Martin

"If we cannot now end our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity." Those words are from President John F. Kennedy.

To me, what he said was if we cannot stop racism, we can at least make the world safe for diversity. Blind Boone, who was a blind, African-American musician from Columbia, represented diversity. He reached out to everyone to make music.

The music that made him famous was ragtime. He showed people that anyone from any culture, race, or with a disability could do something amazing.

Blind Boone had to overcome three things. He was blind and people thought he could not do much, but he made famous ragtime music.

He was also poor. He did not have much money at all, but made a lot of money because he could do music so well.

The last thing he had to get over were bad comments from people who did not treat African Americans with respect. Some people thought that an African American like Blind Boone should not be creating famous music and ragtime.

Those three things might have stopped him from becoming a great man, but Blind Boone did not stop. His music inspires everyone, and brings different cultures together. He changed Jazz forever, and made great contributions to diversity.

Ms. McCarty, 6th Grade, West Middle School

Diversity

Dashon Foster

You're walking down the street and see different people every day,
Just imagine people that looked like you ... No way.

From the head to the feet,
Everyone is unique.

From walking to running,
To jumping to funny.

We are all different, from your skin tone,
Or even your ringtone.

We all like different TV shows,
And some people instead of TV they like to shoot arrows.

Some people like Nike, others like Adidas,
But we all should love the Philadelphia Eagles.

Some people like LeBron James some Dwyane Wade,
But Derrick Rose is better in every way.

If you don't like basketball it's ok with me,
We all different in ways it's called diversity.

Mrs. Jones, 8th Grade, West Middle School

Town of the Free

Cathy Saidi

Columbia, town of the free
So many different people to see
Different colors, different faces
Different cultures, different races.

If you come here, prepare to find
Lots of difference, all the time.
Nobody is ever the same,
For we celebrate the dream
of Martin Luther King.

We're like a blanket beautiful and blue,
Each patch sewn on different, but true.
One may be purple, one may be green,
But they are sewn together in perfect harmony.

Columbia, Columbia, town of the free,
Where everyone's different, including me.
Without it we would be alike,
But so boring we would barely survive.

Mrs. Jones, 8th Grade, West Middle School

Columbia's Rich Diversity

Juliana Custer

I feel as if everyone plays a unique role in the rich diversity of our community. Everyone in Columbia has a different race, religion, and culture, and I think that's what makes our community beautiful. My mother was born in Mexico, and she moved to the United States to become a citizen. My Father's mother was a hundred percent Mexican as well. So I am seventy-five percent Mexican. This means that I have a different culture than others. On my mom's side we celebrate the Mexican traditions like Day of the Dead, and

Cinco de Mayo. On my dad's, we celebrate Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Easter. Sometimes it's overwhelming. I'm blessed that I have the interesting background that I do. The great thing is, my family can use our ethnicity and teach it to others. My mom's a Spanish teacher, and she loves to tell her students her culture and her language. Every person in Columbia has their diversity. I've had experience with diversity; I grew up going to a school that many of the students there were from different cultures. Every year our school would have a multicultural fair. It fascinated us. Students from different countries would bring items from where they are from. I'd learn new things about Africa, China, Canada, Spain, Germany, and more! I loved the tastes and smells from different countries. The rich feeling of knowing about culture is amazing. I feel like I am an important part of the larger tapestry of Columbia because I am one out of many who have different races, cultures and religions. And even if I am one out of many in our community, it still counts. Imagine if we were all the same. Same skin, cultures, and religions. Imagine how boring that would be. We wouldn't be able to teach each other new things, new cultures. I'm proud of Columbia, Missouri and its diversity.

Mrs. Jones, 8th Grade, West Middle School

In Our Land

Hayley Leal

In our land we aren't afraid to mismatch and contrast
We are building blocks
Despite our different colors and sizes we fit together
Along our streets we walk together
We range all the way from black to white
Creating a work of art with a miscellaneous collection of shades

In our land we stand together strong and brave
We are a bouquet of flowers
An assortment of blossoms arranged as a masterpiece
As a community we come together
The world around us is sprinkled with the riches of diversity
In this place we don't match like socks
Instead we color this place to look as a rainbow

Mrs. Jones, 8th Grade, West Middle School

Breaking Boundaries

Jenna Rogers

Columbia is a very diverse place. Take me, for example. I have a very diverse religious background. I'm half Jewish and half Christian, but the religion (well, lack of religion) I identify with is Atheism. I have a unique role in Columbia's tapestry, and I take pride in that.

My mom grew up in a Jewish household. Her grandparents were immigrants from Russia. My father, on the other hand, grew up in a very Christian household. But neither of my parents were that religious, and neither of them carried on with their family's religion after they left for college. When I was born, neither of them gave me any religious direction. I naturally became an Atheist, having never been to Church or Temple, and therefore having never been exposed to religion.

Even though I was Atheist, my family and I still celebrated religious holidays. This is part of the reason I identify with Judaism and Christianity, despite being an Atheist. Every year, during Christmas break we would put up a Christmas tree, as well as a Menorah. We would always drive up to St. Louis on Christmas Eve so that we could celebrate Christmas with my Dad's family. Same thing during Passover, except with my Mom's family. Celebrating these holidays really helped me appreciate my religious roots, and how I can identify with many groups and diversities.

Even though my religious background is confusing, I am thankful that I can identify with so many different types of people. Having different religious roots helps me be unique in the rich tapestry of diversity that is Columbia. I love the fact that I can relate to so many different people and ideas. Being diverse will always help me out in life, and I just hope that I can make a difference.

Mrs. Jones, 8th Grade, West Middle School

Imagine a World

Andie Nolla

Imagine a world without diversity.
A broken bland city,
where there was nothing but grey
that the eye could see.

A vacancy of color and variety,
where everyone was identical.

In the way we speak
the way we walk
the way we dress
the way we think.

No rich tapestries,
but a blank paper.

A canvas still awaiting paint,
a wall with no complexion.

Columbia.

The exact opposite.

A city always ready for more,
a rainbow of colors around every corner.

Not a single person is the same.

we all think,

and act,

and dress,

and speak differently.

An endless tapestry with more meaning than you can think of.

My home.

Mrs. Kirkpatrick, 8th Grade, Oakland Middle School

A Million People

Ivy Le

A million people in the world are scared. Scared of being judged, isn't that why we try so hard? But why should we be scared anymore? We all come together; we all make up a society. Each and every one of us contributes something special. So why can't we embrace who we are? Wear, talk, and say whatever we want? Because in the end we help each other grow, so why don't we just start now? We all look different, sound different, we're just different. And that's what makes us amazing when we work together. Our heritage, our talents, and our diversity are things to embody.

Mrs. Wahid, 8th Grade, Smithton Middle School

Diversity

William Edgar

Diversity is the glue that holds us together. We as humans need diversity in all forms.

Without diversity we would have no debates and no arguments. We will have no differing opinions. Not a single idea will be questioned, only executed, without opposition. This is not a good way to live as a society, we NEED diversity.

Without diversity we would not be cultured. We will have no idea of how other cultures live, what they eat, and what they believe in. This will cause us to only see things only one way and never ask questions or even think that maybe someone else is right about God. We NEED diversity.

Without diversity we will not be a truly enjoyably society. There will be no foreign influences in our communities. There would be no pizza here. That is an Italian invention. Yes. That would mean no more Shakespeare's pizza for anyone, at least in Columbia. I don't know about you, but that is something I cannot do without. We need diversity.

You see, we are a diverse community. We are a mixture of many fabulous cultures that affect all of us. (Most likely) every day. This is what makes us great, our open arms and minds to other cultures. We have diversity. And we need to keep it that way... forever.

Mrs. Wahid, 8th Grade, Smithton Middle School

Respected

Asiya Delic

Martin Luther King Jr. wanted all people all diversities to be able to walk down the streets safe with their children, free to get the same education and the same treatment like anybody else: Human.

Even though people fifty years ago threatened this man, tried to kill him and his family, he remained patient, never using violence because he knew that it would be cruel, and only make everything worse for all people.

He wanted peace. But do we have this peace here today in Columbia, Missouri? The only people who can answer that question are us. We all have our own experiences with being different. I myself am very different, and you can see it.

I wear a headscarf. I'm Muslim, and when I walk down the streets, I can honestly say that I feel safe. Nobody has ever given me a dirty look, just a few curious looks from other kids.

People ask me questions of course, but never harass me. They don't say anything that offends me, the surprising things is how many smiles I get, how much respect I get, maybe even more than last year, when I didn't wear it.

I can't express how grateful I am that I can live in such a time where me and my family can walk down the streets here, respected.

Mrs. Wahid, 8th Grade, Smithton Middle School

Columbia

Taylor Gill

Walk through the streets,
Walk through the neighborhoods,
What do you see?
You see that we have
Diversity.
Different religions and races,
That's what we have.
We have different cultures and opinions,
We are all different,
But we are still one,
Together we stand,
United together,
The people of Columbia.
Diversity is what we have.

Mrs. Jones, 8th Grade, West Middle School

Diversity in Columbia, MO

Annarose Overshiner

Columbia is and continues to be a very diverse community. Being a college town, Columbia brings in people of many different cultures, ethnicities, and upbringings making it a prime example of a diverse community in a state that might not be considered very accepting or diverse.

Columbia provides many programs that allow people less fortunate to have transportation, jobs, etc. One example of a program that helps people of different ethnicities is a cycling program that my mom started. She works with immigrants from Somalia teaching them how to repair and maintain bikes that are given to them at the end of the course once they've mastered basic cycling traffic laws.

Columbia shows diversity in other ways too offering equal opportunities for people of all ethnicities in colleges, schools and jobs. There are also many stores and restaurants

owned and operated by foreign people which keeps Columbia's shops unique and full of culture as well as making others feel more welcome.

Overall I would say that Columbia is a very diverse place to live with its helpful programs, culture filled colleges, equal opportunities, and accepting community. Columbia is a great place to live and a great place to learn about different cultures.

Mrs. Jones, 8th Grade, West Middle School

A City of Diversity

Samuel Graham Muchow

Sitting here, surrounded by classmates,
All different backgrounds, and all different races.
I look around, and realize
Everyone is different, but not just with shape and size.
Each one of us has a story to tell,
And in my head, there began to ring a bell.
Oh how glorious this community is! With open gates and open doors,
Welcoming each ethnicity more and more.
And although our community can get quite faulty,
We always have full equality.
Looking back, far from today
I ask, were these the visions of MLK?
A community plentiful with many choices,
With many people and many voices.

Mrs. Jones, 8th Grade, West Middle School

People

Victoria Hernandez

There are so many races,
So there are different faces.
People from different countries and states,
Should have the same faith and don't hate.
Different people should have the same rights,
So we shouldn't see them fight.
Our respect for each other should be the strongest of all,
So our community won't fall.
Always keep in mind that if we care for each other,
Everything will be fine and there will be no crimes.
We have to stick together,
So we can have the best community forever.
Also keep in mind,
That we should always be kind,
Until the end of time.
Nobody should lie about their life.
When you judge someone on their race,
It makes them not have grace.
Let's all be kind and respectful!!!!

Mrs. Jones, 8th Grade, West Middle School

Diversity in Columbia

Andrew Breedlove

How great it is to live in a place,
Where happiness does not depend on race.
Where those who strive to be new,
Are still accepted as part of the brew.
Where we can live as ourselves in peace,
Where not only the accepted rewards be reaped.
Where we can be sure that no matter what,
No one here will be alone, and out of luck.
Where those who are sad, made to fail,
Are helped by the kind and in the end prevail.
In a place like this where no one seems to be blue,
Surely it's all too good to be true.

Mrs. Jones, 8th Grade, West Middle School

Diversity

Benaë Hughley

Diversity. The concept of giving respect of someone being different, rather it's their beliefs, sex, religion, culture, how we dress or even how we act. There are different and specific ways of people being different and they should be treated equally and we should celebrate the different things in each individual.

Me personally I believe that diversity is a wonderful thing, that we can all be the way we want and we're all not the same as each other, some people were brought up believing in different things and people have different backgrounds. Everyone is varied from different types of things and we should give mutual respect to each other.

We should all be mindful of all of human differences and value every individual regardless of who they are, their background, and how they came up. We embrace diversity for a reason and that is everyone being respected and treated equally because we all are not the same.

Mrs. Jones, 8th Grade, West Middle School

Protest

Connor Brumfield

Being a white male I am part of the majority in Columbia, but the minority groups are growing at exponential rates. Columbia as a community embraces and promotes this growth, further diversifying our elaborate mixing pot of ethnic groups, religions, cultures and opinions. I've lived in Columbia all 17 years of my young life and I've seen this change occur from an inside view. Although I witness diversity in my community everyday one incident stood out in my memory vividly.

It was a cool fall Saturday morning and I was sitting in my home on the south side of town. My parents were in the kitchen talking in a hush tone about something I couldn't quite make out. I knew they were trying to keep me from hearing so, being a kid, went into the kitchen and asked what they were talking about. After shooting my mom a wide eyed look my dad said, "well son, there's a parade downtown today."

"Oh I want to go! You know I love parades," I responded naively. "Well that's where it gets tricky. It's not a normal parade. It's a protest," he said, "a group of people called the neo-Nazis are coming to Columbia to protest."

"Why would they come to Columbia, Missouri of all places?" I asked.

"Well with the university there are a lot of young people that would be aggravated by these protests so they target them to get a rise," my dad explained, "And with such a growing diverse community like Columbia it's an easy answer for them."

This was all a lot to take in at one time. I was being educated in international problems that are centuries old, that have come to my doorstep in a frenzy. My normally peaceful and unified city was going to be turned into a riot that was ignited by hate from one group of people. My parents decided it would be in the best interest of all of us if we didn't go, because in the end what they wanted was a lot of people there enraged by their message. That night I watched the news and saw something that made me proud to live in Columbia. White men, black men, middle eastern men, gay men, straight men, every man was hand in hand standing on the sidewalk watching these protestors shout their words of hatred, but they were silent. They just stood there unified by the knowledge that every man is equal, pitying the neo-Nazi idealists for their ignorance

and prejudice. Martin Luther King said, "darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." Clearly this message was taken in and exercised by the people of Columbia. Although I wasn't there physically, I was in my thoughts. I would have been right beside the men on the sidewalk peacefully protesting the protest. It takes people that are accepting of all, and enriched with knowledge of equality to start such a beautifully diverse community like Columbia. We all play an important role and we all must stand up for what is right.

Mr. McGinty, 11th Grade, Rock Bridge High School

The Rich Tapestry of Diversity

Moiz Muhammad

All human beings are different. That's the beauty of it, diversity is beautiful. Skin color no longer separates person from person. However, there is more to diversity than just your race it's your beliefs, your religion, your interest, everyone is different in their own way. What I think is interesting, is different from what you think is interesting. My religion and values are different from yours.

I'm a Pakistani Muslim guy who grew up in America. I am diverse in many ways. I have different religious holidays, and I eat different food. However, I grew up in America so I do some things similar to the majority. I watch football on Sundays, unlike my parents, who were born and raised in Pakistan, football is weird to them and to me it is very interesting. Life is a lot more interesting when you have two different cultures, both having a big impact on your life.

Everyone is diverse in their own political views. Some people republican, some people democrat, others independent. No matter what political party, your goal is for the government together.

Diversity keeps things interesting. If everything was the same life would be boring. Without diversity humans would just be dolls of an assembly line. Everyone has their story, because everyone is different. No two humans are alike in every way, not even twins. It keeps things interesting.

Ms. Black, 9th Grade, Rock Bridge High School

Columbia and Diversity

Maryam Bledsoe

Columbia has always been different from other places I've lived in. Being of a minority myself, it's easy to find places where you're not accepted. So much of the world is focused on hate, violence, and discrimination, but Columbia isn't really like that. I lived in Canada once, and while it wasn't as terrible as it could have been, my family and I never felt truly at home. My mother is African, and my whole family is Muslim, so experiencing bigotry isn't really all that unfamiliar. My mother says that racism is something that we'll have to live with, whether it's directed at us or not. From history it seems like there's always someone who's being put down by someone else. That's what I'd always expected from people, I expected them to hate me because I wasn't like them. I've learned over the past few years living here in Columbia that that's not entirely true.

I remember my first day of wearing hijab (the head scarf Muslim women wear). I was half-way through my 6th grade year, and I was so nervous. I thought that everyone would look at me differently, stop talking to me, I thought my whole world would be turned upside-down. Yet at the same time, a more resolute, stubborn part of me knew I should be doing this. It was what I believed in, after all. If my friends couldn't look at me the same, were they really my friends?

I walked in school, to the bleachers that morning, waiting for the snickers and the rude comments, but instead, I was met with innocent curiosity. People who I'd never even talked to before asking me questions about my headscarf and complimenting me on my new way of dress. It was a pleasant surprise. It was also met with playful jokes from my friends that only strengthened our friendship. My teachers seemed to look at me with a newfound respect.

Columbia is unique in that way. With so many different people going to the University, and the steadily growing population, it's become so diverse and an easy place to live in. Columbia is a place where I feel at home, where I feel accepted. Columbia will always hold a special place in my heart because of that.

Ms. Black-Cone, 9th Grade, Rock Bridge High School

The Seasons of Our Town

Saja Necibi

The Columbia I know is a luscious jumble of trees
Each with our own bark, stems, and leaves.
In the crisp autumn, we display colors galore
Bright red, burnt orange, pale yellow and more
From when I first opened my eyes, the differences were all I could see
And as I grew older, they meant more to me
I went to a school with a rich blend of people
But that diversity, I've learned, is what makes us all equal
My best friend as a child was Tunisian like me
But I've realized that we were friends only because we came from the same tree
The student on my left was from Somalia, a young refugee
But when I was young that meant nothing to me.
We're all different colors, so why should we mingle?
Because the diversity here is tremendous, with many types of people.
If you drive down the street you'll see a mosque, a temple, a church's steeple
These beautiful buildings represent unique faiths, yet we are all equal
Earth Day bustles with friendly musicians and smiling faces,
Complete with many types of art that attract humans of all ages.
A choir I joined at age five had girls of various races
We sang for love on Earth and for no more hatred
We were called the Buds of Peace, a very fitting name
For young buds on trees with kindness as our aim.
The pigmented trees of Columbia are apparent throughout the land
But there's more to our color than anyone could have ever planned
Because in the middle of spring, we are all vividly green
One people, one hope, one life, one dream
We may be different; our beliefs are unique
But the lush leaves and sprinkling water let Columbia reach its peak
The acceptance, love, and compassion towards all
Is special in Columbia, so it gets us through the fall.
And despite the haze of winter and the troubles we may face
We all remain in the same forest, together as the human race.

Mrs. Clemens, 11th Grade, Rock Bridge High School

Chink

Justin Jose

Yeah, I'm a chink,
What of it, so fluff it
Been 17 years fighting for my peers;
That ageless blessing, so sickened with dressing,
And that way you walk or talk or jeer and peer-
Do my eyes amaze you? Or are you just blind;
To the light I hold inside
That candle stench on that parkway bench
For whom my bell tolls-well here it tolls for thee.

The sound of music,
Yeah, it's all music to my ears,
Cause' I hear these noises; voices all exulting,
Shouting at me so I just shout back.
In my head I see it clearly, the future-
Dust and dreary; lonely in my absence.
I look back and see them chiming
In on me, silent best I'd be-
That boy who listens up and doesn't spill his gut;
That boy who knows his name but lives for his parents' chance for fame.
Yeah, I know what I want, and I'm glad that boy ain't me.

It's time I hear that bell ring, swing and start the day-
Sing for the children who ain't got no voices-
Troubled minds and silent cohorts.
The simple signs and rhymes forsaken-
Yeah, I'm glad I live here, in a place that knows no equal.
I fear its isolation-for my city upon a hill,
And the shrill shrieks of terror covet the lands of neighbors
While we harbor lost processions, quaint possessions of our equals.
We give hugs for the lives of those wrought with torrents because this is Florence,
And while we revolutionize, we forget about the tumults and cries.
There might be color, but all the colors I see are grey.

Yeah, I'm a chink,
But I sing in this choir, chime bells and let the day bring-
Happiness to my people; those I love-
And it's why I wear this ring thing;
Because it is binding, this social contract,
A slight handed syntax error-for real though.
This is our day and we shine for that world to see.
That's why we live for the 'morrow and sing songs full of sorrow,
Because this is Columbia-Missouri's final destination,
A frontier if you will because we are accepting- Isn't that frightening?
I ain't just no chink, and you ain't just a reader
We are part of a Columbian Renaissance

Mr. McGinty, 12th Grade, Rock Bridge High School

Diversity in Columbia

Anna Spell

Living in Columbia, you see diversity everywhere. Whether it's at a world culture festival or just walking down the street, there are many different people and stories. People from all over the world, different cultures and religions.

Being different isn't bad, it's a blessing. New opinions, ideas, and information. Colors, customs, and ways of life. It's a privilege to know so many different people, all with different stories and experiences.

Columbia's diversity just makes it an even more interesting place to live. Nothing's ever the same, and though some prejudices are not yet fixed, we walk hand in hand with our families, neighbors, and community, standing up against those who will never change their opinions, who don't believe in a diverse world. We are many parts, but all one body, and together we work to bring out the diversity in Columbia and pride ourselves in knowing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision is being fulfilled, and Columbia a part of it.

Mrs. Jones, 8th Grade, West Middle School

Vision

Ricky Messner

Our vision as humans on this Earth,
Isn't just black and white.
Even though some can see all colors
They talk like they see only black or white.
Why is that?
Why not talk like you see all colors?
Why not respect all for who they are,
Rather than what they appear to be?
It's sad to see we aren't there yet,
But why not take that first step?
What do you have to lose?
Reputation?
Friends?
Self-image?
If you are blinded by these alone,
You know no acceptance.
You know nothing.
But if you take a step toward acceptance,
You know more than those that are blinded ever will.
So I encourage acceptance.
I encourage knowledge
Racial acceptance can start small
But it will grow.
Soon it will not only envelop Columbia,
But everywhere we go and everywhere we look.
We will not see black and white.
We will see humans.

Mrs. Jones, 8th Grade, West Middle School

The Importance of Diversity

Sydney Gilbreth

If you take a walk anywhere in Columbia, you will see a well-rounded mix of faces, personalities, religions, and nationalities. Columbia is a great place to be if you want to live somewhere accepting and diverse. The city does a great job of remembering everyone and taking all people into consideration, which is very important to having an integrated town.

Diversity is a major part of having and maintaining a successful community. We are all made up of the same materials: skin, bones, muscle, organs. Isn't that what everyone really is? We're skeletons with skin holding us together. What the color of our skin is, our race, religion, or our nationality makes no difference to who we are inside.

At one point, we were all children, coloring pictures with fat crayons. To color a picture, you need a full box of crayons. You need the blue one to color the sky, but does that mean the green one is useless? No, of course not. The green one is used to draw the grass. Does that mean the yellow one is unimportant? No, the sun is always colored yellow. Just like a coloring page, every crayon and person is unique and special in its own way. Some people may not like a certain color, but they will still need to use it to complete their picture. To create something beautiful, you need to be able to accept everyone. Everyone is important to complete the diverse culture of Columbia.

Mrs. Jones, 8th Grade, West Middle School

A View On Diversity

Maddie Hayday

Walk past the church, mosque, and synagogue
With diversity that's just the prologue
Every color of skins and tags
Every color on all the flags
All ages and genders
All people doesn't matter
Every single culture blends
Historic feuds friendships mend
I won't say bigotry is completely dead
But I'm waiting for the day when we put it to bed
Step by step and side by side
Our diversity gives us pride

Mrs. Jones, 8th Grade, West Middle School

The Minority

Raya Aberbach

Columbia is a place home to many religions and ethnicities. It is a small melting pot within the even bigger one that is America. We are, or try to be, accepting of everyone, and we embrace all of the different cultures that make up our community. Even though there are so many cultures, the majority of the city is white and Christian, and being part of the minority, in this case a Jew, is still not easy.

Being Jewish is a huge part of my life. I've attended Synagogue and Sunday school since I was a little girl, and I had my Bat Mitzvah in the beginning of the summer. Unfortunately, to the people in my grade, the concept of Judaism is foreign and not widely understood. I am the only Jew most of them know. This is a challenge, but I've learned to overcome it.

Throughout the years they have known me, my peers have learned about my religion and how it makes me unique. They know that though I am different from them in that

sense, and they no longer treat me differently because of my religion. They know that I help to make up the rich tapestry of Columbia.

Columbia will always be special. Though it is not the biggest city, and it doesn't have the coolest stuff, it is diverse. Every culture, religion, ethnicity, and single person helps to make it such a rich tapestry. We accept everyone, especially people who aren't part of the majority. Being part of the minority is a challenge, but without these small groups, Columbia wouldn't be such a rich tapestry of diversity.

Mrs. Jones, 8th Grade, West Middle School

Diversity in Columbia

Alex Hantke

New faces pass me by
People and their history, their heritage
What their name is, it's their story of life
The race may not be the same, the story isn't either
The inside is the same
Same bones, same muscles, same brain,
They are not they, they are us
What if you moved to Asia or Mexico and were discriminated
For being you. Your ancestors. Your story.
Don't let anyone change it, but join it.
The road may be long, the road to equality.
But you must at least try to march to it.
Martin Luther King Jr. did. He got to a rest stop.
Who will be next to lead the long journey?

Mrs. Wahid, 8th Grade, Smithton Middle School

This collection of student writings is sponsored by
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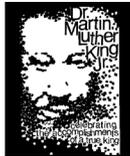
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