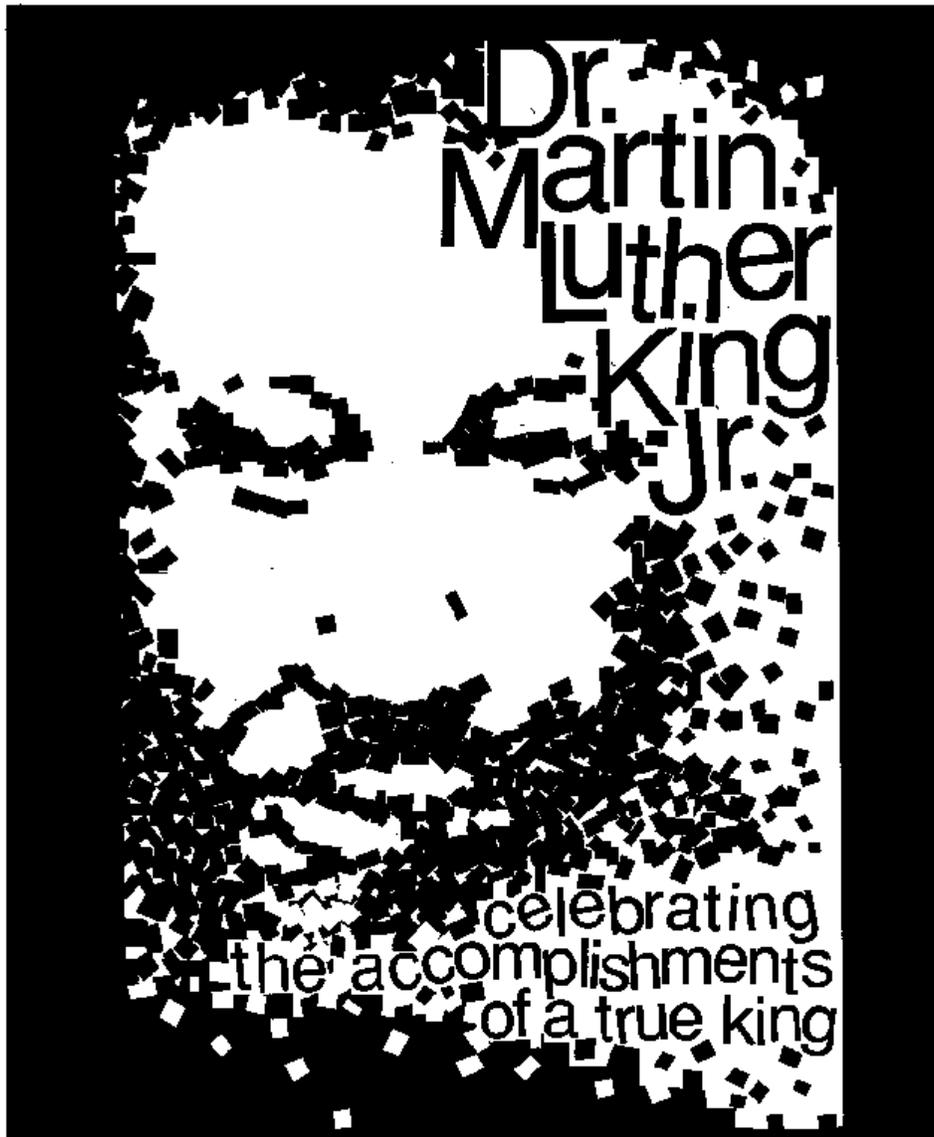


Celebrating Diversity



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Essays and Poems by Columbia Public School Students

Columbia Values Diversity Celebration
January 12, 2001

My Best Friend and I

That which makes us different
Is that which makes us stronger
And the diversity among us
Is what makes our relationships last longer.

I will always remember
The first time we met
How much fun we had together
A time that I'll never forget.

We sat on the dock
And ate ice cream by the lake
Neither of us judging the color of our reflections
And that would've been a big mistake.

I'm thankful that we looked ahead
The differences we didn't see
Because if we were to stop and judge
Perhaps there wouldn't be a "you and me"

We put our differences behind us
And we placed our friendship ahead
So now we can gaze upon the sunset of brotherhood
Together, each night before we go to bed.

And when I am asleep
A smile rests upon my face
Because I know that we'll be friends forever
Regardless of our race.

Stephanie Irwin, West Jr. High School, 9th Grade

Dear Martin Luther King, Jr.,

Thank you for risking your life for other peoples' rights.
I'm from South Africa and our former president, Nelson Mandela, did the same thing and got sent to jail for twenty-six years. He came out of jail and was elected president. He followed your good example and is now well known for what he did.
Thank you for avoiding war. You challenged and encouraged people of all backgrounds, races and cultures to accept each other and work together to change the world.
I've been to the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial here in Columbia. The memorial reminds us of you, your life and the ideas that you stood for.

Sincerely,

James Lindsay, Grant Elementary, 5th Grade

Diversity

In every village, town, and city,
We can always find diversity.
There are many different races,
With lots of distinct faces.
Some give God their life
Others go on hunger strike.
Though our genders are not the same,
We all play in life's game.
No matter what we think is true,
Diversity effects you.
Be we young or be we old,
Or the type of job we hold,
But whether we're big or small,
It doesn't matter at all.
Without any inference,
Together we can make a difference.
As long as we work together,
Work will be as easy as a feather.
The Diversity we find,
Flourishes in human kind.
So alone we will eventually fall,
However, mutually we stand tall.
United, we stand as one,
Going into the millennium.

Shirley Zhang, Jefferson Jr. High, 8th Grade

Diversity is Our Strength

It is a known fact that no two people are alike. America has been called a "melting pot" for many years. Since the world began, there have been people with different religions and cultures. Instead of using these differences in a positive way, people often use them to create barriers. People could get much more accomplished if they would work as a team. Each person has different strengths that if used all together could result in big accomplishments. It is almost certain that if a person is involved in a diverse community, he will learn new things. Imagine a school with no children or trying to build a wheelchair accessible building without the input of a disabled person. The result would be having a building that would be less than suitable for a disabled person. While it is not impossible to achieve things without making use of diversity, it is a lot harder. Through diversity, we can learn a lot of things we never knew. For instance, we can learn more about different cultures, facts about countries, states, and cities we have never even heard about before. We can also learn about different backgrounds, languages, religions and disabilities. Interacting with the opposite sex teaches gender differences. Visiting with people from all age groups can teach a wide variety of things from how children play together to a hands-on history lesson from an older person. In conclusion, I think that diversity in people should be used to tear down barriers. As we march into the new millennium, we must share, learn and work together.

Elizabeth Cherrington, Fairview Elementary, 4th Grade

Isolation and Diversity
Isolation
Plain, weary
Tiring, stifling, boring
Hitler, racism, tolerance, Dr. King
Respecting equality, accepting
Creative strong
Diversity.

Kayla Bruemmer, Grant Elementary, 5th Grade

Our Strength

We, the people, need to work together. We need to love each other forever and ever. We don't need violence or bad behavior. We all need to know that God is our Savior. Sometime our differences can divide us. If He looks hard enough, He will find us. Everybody is different in his own way. We need to know that God is here every day. Old, young, black and white, we do not need to always fight. Red men, yellow men, we all need to join in. Red, yellow, black and brown, we all should go through life without a frown. A helping hand is always the best. It allows us to meet life's true test.

Renea Moody, Douglass High School, 10th Grade

Diversification: The Key to Success!

The declaration, the foundation of our society states that all men are created equal, but by most actions that are shown we must think this to be untrue. Even decades after the civil rights and women's rights movements discrimination is still all around us on TV, on the radio, in the movies, in the news, and in other everyday life situations. We must overcome discrimination and make it obsolete if we ever wish to have total world peace and great world success.

Our different cultures are like the stock market in many ways. If you don't diversify your portfolio you'll never do as well as if you had. If you stay away from one group of stocks because they might have had a bumpy past or just because they are different from the rest then you won't profit from their success. Life is no different. If we discriminate or single out one or more groups of people, cultures, or races we will never profit from one another. Until we can overcome our discrimination towards each other we can never see the true potential of man.

Discrimination is like a drug, its addictive, is harmful, and can make you do things that are violent and you know not to be right. First you make fun of someone. Next you'll harass someone. Then you might do something even more drastic, and all this time you are not realizing that it's hurting not only the person you're discriminating against, but you as well and yet you can't stop because your hate has become addictive. Your own hate for someone else is killing you! It's consuming you with hate and meanness. It's filling your heart with bitterness and making you a sour unlikable person.

We must stop this evilness in our society so that our children and their children don't have to live in an awful world of hate. The only way to become a greater nation and a better world is for all kinds of men and women to work together as one. Once this is gained the world will have true peace and experience true world success, and will be a wonderful place for our children and grandchildren to grow and prosper.

Larry Stendeback, Jefferson Jr. High, 8th Grade

Martin Luther King Jr.

Skin colors do not matter to me because everybody should share and play together. I think some people treat people mean just because of their skin color. Martin Luther King, Jr. thought the same.

He thought why do we always have to sit in the back of the bus and why do we get treated bad because of our skin color. One day Martin Luther King, Jr. stood up to the white people and told everybody not to ride the bus and to walk so that the white people won't get money. Martin Luther King Jr. made a difference in life and e went down in history.

Michael Fisk, Midway Heights, 5th Grade

Diversity

Diversity is the world's beauty
Without it, the world wouldn't shine
For variety is the spice of life.
Without it, it would leave the world tasteless.
You see the beauty of a face
Comes from its originality.
And the uniqueness of a personality
Is why you love and hate.
With each and every person
There is a masterpiece of art.
Appreciating the differences in each of us
Is the only way to live.

Eric Miedema, Smithton Middle School, 7th Grade

Understanding Other Cultures

I think the reason that people dislike different cultures, is because they don't understand them. They have different ways of doing things that might seem a little strange to us. Martin Luther King did understand. I think that the world needs more people like Martin Luther King. Why do some people hate African Americans? Is it because they are a different color than us? Is it because they have different ways of living than us? If people knew more about other cultures, instead of opening their big mouths and not knowing what they're talking about, then there wouldn't be as much fighting between cultures. Some people still think that they own other cultures, which is totally wrong. I feel that we as people of the United States, a country that prides itself on diversity, can learn from different cultures to better ourselves and make us more understanding of customs and beliefs. Martin Luther King accomplished many great things in his life. I feel the best one was that he helped and is still helping people understand other cultures so we can all live in harmony.

Douglas Luetjen, Midway Heights Elementary, 5th Grade

Diversity Is Our Strength

Though we think of diversity as our strength it is also our weakness. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. fought hard for people of all races, religions, sexes and those with disabilities to be treated equally. Still, people of all ages don't seem to understand. Every day hate crimes are committed against people of different races, religions, and sexes, as well as those with disabilities.

If we don't join together now, to show others the errors of their ways, then more and more people will forget everything Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stood for. This would take us right back where we started. Everyone would be left in diversity and no one would be treated fairly.

Kelsey Dexter, Lange Middle School, 7th Grade

Diversity and Equal Rights

All people are different. All people should have the same rights. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was a big believer of that. He has led many people of different races, ages, cultures, abilities, disabilities and religions.

If everyone believed that we should have equal rights, we would all have easier lives, a better country, and a better world. Example: someone in a wheelchair deserves the same rights as someone who can walk. Someone who is poor deserves the same rights as a very rich person. Someone in Egypt deserves the same rights as someone in the United States. Different people means diversity. Diversity is different ages, races, abilities, disabilities and religions. We all deserve equal rights.

Shelby Curry, Grant Elementary, 5th Grade

When I Grow Up

When I grow up, I wonder
If people will be more afraid to cry, than they are to die.
Will I be able to see a rainbow at the end of the horizon's sky?
Will there be any forest with trees still alive?
Will the internet have a web site at www/lifetime.airsupply?

When I grow up, I wonder
If my dad and I rent a canoe
Will the polluted water still be blue?
Will I have to be like you?
Letting money make every decision for what I do?
Will dolphins and whales exist only in pictures they drew,
Like "once upon a time" and "I love you."
Will television still raise America's youth?
Will they go to school in vests that are bullet proof?

When I grow up, I wonder
Will I live in peace and harmony in a safe world?

Janel Coleman, Ridgeway Elementary, 5th Grade

Assassination of Dr. King

Rest now my silent Brother,
Your work on earth is through,
Your spirit lives in others.
Who carry on for you.

The flames you have kindled,
Burn brighter than the sun.
To awaken the sleeping Brothers,
For work that must be done.

From seeds that you have planted,
A mighty forest grows.
From guns of the enemies,
Your story will be told.

So rest now my silent brother,
Your crops are doing well.
A million American families,
Are blooming in your fields.

When guns are silent
And in victory we stand.
The spirit of a mighty warrior,
Will live in every man.

Carlton Foust, Hickman High School, 12th Grade

Columbia Values Diversity

Religion, race, age, culture, disability, ability, and gender; these are some of the reasons why we all can't work together. Even if we are a different race, religion, culture, and age, we are all still the same inside. We were all created and should be equal partners in the community.

This makes me want to start a group of people, with all types of backgrounds that want to help the community. We would go to nursing homes, collect for charity, and clean up our streets. We would be setting a good example for other people. They would be encouraged to go out and start helping and discrimination would be a thing of the past. If we work very hard to be known for the good we do, this could be a nation-wide group.

If you like my idea, you could try to start up a group in your area. If not, I understand you're probably very busy, but it would not be hard to set aside a day to help clean up the community. It would be better if you did it with someone that you didn't know or with someone that has a different background and values than you. I hope all of you will consider helping out in the community, as well as getting to know others at the same time.

Joan Stafford, Gentry Middle School, 7th Grade

The Heart of Our Nation

Not by the color, but the size of the heart,
That's one thing I can say right from the start.
All of us equal in the human race,
People must pick up the pace.
Diversity is as different as newly minted coins,
Building relationships as everyone joins.
Joins is the key word in that line,
I hope we never leave it behind.
Having all persons join together
To me, that would be a pleasure.

Diversity is not just a game,
Sometimes it's just a shame,
That blacks and whites don't get along,
That's why I am writing this poem/song.
I can't believe that black and white
Can't get along and get it right
Some people don't let differences grow,
Those are the people that show,
Glory and pride throughout our nation,
Someday our diversity will be a celebration!

Brandon Reddick, Ridgeway School, 5th Grade

Diversity is Our Strength as We March into the New Millennium

A painting is not beautiful if it is only painted with one color. It needs many difference colors to make the painting complete. One race could not survive. There must be many races to make the world better. Just like a painting, each color needs the other to make everything work.

Although we need many colors to make a painting beautiful, many colors can also destroy our world when there is racism. One smear on that once perfect painting, and it is forever damaged. It can happen so quickly that sometimes we don't even notice. But like art, we can learn from our mistakes and eventually change them. Racism destroys everyone and fighting over colors is a very destructive thing to do.

In the United States, there are many different types of people. They all come from different places, different cultures, and different religions. I think of America as a "salad bowl" rather than a "melting pot." In a salad there are many different ingredients. Without one ingredient, it wouldn't taste the same. Even though all the different ingredients in the salad remain individual and don't melt together, they make a good combination and depend upon each other.

Every race needs one another. Without diversity we could not live. Every person in this world was created equal. Everyone is a living breathing human being. If only people could look past the outside and see the person who they really are. Only when we can look past one's color have we truly prospered.

Chelsea Laun, West Jr. High, 8th Grade

Lessons In Color

Now listen girl,
Can't you see?
We can't be friends,
Not you and me.

We can't watch movies
Or ride our bikes.
Not today
And not tonight.

My mama says,
It's just not right
To mix together
Black and white.

But in my heart
I know it's true
That we'll be friends,
Just me and you

Because color doesn't matter
It's about what's inside.
About who you are,
How hard you've tried.

So in the secret
We will be,
The best of friends,
You and me.

Erin Sappington. Oakland Jr. High, 9th Grade

Different People

There are different people In the world.
All in different shapes and sizes.
In different colors too.
The thing you might say
To these people is: "I love you!"
If we didn't have different people in the world
Then everybody would be bored!

Tavia Eubanks, Eugene Field Elementary, 4th Grade

Diversity is Our Strength

Diversity is the key to success
Shouldn't matter our age, color, or dress
To those out to kill, we preach
To those just confused, we teach.
Everyone of us is different, yet all the same
Same guts, same heart, different colors, different name.
So as we march into the new millennium
Let us lead the way and hope everybody will come
It is the fact that we are all human and proud
That our faith in each other will diminish any cloud
Any cloud of darkness or hate
Shall be gone when we reach the millennium gate.
And when it slings open we will stand
Blacks, whites, yellows, reds, short and tall, young and old, hand in hand.
At least this how I'd wish to see it
But the race for race-free America has been quit.
Those we preached to left and killed a man due to color
Those we taught, left and went after each other
Innocent lives are being taken
Gunshots don't begin to awaken
Don't even start to awaken out hearts to what's right
We won't be caught dead trying to stop a fight.
We'd rather shut our eyes and turn our head
Then read in the news "Another Dead".
Would you turn and shut your eyes?
What if it was to effect your family members' lives?
No human deserves death for no cause or reason
No matter money, color, life, or season.
It is worse to hide in the shadows of night
Than it is to be a part of this diversity fight.
If those of us that see the hatred among the colors, don't do anything but sit
Than it will eventually make the whole world a target.
So if we're supposed to march hand in hand through the millennium gate at the same time
Then we had better get together a plan that will stop racial, diversity, & meaningless crime.

Jacky Noel, Hickman High School, 11th Grade

Differences

I think that if all things today were different then the world would be a whole different place. But to be able to change the world you would have to have leaders. I know you are probably saying we have leaders now...duh! But the leaders we have now aren't what they're supposed to be! I mean if you are going to be a leader then, of course, you are going to have followers. As the old folks say that it is better to be a leader than a follower. Man, if the world were different then the people will be different, and I think better people will make the world a better place. So to make a better place we need to have a person like Martin Luther King, Jr. to be on this earth. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a man of words and a man of love. He showed lots of love towards those that he didn't even know. He was a true father. I wish on this earth someone like Dr. King would be my leader, then I'd be mighty happy.

Shaneika Barney, Lange Middle School, 7th Grade

Diversity

The world will always be divided and we will always hate or feel bad about the other races. Our planet will always have diversity because of the different races, sexes, religions, and capabilities. How can the world get along when someone will always have a negative thought about a person "different" from him or her? Those people are all around us and don't mind being recognized because they will never have anything to do with the other "kind".

The first concern is sexes. Men and women have fought over who was the best, smartest, strongest, etc, for many years. Back in the 1700 and 1800s women were like house pets. Men could tell them what to do, say, and hate. Women would have to obey. Women could not have more than one husband but men could have as many wives as they wanted. Women could not vote, express feeling, run a business, or anything. They had to stay home and watch the servants. Women started to speak out and men thought that they should be quiet because men were better and could provide everything that the women wanted. Women, however, knew the life and wanted to be free to do what they wish. It took many years to convince the government that women population was as smart as men are. Finally women got the right to vote. Even after men and women had more equal rights, they still fight over which is the best sex.

The second concern is that people take their abilities for granted. They think that because they can do anything, then they will do anything and brag about it. Then others who are disabled and can't do everything get offended. Also people might think that their world should not have the disabled because they are not capable of taking care of themselves. The world has many people who feel bad about the handicapped, they feel like they need so much help and that they can not do anything. However, the disabled still have feeling and can think, so they do not want anyone feeling bad for them. Everyone can do something and everyone has feeling. Do not feel bad about a disabled person because they are proud of who they are and they do not feel bad about themselves.

The third concern is racial problems. There are many problems between people of color and whites. The world is divided because of the races and it will always be that way, unless people change and do not mind what color the skin is. People have different colored skin and that is a problem. However, the biggest problem is the past. The blacks still hold the whites accountable for what happened in the time slavery. The whites also think that the blacks should not blame them for the past. It do not want to sound prejudice, but the blacks should not be blaming the whites for happened hundreds of years ago.

There was no way we could have changed or been part of the slavery period. I know that if I could change something in the past it would be the slavery years. There will also be thoughts and regrets about the past but you can not stop that, so we should just forget and forgive what happened in the past. The country of South Africa has also gone through many race problems because the whites took over the country and the blacks went into poverty. Blacks had to live in the poorest and least fertile lands in all of South Africa because the whites thought that they had to teach the blacks who was boss. Then in 1991 all of the blacks finally got equality. There is still a lot of people who want the whites to rule the world and some blacks who wish that whites never existed. That will always be a problem.

The fourth and last concern is the biggest and worse problem ever, religion. The world has many religions and that is okay. The problem is that with all of the different religions: Christians, Jews, Muslims, Catholics, Buddhism, etc, cannot get along because there are many people that have very strong beliefs and fight for them. There are many other religions all over the world but many do not fight with the religions that live right next to them. There is a problem in Europe that has been going on for many years. There was once a country called Yugoslavia and when it was divided into five different countries the continent was in for a war.

Michelle Horstmeier, Lange Middle School, 7th Grade

Diversity

Diversity is the key to a perfect city.
Diversity is the golden rule,
It makes everyone cool.
If everyone had the same race,
Things would go at an awful pace.
If everyone had the same age,
We would feel like we were in a cage.
If everyone had the same culture,
We would not even reach the ability of a vulture.
If everyone had the same gender,
There would be no one left on Earth to remember.
If everyone was the same color,
Everyone would look just the other.
If everyone had the same disability,
We would never grow into a city.
Respect diversity.
Respect every other kind.
Diversity is part of every mind.
Diversity is our strength,
Not our length.
Diversity, I say,
Diversity is the history of food.
Diversity is the history of mood.
Diversity, I say –
Diversity Make it part of every city.

Sarah Khasawinah, Jefferson Jr. High, 8th Grade

Diversity is Our Strength

I AM here showing pride in my working class heritage.
I WONDER what was the point not much has really changed.
I HEAR a lot of talk of things still needing to be done.
I SEE that not much has really changed.
I WANT people to work together to better themselves and the people around them.

I AM here showing pride in my working class heritage.
I PRETEND that things have changed.I FEEL its just a lot of talk.
I TOUCH the socialist star as it rises in the sky.
I WORRY that they call what we have now progress.
I CRY when I hear some one call this progress.
I AM here showing pride in my working class heritage.

I UNDERSTAND we have a very long way to go.
I SAY its just another sad attempted to makeup for past mistakes.
I DREAM of one day watching the socialist star as it hangs in the sky.
I TRY to see things through their eyes but they represent what I hate.
I HOPE one day we can all come together as one race without the help of any government.
I AM here showing pride in my working class heritage.

Ian Kimmel, Douglass High School, 9th Grade

Diversity

What matters is not the race,
But what is hidden behind the face,
Woman or man, girl or boy,
Equality would bring all joy,
You should not judge by age,
But you should read this page.
If prejudice would be no more,
It would not matter if you are rich or poor.
I will stand tall with diversity by my side,
Diversity is reality from which no one should hide.
Columbia, rich and culturally diverse,
It's the best city on the earth!

Stacey Winter and Heather Bethel, Ridgeway Elementary, 5th Grade

A Rainbow of Diversity

Each day I see much diversity, a rainbow of people, each with different race, culture, and ability. In just one day, if one looked, one would see just how diverse Columbia has become. Walking into school, just glance around. There are so many different races and cultures. People from all around the world.

There are many different skin tones. Clothing style range widely from American Eagle and Abercrombie or Fubu or Hot Topic.

Through different classes, notice the abilities of some: A fine, steady-handed craftsman, shaping a block of wood into a masterpiece in a shop. A skilled scientist experimenting with reaction time in science. A future rock star, trying out for a solo in choir. They are all supported and offered opportunities for advancement.

Others have disabilities: A struggle with factoring polynomial equations in math. Blindness. A problem speaking in front of others. These people are able to receive the help they need so they too can succeed. From a young age, girls are told they can be anything they want to be, astronaut, architect, doctor, or lawyer – the options are endless.

During PE one girl stands apart from the rest.. She is wearing long sleeves, long pants, and a hijab.

All the other girls are wearing shorts and T-shirts. Yet the girl is not embarrassed. She proudly represents her religion and culture, even in a country where they are not the majority. For this, she is not cast away, but accepted. Together, everyone sits down for lunch. Race and culture do not influence friendships. Indians, Caucasians, and African-Americans sit together. They talk about different things, but race is not one of them. The bell toll loudly the end of another day. Boys and girls alike cheerfully leave. Together they all leave. Together.

Elaina Griffo, Jefferson Junior High, 8th Grade

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