

DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

*Selected September 2007 Dates to Remember
(From the Multicultural Calendar 2007)*

- o Sep 3: Labour Day, Canada and USA
- o Sep 8: International Literacy Day, UN
- o Sep 13: Rosh Hashanah, through Sep 13
- o Sep 13: Ramadan begins, through Oct 14
- o Sep 21: International Day of Peace, UN
- o Sep 22: Yom Kippur
- o Sep 27: Sukkot, through Oct 3

DIVERSITY AWARENESS: ONE PERSON AT A TIME

HRPLD member, **Tricia Gill**, mentioned that one of her friends had recently participated in Diversity Training. HRPLD's Diversity Committee contacted **Candace Loosley** who generously shared that life-changing experience with us.

HRPLD: Who initiated your training: you or your employer?

Candace: *My employer, Anago Resources Inc. (www.anago.on.ca), a detention and custody facility and residential treatment home for youth, did. The whole office (30 of us) spent 2 days at the Oakwood in Grand Bend.*

HRPLD: Was your training facilitated in-house or by an external facilitator?

Candace: *Leeno Karumanchery PhD, Executive Director, Diversity Solutions Inc. (www.diversitysolutions.net) led the program. 29/30 of the post-program evaluations were very positive.*

HRPLD: What kind of diversity training had you had prior to this program?

Candace: *None! I was raised in a small Northern Ontario town where there was one black child so, until I moved to London as an adult, diversity was not part of my experience.*

HRPLD: What were your expectations of this training program?

Candace: *None really. My Manager had heard Leeno present at a Youth Justice conference and recommended him highly. I'd gone onto Diversity Solutions Inc's web site but still didn't know what to expect. I was the only Admin person at the training; the rest of the group were all management so I felt a little out of my league. I didn't think racism really existed any more.*

HRPLD: How did the reality of this training differ from your expectations?

Candace: *It was a real wake-up call, especially the messages about power and privilege. I hadn't seen biases in myself but now I know that choosing not to see racism doesn't mean it doesn't exist!*

HRPLD: What was the greatest learning you took away from the training?

Candace: *The program covered a wide range of topics: ability, age, class, gender, privilege and power, race, sexual orientation...but the Blue Eyes-Brown Eyes exercise ([see footnotes below](#)) impacted me the most.*

HRPLD: What did you learn about yourself?

Candace: *I hadn't felt I was biased in any way in regards to racism; I thought I was very accepting but I discovered I wasn't as diverse as I thought. I chose to be ignorant to a certain extent and then felt guilty about it. How could I not have seen it?!*

HRPLD: How will you implement this training in your everyday work and life?

Candace: *I've become aware of how many simple common phrases we use on a daily basis have both racist and socio-economic implications.*

I've decided I need to diversify who I hang out with.

My 18 year old son recently watched Blue Eyes – Brown Eyes in his sociology, anthropology, physiology class so that gave us a great opportunity for discussion.

HRPLD: What advice would you offer others considering Diversity training?

Candace: *Just do it! Even though I was absolutely drained after 2 days, it was worth it. We didn't sit around hugging and singing Kumbyah! It was really painful work at times, very moving at other times to hear about Leeno's life experiences. For example, his parents, originally from India, had lived in Canada for more than 50 years but still were asked: where are you from? They wanted to know when they would be considered to come from Canada. Many of us cried when we heard that.*

HRPLD: Any other last words?

Candace: *Every workplace needs to hear about Diversity! If you can't be a champion then at least be an ally!*

HRPLD: Thank you very much for sharing such a personal experience.

Some resources worth considering as you plan your Diversity Training:

The Eye of the Storm:

Jane Elliott, internationally known teacher, lecturer and diversity trainer exposes prejudice and bigotry, for what they are, an irrational class system based upon purely arbitrary factors.

In response to the assassination of Martin Luther King many years ago, Jane devised this controversial and startling exercise (Blue Eyes-Brown Eyes) which labels participants, members of a grade 3 class, as inferior or superior based solely on the colour of their eyes and exposes them to the experience of being a minority.

A Class Divided:

Jane follows up **The Eye of the Storm** by meeting those grade 3 students in adulthood and hears how the exercise affected them and their families.

For more information on all Jane's work: www.janeelliott.com

The Fall Out Shelter Exercise:

You have 11 people in a shelter that is equipped with food, water and oxygen to last 11 people 2 weeks...or 6 people for a month. How do you determine who gets to live?

<http://apics7.org/documents/Ethics%20Handouts/bio-terrorism-exercise.pdf>

Issues of Gender:

Jane Rule and Harvey Milk write on various aspects of this topic.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane-Rule>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvey_Milk

White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack

Peggy McIntosh lists 50 things that reinforce the daily effects of white privilege. She says: "I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group".

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peggy-McIntosh>

COMING UP...

**abilityfirst Conference 2007
Tuesday, November 6, 2007
www.abilityfirst.on.ca**

Don't delay: this conference sold out very quickly in 2006!