

Weekly Wisdom 4-5-17

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Weekly Wisdom
~Stephen Sarchet

I just finished the [DiversityEdu](#) training for staff and faculty. If you haven't heard it yet, I recommend listening to the presentation. For me at least, it achieved its goal of getting me to think about what diversity is and what it isn't. Our own [diversity statement](#) say we believe that a diversity of peoples, cultures, and ideas is essential to learning, discovery, and creative expression. It says that we believe we all must be and feel physically, professionally, and emotionally safe so we can fully engage in and benefit from the university experience.

And so, with the topic fresh in my mind, I Googled "diversity" to see what I could find. Of course dictionary.com and mirriam-webster.com chimed in, so I looked there first thinking I'd get the real, no-nonsense version. Dictionary.com defined diversity as the state or fact of being diverse and the inclusion of individuals representing more than one national origin, color, religion, socioeconomic stratum, sexual orientation, etc. I also learned "diversity" is worth 16 points in Scrabble and Words With Friends. Seems like it should be worth more... Merriam-Webster described diversity as the condition of having or being composed of differing elements, especially the inclusion of different types of in a group or organization. Their use of the word "condition" in its definition stuck with me. It felt like a negative thought in what is supposed to be a desirable situation. It felt so out of place.

My search continued, following clicks hoping maybe to find someone's story about diversity. Between what I heard in DiversityEdu and what I read in the definitions, I felt like I wanted to hear more, something personal, thinking a story would be better than more diversity statements, definitions, or charts. Surely they must be out there. People love to tell stories. But I couldn't find what I was looking for. I wanted something that would touch me, something that, in its simplicity, in its heartfelt honesty would stay with me. Maybe I wanted too much. I looked and I looked, beginning to feel like I wasn't asking the right question or maybe no one had put into words the expression I was looking for...

Finally, I landed on a short bit from a story called Where the Sidewalk Ends by Shel Silverstein. I've never read the book, but his words seemed to answer my question. Not profound or preachy; not too smart or too teachy; definitely not pushy or speechy. The words are clear, the feeling human. And as I read them I felt them say this is us, and being us, we are, after all, the same.

My skin is kind of sort of brownish
Pinkish yellowish white.
My eyes are greyish bluish green,
But I'm told they look orange in the night.
My hair is reddish blondish brown,
But it's silver when it's wet.
And all the colors I am inside
Have not been invented yet.
~Shel Silverstein

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