**First Conscious Experience with Diversity**

3 questions | 30 participated

**1.My first experience in meeting or observing someone obviously different from me was....** (Long Answer)

30/30 (100%) answered

- visiting a Hindu temple.

- The first day of high school. I was not exposed to diversity until then.

- when I saw a severly overweight woman. I couldn't believe that someone would eat that much and enjoy gaining all of that weight

- Some years ago, my school’s reading curriculum presented stories with “more diversity.” My 7th grade students (African American) protested. One said, “Ya’ll are just trying to get us to think different people are good. But why can’t we just read something fun like other kids?”

- I didn't think about my first experience with it, but I did have an experience yesterday that has been on my mind. I was talking with a young lady that appeared to be of Middle Eastern descent. She spoke English. We were discussing an expensive item that she couldn't afford, so I said, "You'll have to ask Santa."

- When I was in first grade, there was an African American student in my class. She sat in front of me because we were seated in ABC order. My first thought was how did she get all the braids in her hair?

- In elemenatry school. I am from a very small town in rural Iowa. It was a very unique monoculture. I recall when people of other races started moving into the area. It was quite a controversy among the adults.

- I went to a Catholic college and I wasn't catholic. People didn't understand my beliefs (even though I am Christian)

- when I was young (10-12 years old).

- When dating outside of my race it caused a family disruption that I was unaware existed (to that extent). I have never had to ask permission to bring a significant other to a family event, but there were group letters being mailed with accusations and sides were being taken. I was ultimately given permission to bring my significant other.

- I went to Disney World as a young child (maybe 8 years old) and played with a kid from Mexico for several days at the pool. He spoke English but noticed he spoke Spanish to his parents and he mentioned being there to celebrate a holiday (or something like that) that I had never heard of. I remember being very curious and asking questions.

- A student had moved from an inner city school to a posh suburban one. In trying to connect with him, I said something like, “You must think this school is kinda lame”. He said, “No, I’m just glad to be able to do my work…”

- I went to a Catholic school with no children of color. In second grade, 2 female students joined my class, both black students. My mom, who was a school admin. said 1 was a "charity case" who got a scholarship, and the other was a doctor's kid who has a wife mom. She said it would be ok for me to befriend one but not the other.

- Working with contractors in high school. Not everyone is thick skinned and can take the banter that is dished out on job sites. I witnessed multiple people quit once they were picked on for their ethnic backgrounds.

- Cultural experience while in Tennessee. They were not accepting of northern transplants in the community because of the way the northern transplants treated them. (Biases on both sides)

- I shared in middle school that I was an atheist. It was just part of the discussion that we were having in class. I didn't realize that anyone would care or that it would be a big deal. I spent the day being told I was going to burn in hell. Then after that many other students tried to "save" me.

- I had an experience in college when diverse students stated that I was “privileged" and that was the only reason I had a prominent place on the team” verbally attacked me often.

- Riding the El/Subway for the first time in Philadelphia. Kids were shouting, cursing, fighting, and being disrespectful to the other riders.

- My experience was in High School was driving for the first time and a male of different race needed a ride. A complete stranger. I was taught conflicting tings growing up stranger danger, versus helping out thos in need. I gave him a ride.

- We might not have much in common and I we will not be able to relate.

- Anxious- figuring out to how I was going to support their needs.

- I was on social media and reading posts in a parent group. One parent posted about her 15 year old son walking home one night (10 PM ish) in their suburban neighborhood. She said that a police car pulled up beside him and asked him what he was doing. When he said he was walking home, they asked if they could follow him.

- Basketball Tournament Dinner

- Going to my Aunt's house and meeting her boyfriend and his son. His son was my age but didn't speak English.

- This is an impactful experience, but one that occurred over a period of 30+ years. A dear friend of the family was born of ethnic-German heritage in Poland in 1944. As a toddler her mother and sisters were taken prisoners by Russian soldiers and spent many years in a Russian work camp w/terrible treatment. She eventually came to the US

- This was not my "first" experience meeting or observing someone who was different from me and also, the people I met were not actually much different from me; no different than any other people I would meet. They happened to be from Brazil - a man and a lady. They were a younger [than me] couple, possibly in their 30's.

- Not an experience, but I grew up in a very diverse area. All of my friends were of different backgrounds.

- This is hard to know when you are born and raised in a city. It was probably long before I can remember and I have always been surrounded by different types of people.

- I have a “friend” on social media that posts a lot of pictures of themselves with groups of their friends, out on a Friday night or together at an event. I never see any diversity in their pictures. I have to wonder – are they only friends with people of their own race?

- Harassed by police for no reason.

**2.My "takeaway" (impression, conclusion, feeling, etc.) from that experience was.....** (Long Answer)

30/30 (100%) answered

- It didn't occur to me right away, but later I thought: She might not celebrate Christmas! I felt terrible for being so potentially insensitive. I assumed that she was like most of the people in my family/circle of friends.

- It seems… odd. I have a negative feeling associated with this person now because of how they are representing themselves and their social circle.

- My takeway led me to making a lifelong friendship with the "doctor's daughter" who became a lawyer and not feeling very surprised when I learned the other student had gotten pregnant right out of HS and got arrested for writing bad checks.

- I had some, or a lot, of learning to do.

- Police would rather harass people of color than looking for crime.

- It felt strange to me since I lived in a town where everyone looked like me.

- Probably a dumb idea as I didn't know him and it could have been bad but it turned out ok and he happened to be best friend of my next door neighbor. Small world.

- I felt ashamed for making an assumption about this student and his own unique experience and preferences.

- I became very curious during these encounters because it is my first time I can recall meeting someone from a different country/culture. I had met diverse people before but this was my first time meeting someone where the differences were so drastic. I remember asking my parents many questions.

- He and I had many conversations about how this would look and if he was prepared to face my family because of the seriousness of the relationship. The event was for my grandfather’s birthday and he died on his birthday prior to his party, therefore the emotions I was causing to come up in others got shadowed by grief.

- I would be nervous taking public transportation whenever there were groups of kids not like me.

- While there are many differences, there are certainly many commonalities all people share. To notice them we have to listen attentively.

- It was frustrating trying to communicate with someone who didn't speak the same language as you, but it was rewarding when both of you understood each other eventually.

- & her story is one of forgiveness for those who mistreated her & her family & her courage & strength due to her strong faith. She was known for her love & care for others. Take aways: the importance of forgiveness. The importance of listening to others' stories. They lived the history we read about & teach our students. We need to listen.

- I don't think I really noticed she was African American, I was just fascinated with her hair. I went to school with her until 6th grade and then we went to different middle schools. During elementary school, we were friends. However, we never visited each other homes; we were school friends.

- It was mind boggeling to me that people didn't understand how I could still believe in the same things they did when I wasn't their exact denomination. I was also struck by the hypocrisy of them being "good Catholics" yet judging me for not being the same as them or telling me I was going to hell for eating meat on Fridays during lent...

- My impression was that it was just part of the job and were being tested on how much you could take to fit in. After listening and watching, you realize that some of it from certain individuals did not seem like a joke after a while.

- My take away from that point on was not to share with anyone that I am an atheist or really anything about my religious background or to even discuss religion with people.

- Being far from privileged and knowing what I had to go through to get that spot I was angered and immediately built a wall between myself and other diverse students. It created a negative response to that word used so generally today “privileged” when I hear it describing an entire race.

- Adults are strange.

- Anger and Confusion

- I still think about this years later. As a young teacher it had a strong impression on my methodology.

- When I do meet new people or different types of people, I am often curious of their culture but also want to be respectful and not intrusive.

- I was umconfortable.

- It is difficult to develop a relationship and a sense of belonging to the community for fear of offending a person or being labeled.

- I learned that over eating is a reaction to something that happened in that person's life that was different from me. My take-away was don't be so judgmental.

- My thought was how nice. They were making sure he made it home okay. That is awesome. As I continued to read, I realized that the parent was really upset by this and felt that her child was being targeted. That the police didn’t think the child lived in the neighborhood and she was very worried for her sons safety during the encounter

- I thought it was interesting to meet a couple from another country who came to the United States for the purpose of working and being here because they liked Pittsburgh. I have a step daughter who is bilingual and has been looking to leave the Pittsburgh area.

- I never really thought about it. I was brought up to treat people based on their actions, not their color or religious beliefs.

- I still remember the feeling of discomfort I had at first, wondering if the people there would think I was in some way encroaching on a place I didn't belong. But I also remember how everyone I meet was warm and welcoming and how it became an impactfule experience.

**3.Has that "takeaway" changed over time? If so, how has it changed?** (Long Answer)

28/30 (93%) answered

- It's caused me to be more thoughtful of kids' interests when considering assigned reading.

- No, I love learning about our differences.

- I believe it has. Unfortunately I still have some biases from that high school experience

- Nothing has changed for me in how I view people.

- The take away has not changed. I still find it interesting and enjoyable.

- I still don't trust most people when it comes to sharing this information about myself. Those who are close to me or I know I can trust do know, but if I don't know someone it's not something I share. I have tried a few more times in the past and it has rarely gone well.

- As I get older (LOL) I am reminded of the importance of giving people time to tell their stories; especially those who are often not given time (elderly) in our fast paced world. We have a lot to learn from previous generations.

- Nothing has changed since then. In fact, one of the things I notice when reflecting on my own bias is that I am quite unknowledgeable or ignorant to certain cultures and their customs. I notice similar feelings when meeting or learning something new about a culture as I did when I met the kid from Mexico at Disney World.

- I can't control their life. I can control my feelings about the life they are presenting though. I just try to remind myself that they are only presenting a small piece of themselves and try not to judge them.

- My takeaway changed months later because we found common ground and talked about things. However, I hear the term "privileged" used much more often nowadays when discussing a particular race I find myself back in those moments and feelings I had in college.

- Yes because there isn't a fear of having to learn something new. Now, it is more of an excitement to learn different ways in which I can support different needs.

- I don't think it has changed. I met up with her again as adults; both our first jobs were at the same company and we would occasionally talk in the hall and remember things we did; but, it was not a life long type friendship.

- It's only been about 24 hours, so I am still mulling it over. But I've thought about what I could have said instead (birthday idea!).

- Be careful with assumptions and be engaged in the moment.

- Once I started going to school with a more diverse student body, I had positive experiences with people who weren't like me and negative experiences with people who were, which enabled me to more realistically frame my initial experience.

- Nothing has changed

- It changed, certainly. Both girls having the same educational opportunity was not enough to provide positive outcomes for both. The ingrained biases and systemic issues prevalent in our society were powerful enough to lead to drastically different outcomes.

- Yes, this was a seminal moment for me about bias and assumptions.

- Yes, I try to think of being in another person's situation or life.

- No - I'm still a little "salty" about it...lol. I have a hard time with people who can't and won't take the time to learn about things outside of their own little bubble as well as organized religion as a whole.

- It really struck me that I had a totally different thought process when she described the encounter and how my past experience shaped my thought process and her past experiences shaped hers

- Not really.

- Anger subsides...confusion remains.

- Yes, I learned that close relationships take time to develop. Relationships are developed by understanding differences and meaningful communication.

- My family still acts and 'do what they do'. I can't say I have made an impact or a change in them. However, they comment that I should cover my ears like a little kid before they make their remarks. I do my best to remind my family that my children are in a group they comment on, but they often forget this based on how they appear outwardly.

- I have come to develop a better understanding of the biases that are developed over time that may impact how adults, or anyone, react to changes in their environment.

- Over time I realized that was not the environment I wanted to work in. I would not put myself back in that setting.

- As an adult, we tend to give up very quickly when we discover someone speaks the same language as us. Although I try to learn other languages, I wish more people, including myself, were willing to work on communicating with someone who speaks a different language the same way we did as kids.