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Reflection Paper #1- Diversity

I had a teacher in high school ask the class to raise their hands if we had ever shared activities with people of another race, whether it be sports, games on the playground, or school projects. The majority of the class raised their hands. In many cases, it would have been hard not to raise your hand. The teacher had then asked the students to raise their hands if they had ever invited a member of another race to a party, dinner, or even sleep over. Half of the hands dropped. The teacher then asked the students to raise their hands if they had ever attended a dinner, party, or sleep over at the residence of a different ethnicity. I was one of only two people that could actually raise their hand out of thirty to forty students. My own position was not too great because I could only say that I had been to a different ethnic household by invitation once or twice. Of course, over the years I had developed many of my different ethnic friends because I lived in the same neighborhood. Until now, I have used this story to measure racism because it isn't necessarily the dislike in another race as much as it is the lack of interaction, trust, and comfort being around someone different.

Although diversity is better defined as any unique trait in nature, I think that many people only see diversity as the differences and interactions that make them uncomfortable with other people. Diversity is not an issue but a fact of our world. We would not and could not evolve and grow without diversity. We waste more energy

unnecessarily by resisting change and trying to make everything work, act and look the same.

Many multicultural events that I have been to in the past have expected no more than for people to give different styles of life a try or positive thought. No one ever expected me to like or continue doing things their way. I would look at someone else's culture shock to my way of life as being a compliment. An example would be like being a champion eater of extremely spicy food where you expect to be the only one to handle such a feat, and you want others to experience what you endure, so they have a perspective of what makes you different.

I think that one of the unconscious habits people in our world have had is grouping. My roommate brought up an interesting point in one of his classes that sparked a thought. The topic they had discussed was affirmative action and being qualified as being an African- American. Do white people from Egypt and Libya, areas in which people tend to forget as being apart of Africa, receive the same rights as any other black African- American when it comes to affirmative action? The point is that we haven't really judged on points of origin and diverse culture as much as we have judged color. People who are white in color use the "African- American" phrase with the intent to be more polite, but people of color may still be offended because it doesn't describe their heritage correctly or who they are as a person.

Dr. Martin Luther King said that he had a dream that we would all one day be treated equally. We all should be treated with the same opportunities, but not necessarily to live by the same rules, beliefs, and customs. All people when given the same opportunities should be given an equal and honestly listened to view. His view was about

how we were all people with rights so long as we didn't violate the rights of others. These rights were freedom. Most of the different ethnic groups in our society were not out to change our beliefs, so no rights of ours had been violated. Many of the groups on campus and in the community set up events so that we can see they mean no harm. They give us a chance to ask questions. We all came from different places, so we should all have an equal opportunity. We all deserve space, an understanding, and a chance to be able to say we belong to the best nation in our world- one that represents most of the world.

When I leave Stout, I want to be able to teach. When I do become a teacher, I will be stressing the same values upon my students as we have discussed this semester, but everyone needs to practice their social skills with members of any race, whether it be out in schools or out in other work forces. We could turn down a great deal of hard work and potential by not giving everyone an equal opportunity.

