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Consistently the Same: 1 Diversity: 0

According to Webster's Dictionary, diversity is defined as, "the inclusion of people of different races or cultures in a group or organization or community." Diversity allows communities to mix cultures, values, and ideas from different ethnicities and different groups of people. Diverse communities allow young adults and teenagers to grow, broaden their minds, and find themselves individually. Differences in opinions, moral values, and lifestyles within a community allow young individuals to grow opinions and thoughts for themselves. Lack of diversity causes too much consistency in an area and halts the development of individual thinking. Individual opinions and individual ideas are necessary to any community.

Diversity is a vital part of the development of teenagers; however the amount of diversity in a community varies around the United States. My name is Victoria Yarnell and I have lived in seven different states from Georgia to California. I moved to Idaho Falls the start of my junior year and have enjoyed the outdoor-driven community. Although Idaho Falls is a great community filled with close-knit relationships and beautiful outdoor scenery, the town lacks the vital necessity of diversity. Idaho Falls is a very small, conservative, religious town with little liking of and support towards outsiders and their opinions. The town is consistent in maintaining certain moral values and opinions as a town, and not as individual citizens. Moving to Idaho Falls from California is not exactly looked at as a good thing, since California is very unique in offering different opportunities and opinions to its youth. Idaho Falls limits the broadening of opinions outside of what is considered "the norm." I believe in differences and argument and equal opportunity. Idaho Falls typically believes in conservative opinion, Mormon ideals, and God's moral values. The lack of individual opinion and development has a huge affect on young adults and teenagers within the Idaho Falls community.

The lack of individual opinion and opposition to outside opinion can be easily located within Idaho Falls. All one has to do is open the local newspaper, The Post Register. The Post Register is overflowing with religious/church articles and conservative-opinion articles regarding the world issues. Articles supporting the war, dismantling Obama, and bashing liberal views are a consistent find in The Post Register. An infamously-conservative article printed in the Post Register would be an article regarding the election of Barack Obama as president, written through the opinions of Idaho Fall's celebrity Frank Vandersloot. Vandersloot, the CEO of Melaleuca, is known throughout Idaho Falls for not only creating a thriving company in eastern Idaho, but for also funding the Melaleuca Freedom Celebration every Fourth of July. Vandersloot is also a very conservative man, which was shown heavily throughout the Obama article. Vandersloot claimed that he did not support Obama as president, nor should anyone else for that matter. Vandersloot claimed that as Americans, we must believe that Obama can do good things for this nation even though we know that being that he is a Democrat, Obama will not be able to do this nation justice. Frank proclaimed repeatedly that we, as a community, cannot support Obama as a president, but we must hope, as Americans, that he will try to do this country justice. Not only is this a complete contradiction, but this article is a huge barrier on individual beliefs. This man has a huge influence in Idaho Falls and the difficult thing is that many people will follow

Vandersloot's opinion without thinking for themselves. This is why diversity is essential in a community. Without differences in opinions, confrontation on ideas, and the sharing of different views, the world would not be diverse, but consistently the same.

This world needs diverse because we fuel our government and our society, with differences, with arguments, and with opinions. Debate fuels our economy and allows Americans to get the best possible solution to our nation's problems. Without different opinions, without diversity, we have no debate and without debate, we, as American citizens, have no voice in government. Without a voice in government, we are no longer in control of who runs our country or how they run it. Diversity is essential, difference is necessary, and change is vital to allow communities, states, and countries to reach their full potential. Young adults and teenagers need diversity to grow, learn, and develop opinions for themselves. Like the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the clothes we wear, diversity is a vital necessity for the development of teenagers and young adults.

20/2

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How Diversity Unites Our Community

Recently, two kids from Skyline were driving down a dirt road after school. The boy driving, age seventeen, started fishtailing and lost control of his truck. The truck tipped, and the girl sitting next to him, age sixteen, was ejected from the vehicle. The truck rolled over top of her. Instantly, she passed away. As I walked into school the day after this terrible tragedy, there was silence. Everybody was mourning the loss of a classmate and a friend. In class, teachers informed us about this horrible accident.

Putting aside their differences, the students and teachers at Skyline High School united and helped one another. Counselors were available. Posters were in the library accessible for all to sign: one for the boy driving, and one to write the memories of the girl to give comfort for her family. These would be given to the girl's family and the boy driving.

The next day jars were being passed around to collect donations. These donations were for the girl's family to help with funeral costs. Most people pitched in to help. Some donated large dollar bills; others contributed their pocket change. The donations really helped the family with the cost, and even people who didn't know her were willing to help in this hardship. Skyline students and teachers were very thoughtful to help out. The football team wore armbands in memory of their lost friend with her name on it. Even though everyone at Skyline may look different, act different, and think differently, countless people united to help out in a time of need.

The word diversity means different types of people, whether it be race, religion, beliefs, or actions. People are interested in different things and are unique in their own way, and that's what makes us who we are. Diversity is something we see every day. Sometimes it is just someone who has a different skin color, and at times it's someone who believes in something very different. The wide variety of people in our lives helps to give us an acceptance for diverse people. It also helps us be selfless and do things for others. In the hall, I saw a girl who wasn't having a good day. I talked to her about what was making her sad, and I tried to cheer her up. When we are selfless, we aren't thinking about ourselves and tend to be happier.

My sister, Lindsay, is eighteen. We have been best friends since I was born just a year after she was. Although we are best friends and spend a lot of time together, we have many differences. We both love to do gymnastics, cheer, dance, and spend time with friends and family, but there are many things that she loves that I dislike and vice versa. For example, I love playing the piano, but she absolutely hates it. She loves doing her hair, but I would rather put my hair up in a ponytail and use the extra time to play my guitar. No two people are the same, even if they seem to be very similar.

In our communities, we could go to the grocery store or a popular clothes store and see a variety of different people. Some are tall, several are skinny, and others are dark. Diversity doesn't stop with their outward appearance. It continues to the person inside. Some are shy, others believe in themselves, and a number are timid and not confident. No two people are exactly the same. We like different things, believe in different things, and have different hobbies, which sets us apart from other people.

1 of 2

When I was a sophomore at Skyline, they had diversity week. I had never participated in diversity week because we didn't have it at Eagle Rock. Some of the student body officers asked if I would help with an experiment for them. I agreed and they told me what needed to be done. I was to not talk to anyone for a whole day. A few people in each grade were asked to do this. They had all of us wear a bright fluorescent shirt that said, "Don't talk to me. I'm different." All of the students were informed that they were not allowed to talk to or associate with the people in these shirts. As I went throughout the day being silent, I thought about the kids who are ignored, don't have friends, or the children who may lack the confidence and don't talk to others. I had now put myself in their position and could feel the sadness they must go through. Because I couldn't talk to anyone that day, I couldn't share my feelings or thoughts with anyone. No one was there for me to talk to or giggle with. Eating lunch by myself was not fun at all. It was boring and depressing. The whole day was gloomy because I didn't have friends there to make me laugh or smile. We might think of diversity as a culture difference, but it can also be an attitude or personality variation. Although some people are shy and don't know how to talk to people, it doesn't mean they don't want to talk to others. We can all reach out to the assortment of people in our community. People need friends, no matter who they are, what they believe, or what they say.

When we understand others' differences, it helps us understand them and what they are experiencing. I notice when I put myself in another person's shoes, they are more appreciative of me, and they feel like someone cares. It is also easier to understand world issues when we are non-judgmental and open to acceptance. Compassion is important in being able to help others.

Diversity can be a good thing if we accept one another's differences. Some people may be good at one thing while others are good at something else. If we all put our strengths and talents together as a community, imagine what we could accomplish. Our talents combined could really make a difference.

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Diversity Play-Doh
By: Caitlyn Lewis

Simply picture a world where everyone acted, talked, and believed all the same things. The word boring might come to your mind, or at least it does to mine. That kind of world would be more than just boring though, it would not show us diversity. With diversity in our lives, we will be able to form unity despite our differences, whether in race, culture, religion, gender, or style.

I like to think of a "tight-knit" community like playing with Play-Doh. It's like everyone in the community has a small tub of Play-Doh. Heather's is purple, and Joe's is lime green, but maybe Grant's Play-Doh is chilly pepper red. When people serve, love, and care for those in their community, a small piece of their Play-Doh goes into a giant multi-colored ball of dough. Once people forget themselves and differences they have between others, beautiful things can be formed. Everyone believes different things, looks different, and comes from different backgrounds. Once we forget those things and come together, that ball of Play-Doh becomes so much more interesting, bold, and bright. Personally I want to live in a world where people are interesting, caring, and happy.

Everyone has an impact on his or her school, workplace, or community. No matter how small you feel at times, people care what your opinions are. Everyone that puts aside their differences to unify themselves within their communities, live happier lives. Let's not judge others, let's serve them and add Play-Doh to our mix. People are beautiful and can create beautiful things when differences are forgotten. So, remember to contribute your Play-Doh to the "mixing pot" of colors.