



# Diverse Issues

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## Diversity in People: The Bahá'í Faith

With beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century (1844), the Bahá'í Faith is the youngest of the world's independent religions. This religion arose from tensions with and conflicts in beliefs, practices, and laws of Islam. Much as Buddhism emerged from a traditional Hindu background, and Christianity was born out of the messianic expectations of Judaism, the Bahá'í Faith is entirely independent from its parent religion.



The resting place of Bahá'u'lláh in Bahjí, Israel

Bahá'u'lláh, founder of the Bahá'í Faith, taught that God is too great and too subtle a being for man to ever fully understand him or construct an accurate image of him.

More than five million believers of the Bahá'í Faith can be found in virtually every part of the world, and among every cultural, racial, and social group. It has established administrative institutions in more than 235 nations and territories. More than 140,000 Bahá'ís live in the United States (2004 Interfaith, 2003).

The Bahá'í Faith is based on the belief of three basic principles: (1) the oneness of God; (2) the oneness of humankind; and (3) the fundamental unity of religion.

First, Bahá'ís believe that the universe and everything within it was created by one superhuman, supernatural Being that we call God. Further, God is believed to have complete control over the universe and complete knowledge of it.

*“Although we many have different concepts of God's nature, although we may pray to him in different languages, and call him by different names – Allah or Yahweh, God or Brahma – nevertheless, we are speaking about the same unique Being.”* (Hatcher & Martin, 2002, p. 74)

Second, Bahá'ís believe that the entire human race is one unified, distinct species, and organic unit. Human beings are the highest form of life which God has created. All humans are believed to have the same basic, God-given capacities. Physical differences are superficial and do not make one ethnic group superior to another. All theories of racial superiority are rejected by Bahá'í teachings. According to the teachings, prejudice, ignorance, power-seeking, and egotism have prevented many people from recognizing and accepting this oneness of humankind.

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The Bahá'í Faith teaches that man is in the process of growing and developing collective maturity. As we continue to grow and organize society on ever higher levels of unity, there is a greater need for interdependence and cooperation. We have progressed from the family, to the tribe, to the city-state, and the nation. According to the teachings, the next stage in the collective growth process is world unity, the organization of society as one world. Thus, ultimately, the principle of oneness of humankind implies the establishment of the unity of nations, or world government, and of planetary civilization.

*“The object of life to a Bahá'í is to promote the oneness of mankind – a universal salvation. Thus, the spiritual purpose of society is to create a milieu favorable to the healthy growth and development of all its members.” (Hatcher & Martin, 2002, p. 77).*

The structures of world unity include a world legislature with genuine representation and authority, an international court having final jurisdiction in disputes between nations, and an international police force (Hatcher & Martin, 2003).

*“The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.” - Bahá'u'lláh*

The Bahá'í Faith promotes unity in diversity, rather than uniformity. Increased awareness of and respect for the intrinsic value of each separate culture and individual is valued. The establishment of world unity and a planetary civilization is believed to represent the “coming of age” of humanity, the maturity of the human race.



Third, according to the Bahá'í Faith, there is only one religion, the religion of God. “This one religion is continually evolving, and each particular religious system represents a stage in the evolution of the whole” (Hatcher & Martin, 2002, p. 83). Bahá'ís believe that God has revealed himself to man throughout history

through great prophets or messengers who have brought the Word of God. In successive order, these messengers have been: Abraham, Moses, Krishna, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed, the Bab, and Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith. The messages are believed to differ according to the requirements of the ages in which they were delivered. Religious history is viewed as a succession of progressive revelations from God.

While the fundamental goal of the Bahá'í Faith is to achieve a unified world order, a number of other principles are important. These include:

- The importance of using the reasoning capacity of the mind to investigate the truth
- The abandonment of all superstitions and prejudices
- The belief that true religion is in harmony with the pursuit of scientific knowledge
- The equality of men and women; a greater balance between feminine and masculine influences on society
- Realization of universal education
- Abolishment of the extremes of poverty and wealth
- Emphasis on the spiritual nature of man
- The adoption of a universal auxiliary international language, taught as a second language in all school systems of the world

The sacred writings of the Bahá'í Faith include over one hundred books and tablets. Basic concepts, including the explanation of progressive revelation, principles of human life and conduct, the laws and ordinances, and the administrative structure of the institution are described within these writings.

At the community level, a “Local Spiritual Assembly” may be formed whenever there are at least nine adult members of the Bahá'í Faith in that community. Nine members are elected to supervise the local Bahá'í activities. Local members select delegates to attend an annual national convention where nine members are

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## *Diversity Around the State: 4-H High School International Exchange Mid-Term Weekend*

*By Wanda Braymer, 4-H Extension Educator in Crawford County*



What does Amish style country cooking, three Japanese teenage girls, three American teenage girls, 750 Holstein milking cows, several board games, a 79 year old grandmother, a foot of snow, and two 4-H Extension Educators have in common? The answer is . . . the 4-H High School International Exchange Mid-Term Weekend.

Recently, the Pennsylvania 4-H High School delegates fulfilled their mid-term requirement in a fun, diverse way. Rerei Oyabu and her host sister, Erika Wood of Crawford County, Akari Koge and her host sister, Bethany Gould of Butler County, and Risa Jojima and her host sister, Britta Lais of Garrett County, MD participated in a fun-filled sleep over at the Hillcrest Dairy Farm in Somerset County.

You may wonder how and why this all took place? The Japanese students are in the United States, taking high school classes for the full school year. 4-H host families offer their homes as a year-long home stay. Halfway through the exchange, they are required to participate in a mid-term event. This gives the students an opportunity to share their experiences with other youth from their country and, in many instances, speak in their native language for the first in a long time. In some states, this may be an evening out at a nice restaurant, but since it was all girls, why not a slumber party? Wanda Braymer, Pennsylvania 4-H International Exchange Coordinator, decided to have the mid-term at her family farm, which was near the Lais Family home. Also, her mother is one of the finest country cooks in the county. (I'm sure this had some bearing on the decision.)



The girls were not too anxious to trudge through the snow to the barns and watch the cattle be milked and cared for. So, they stayed in where it was warm showing each other, on the Japanese city and province maps, areas familiar to them. After a delicious country meal (chicken pot pie served with gravy, fruit salad, Jell-O salad, toss salad, three varieties of cookies all homemade), the teens enjoyed an ice cream novelty, many laughs, and several board games. The girls all slept well in their sleeping bags on the padded living room floor at the big farm house.

The following morning the group again enjoyed a big country meal (fried eggs, toasted homemade bread, and jams, bacon, strawberry rhubarb sauce, fruit salad, and orange juice). Before leaving Somerset County, the girls shared their phone numbers and e-mail addresses with each other. Then Wanda Braymer, Crawford County 4-H Educator, and Ellen Linamen, Butler County 4-H Educator, safely returned the girls to their host families. ❖

## *Diversity In The Workplace: The Top Ten Intercultural Competency Skills*

Intercultural competency is human capital in modern life. You will increase your worth as a member of an organization with skills that enable you to assist in promoting inclusion and exploiting the promise of diversity. However, few people understand what intercultural competency entails. Intercultural competency is human capital made up of a set of four components: (a) Attitude/Self Awareness; (b) Intercultural Knowledge; (c) Intercultural Skills; and (d) Intercultural Leadership Skills.

While you may think that the leadership skills are not relevant to your immediate situation, keep in mind that organizations are increasingly relying on teams to meet the demands of a fast moving, ever-changing world, and that every team member plays a leadership role in high functioning teams. Below is a list of skill components that are characteristic of intercultural competency:

- An ability to empathize with the unique perspective of different members of the organization, especially individuals who are most different from you.
- An ability to listen to others, especially when intercultural differences pose challenges (e.g., the person has a strong accent, the person is highly emotional, the person shares views that are counter to one's own, etc.).
- An ability to notice subtle, but important, nonverbal cues.
- An ability to lead people in a way that members of different groups feel supported and able to bring their whole selves to the organization.
- An ability to tolerate the ambiguity that results from not knowing what the rules are or what is expected of you in unfamiliar situations.
- An ability to know when your personal limitations interfere with your ability to interact with someone who is different.

- An ability to lean into the discomfort of feeling misunderstood or rejected that often comes with learning new behaviors, so that you can work towards competence.
- An ability to take risks so that you can practice intercultural skills.
- An ability to see value in each and every culture to the point that learning about cultural differences becomes a way of life.
- An ability to address the challenges of intercultural interactions, rather than blame people for poor interaction outcomes.

Can you think of any others?❖

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### Greetings Around the World

Some people shake hands, some kiss, or embrace. Others just say hello. The following are greetings typically used by people in other countries.

**Japan** Bow from the waist with eyes lowered and palms against your thighs.

**India** Hold palms together (as if praying) below the chin; nod or bow slightly and say namaste (nah-mas-tay).

**Guatemala** Men shake hands, and close male friends may hug or pat each other on the back. Women will often pat your right forearm or shoulder instead of shaking hands.

**Brazil** Handshakes are common during a first meeting. As friendship develops, the handshake may change to an embrace. Women may kiss each other on alternating cheeks.

**Russia** Shake hands and state the person's name.

**Saudi Arabia** The traditional greeting between men involves grasping each other's right hand, placing the left hand on the other's right shoulder, and kissing each other on each cheek.

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elected to serve as the National Spiritual Assembly. Voting is done by secret ballot with no electioneering allowed prior to voting. The nine members with the greatest number of votes are declared to be elected. Elections at the local and national assemblies are held annually. However, the structure extends to another level. Every five years delegates from the national assemblies meet at an international convention. Nine persons are elected from national spiritual assemblies to the Universal House of Justice. This convention is held at the World Center of the Bahá'í Faith in Haifa, Israel. There are no clergy or ritualism associated with this faith.

The Bahá'í year consists of nineteen months, each having nineteen days. The year is based on the Bahá'í solar calendar and is the same for the entire Bahá'í world. The four extra days in the solar calendar (five in leap year) are designated as "Intercalary Days." This is a special time for gift-giving and festivity. Members of the Bahá'í Faith gather together on the first day of the month for a feast. The feast consists of three parts: 1) prayers and meditations, 2) a community business meeting, and 3) refreshments and informal fellowship. Feasts generally take place in the homes of members or in small community centers.

Members of the Bahá'í Faith are obligated to follow certain requirements. These include:

- Abstention from alcohol and narcotic drugs
- Fasting from sunrise to sunset by adults during a specified 19-day period each year
- Abstention from backbiting and criticism of others
- Abstention from any political party or partisan movement.
- Consent from both parents prior to marriage; chastity before marriage; and absolute faithfulness between partners in marriage
- A full year of waiting prior to divorce

## References:

Hatcher, W. S. & Martin, J. D. (2002). *The Bahá'í Faith: The Emerging Global Religion*. Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing.

2004 InterFaith Calendar. (2003). The National Conference for Community and Justice, (author). Chicago, IL.

The Bahá'í World. (2001). The official presence of the Bahá'í Faith on the Web. Bahá'í International Community. <http://www.bahai.org/>. ❖

## *Diversity Around the State: Diversity in Horticulture Programming*

*By Mary Concklin*

### *Montgomery County Cooperative Extension*

With the growing number of Spanish speaking workers in the green industry in Southeast PA, there was a need to provide up-to-date practical horticulture programming in Spanish. On October 28<sup>th</sup>, the Southeast PA Urban Ag Committee offered the 2003 Horticulture Short Course for Spanish Speaking Employees. This course offered four classes covering installation and establishment of turf grass, planting procedures for woody ornamentals, annual bed preparation and installation, and quality landscape management: the employee's role. The classes were taught by John Berry, Nancy Bosold, Mary Concklin, and Warren Goll, using videos, and Drew Smith, a local grower and interpreter.



Fifty one individuals, many of them bilingual, participated. The bilingual participants helped with the interpretation providing for interesting discussions. Results from pre and post tests indicated all participants increased their knowledge in each area.

All participants received a certificate of attendance. After the program, several of the businesses that had sent employees have indicated they were pleased with the program and look forward to future ones. ❖

## Diversity Resource: Web Sites for Special Months



May is Asian Pacific American Heritage Month and June is Gay and Lesbian Pride Month. The following Web sites offer historical and interesting information on these groups of Americans.

### **Asian Pacific American Heritage Month**

The Asian Pacific American Heritage Month is a federal celebration, signed by the United States Congress on October 28, 1992, in Public Law 102-450, to recognize the contributions of Asian Pacific Americans in all walks of life to this nation. Visit the following sites to learn more about Asian Pacific Americans:

Asian Pacific Heritage Month  
<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/asianhistory1.html>

The Asian Population: 2000  
Census 2000 Brief  
<http://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/c2kbr01-16.pdf>

Channel 3000: Asian Pacific American Heritage Month  
<http://www.channel3000.com/aphm/index.html>

What Is Asian Pacific Heritage Month?  
<http://iis.stat.wright.edu/AAC-Dayton/asianHeritageMonth.htm>

### **Gay and Lesbian Pride Month**

Although Gay and Lesbian Pride Month is not an official U.S. holiday, many cities across the country will hold annual Pride celebrations in June. Visit the following sites to learn more about Gay and Lesbian Pride Month:

History of Gay & Lesbian Pride Month  
<http://www.nwhp.org/events/gay-lesbian-pride/history-of-pride-month03.html>

Library Resources For Gay And Lesbian Pride  
<http://www.bothell.washington.edu/library/features/June2001-2.html>

Symbols of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Movements

<http://www.lambda.org/symbols.htm>

2000 Census Information on Gay and Lesbian Couples

<http://www.gaydemographics.org/USA/USA.htm> ❖

### *Client Assistance Program CAP*

**CAP** is an advocacy program for people with disabilities

**CAP** helps people with disabilities who are seeking or receiving services from:

- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services
- Centers for Independent Living
- Other programs funded under federal law

**CAP** help is provided at no cost.

**CAP Services** include:

- Information and advice about rehabilitation programs
- Information about one's legal rights and responsibilities
- Help to resolve problems that may arise while one is seeking services from rehabilitation programs.
- Help to pursue administrative and legal remedies to protect one's rights

**Contact CAP** at:

1617 JFK Boulevard  
Suite 800  
Philadelphia, PA  
(215) 557-7112 Voice/TTY  
(888) 745-CDLP Toll Free  
(215) 557-7602 Fax  
E-mail: [info@equalemployment.org](mailto:info@equalemployment.org)

Each State and Territory of the United States has a **CAP** to help individuals with disabilities get the services they need from programs funded under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

# Diversity Calendar

## May 2004

### Asian Pacific Heritage Month

- 1<sup>st</sup> Flores de Mayo.** Philippine. A festival of tribute to the Virgin Mary. Lasts all month.
- Mawlid Al-Nabi.** Islamic (begins sundown). Commemorates the prophet Muhammad's birthday.
- 5<sup>th</sup> Cinco de Mayo.** Mexican. A day for U.S. citizens of Mexican heritage to celebrate their ancestry.
- Children's Day.** Korea
- Kodomo no hi (Boy's Day).** Japan. Honors boys with brightly colored flown kits shaped like carp (a sign of great will, strength, and longevity).
- Vesak.** Buddhist. Theravada Buddhist celebration of the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha.
- 9<sup>th</sup> Mother's Day.** U.S. Day to honor mothers.
- 10<sup>th</sup> Golden Spike Day.** U.S. Asian American. Commemorates the day in 1869 when the last spike was driven into the Trans-continental Railroad. The contribution of the Chinese immigrant labor on the railroad was recognized in 1999.
- 19<sup>th</sup> Ascension Day.** Orthodox Christian. (begins sundown). Marks the ascent of Jesus Christ into heaven.
- 20<sup>th</sup> Ascension Day.** Christian.
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Declaration of the Bab.** Bahá'í. (begins sundown).
- 25<sup>th</sup> Shavuot.** Jewish. (begins sundown). Commemorates the revelation of the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mt. Sinai.
- African Liberation Day.** International. Focuses on the progress of liberation for all African nations.
- 28<sup>th</sup> Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh (Glory of God).** Bahá'í. (begins sundown). Marks the death of the prophet-founder of the Bahá'í faith.
- 30<sup>th</sup> Pentecost/Whitsunday.** Christian. Commemorates the Holy Spirit's descent upon the 12 Apostles.
- 31<sup>st</sup> Memorial Day.** U.S. Commemorates U.S. heroes and those who have died.

## June 2004

### Gay and Lesbian Pride Month

- 1<sup>st</sup> Children's Day.** China.
- 4<sup>th</sup> Red Earth Native American Cultural Festival.** U.S. Native Americans. Features nearly 2,000 artists from over 100 tribes, nations, and bands. Designed to preserve the rich tradition of Native American culture.
- 5<sup>th</sup> All Saints Day.** Orthodox Christianity. Celebrates the lives of those saints, known and unknown.
- 6<sup>th</sup> D Day.** U.S. Commemorates the beginning of the ending of WWII when U.S. troops landed on Normandy.



## February 2004 (Continued)

### Gay and Lesbian Pride Month

- 6<sup>th</sup> Trinity Sunday.** Christian. Celebrates the belief that God, his son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are one.
- 10<sup>th</sup> Corpus Christi.** Christian. Catholic. Honors the sacrament of the communion. In the U.S. it is known as The Body and Blood of Christ and is celebrated on the following Sunday.
- 13<sup>th</sup> Race Unity Day.** Bahá'í. Promotes racial harmony and understanding.
- 16<sup>th</sup> Martyrdom of Guru Arjan.** Sikh. Commemorates the death of the fifth guru of the Sikhs and the first Sikh martyr.
- 19<sup>th</sup> Juneteenth.** African American. Celebrates the day in 1865 that Union troops brought news to Texas of the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation.
- 20<sup>th</sup> Father's Day.** U.S. Honors all fathers.
- 24<sup>th</sup> San Juan Day.** Puerto Rican. Marks the birth of St. John the Baptist.
- 28<sup>th</sup> Stonewall Rebellion.** Gay and Lesbian. Marks the protest by gays and lesbians against police harassment in New York City.

## July 2004

- 4<sup>th</sup> Independence Day.** U.S. Marks the signing of the Declaration of Independence.
- 8<sup>th</sup> Martyrdom of the Bab.** Bahá'í. (begins sundown). Commemorates the arrest, torture, imprisonment, and execution of the Bab, the forerunner of Bahá'u'lláh.
- 13<sup>th</sup> O-Bon.** Japan. Lanterns are lit for souls of the dead who visit earth during this time.
- 17<sup>th</sup> Munoz-Rivera Day.** Puerto Rican. Celebrates the birthday of Luis Munoz-Rivera, a Puerto Rican patriot, poet, and journalist.
- 19<sup>th</sup> AsalhaPuja.** Buddhist. Celebrates Buddha's first sermon and the setting of the Wheel of Truth into the world.
- 20<sup>th</sup> Umi no hi.** Japan. A national holiday to honor the importance of the sea in Japanese history and culture.
- 24<sup>th</sup> Pioneer Day.** Mormon. Honors the U.S. pioneers who came to Utah and began the 1<sup>st</sup> settlement by Brigham Young in 1847.
- 27<sup>th</sup> Tisha B'Av.** Jewish. Day of mourning and fasting commemorating the destruction of the first and second Temples in Jerusalem.
- 31<sup>st</sup> Feast of St. Ignatius Loyola.** Spain. Commemorates the life of St. Ignatius Loyola who founded the Jesuits.



Sources: *Honoring Differences, The Pro-Group, Inc. The National Conference for Community and Justice*

## Diversity Activity: Guided Visualization

**Goal:** To heighten awareness of and sensitivity to diversity

**Age Level:** Older youth and teens

**Directions:**

Lead the group through an exercise to recall the first time they discovered that not all people were like them. Ask everyone to relax and get comfortable and to close their eyes. Tell them to think back to when they were 4, 5, or 6 or perhaps a little older. Where did they live? Who were their friends? Who were their family's friends? Ask everyone to try to remember the first time they met someone who was clearly different from them. This could be a person of a different race, a different religion, someone who did not speak their language, or someone with a physical disability, etc.

Come forward in time until you can remember an encounter. How old were they? How did they react? What was the situation? How did their family respond? What were their feelings at the time? Give everyone a chance to think about these questions and then ask the group to open their eyes and come back together as a group.

**Discussion:**

- Ask people to share what they remember about this experience.
- Write down feelings and reactions as they are described.
- Ask if and how feelings have changed over time.



**Summary:**

- Families influence how children react to people different from themselves.
- People are exposed to different people at different ages and to different degrees.
- Given past experiences, people have a variety of responses when meeting someone who is different.

Source: *Youthwork Links and Ideas: Introduction to Counseling Skills*

<http://www.youthwork.com/couns/diversity.html#inter>❖

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