



Public Works

# Kaleidoscope

A REFLECTION OF DIVERSITY IN PUBLIC WORKS

WINTER 2016

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## How in the World(view) Can You Think That?

By Patrick Cox, PWE

A few minutes on Facebook will quickly reveal that we all know people who have completely different values and beliefs from each other and ourselves. Who should be president? Is there life after death? Sometimes we conclude that the person holding the opposing view to our own must necessarily be defective, narrow-minded, or worse.

We may talk about these viewpoints in terms of how "distant" they are from one another i.e. they're miles apart. But sometimes these differences are not just miles apart - they're worlds apart. That's because the fundamental views that a person holds come from their worldview.

In philosophy (stay with me!), your worldview is your comprehensive conception of everything that exists. It is your foundational beliefs about the cosmos, the meaning of life, and existence itself.

A few examples of worldviews are materialistic naturalism, theism, and monism. The truth claims for each worldview deserve long explanations, but you will not get that in this short article. Instead, I offer these very short synopses:



Diversity in Public Works

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1. Materialistic Naturalism
  - a. Matter exists eternally and is all there is – nothing supernatural exists
  - b. Humans are complex machines; personalities are based on chemical and physical properties
  - c. History is a long chain of cause and effect with no overarching purpose
  
4. Theism
  - a. God is an omnipotent, transcendent, personal being that created the cosmos out of nothing.
  - b. Humans are created in the image of God – hence they have intelligence, free will, and morality.
  - c. History is a meaningful sequence of events leading to the fulfillment of God's purpose for humanity.
  
3. Monism
  - a. The soul of every human being is the Soul of the cosmos
  - b. Many (or all) roads lead to the One
  - c. To realize one's oneness with the One is to pass beyond time. Time is unreal. History is cyclical.



When reading about these worldviews, a few things stand out. First, the worldviews are very different from one another. In fact, they contradict one another. If one of these worldviews are true, which is to say that it accurately describes reality, then the others are false (they do not accurately describe reality).

Second, a person's worldview, if consistently held, will limit their choices with regards to religion. For example, a person that is convinced of the truth of theism could rationally elect to observe Islam, Judaism, or Christianity. A person that is convinced of the truth of materialistic naturalism could not rationally believe in Hinduism.

But (and this is important) people are not always rational. Many people have not examined their worldview and considered whether their beliefs and values are internally consistent with one another, or with

the way they actually live their lives. Also, people are not always perfect examples of their belief system. So, as always, we would not want to blindly extend our knowledge about a group of beliefs to an individual.

Nevertheless, I believe a basic knowledge of worldviews is helpful. It's another tool in the toolbox for understanding all the interesting people near us, or worlds apart from us. By understanding worldviews, we gain some insight into someone else's world, and our own.

For another look at this this topic, consider reading *What's Your Worldview?* By James N Anderson. For a deeper dive, pick up *The Universe Next Door* by James W. Sire.

# How Diversity Makes Us Smarter

By Kelly Darnell, POS

In this article in Scientific American, author Katherine Philips argues that if you want to build teams or organizations capable of innovating, you need diversity. Even simply being exposed to diversity can change the way you think. She argues that diversity is not only about bringing different perspectives to the table. Simply adding diversity to a group makes people believe that differences of perspective might exist among them and that belief makes people change their behavior. Members of a homogeneous group rest somewhat assured that they will agree with one another; that they will understand one another's perspective and beliefs; that they will be able to come to a consensus. But when members of a group notice that they are socially different from another, they change their expectations. They anticipate differences of opinion and perspective and assume they will need to work harder to come to a consensus. She goes on to say that this logic helps explain both the upside and the downside of social diversity: people may work harder in diverse environments both cognitively and socially. It might be challenging at times but the hard work can lead to a better outcome.

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Her article described numerous diversity studies around race and gender, and a couple focused on perceived social differences. In one study 186 people were asked if they identified as being Republican or Democrat, then were asked to read a murder mystery and decide who they thought committed the crime. Next they were asked to prepare for a meeting with another group member by writing an essay communicating their perspective. They were also told that their partner disagreed with their opinion but that they would need to come to an agreement with the other person. Everyone was told to prepare to convince their partner to come around to their side; half of the subjects, however, were told to prepare to make their case to a member of the opposing political party, and half were told to make their case to a member of their own party. The result: Democrats who were told that a fellow Democrat disagreed with them prepared less well for the discussion than Democrats who were told that a Republican disagreed with them. Republicans showed the same pattern. Based on this and other studies, the author believes that when disagreement comes from a socially different person, we are prompted to work harder. That we are jolted into cognitive action in ways that homogeneity does not bring about. To read the entire article go to [www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter)

*Have you seen or read something recently that opened your mind to the diversity of human experience? Please send your story and photos to [pwdiversity@ci.eugene.or.us](mailto:pwdiversity@ci.eugene.or.us) for inclusion in a future edition of Kaleidoscope.*

# Cliques, Groups, Empathy, and Communication

by James McClendon, WW

Besides our obvious physical differences, the diversity of work tasks and personal interests in the workplace has the potential to diffuse and gel workers into cliques and exclusionary groups. But it doesn't have to. And it shouldn't.

For instance, some workers in an organization may have earned college degrees and are tasked to build databases and spreadsheets, organize the finances, or manage people and materials. Others offer years of technical expertise and can rebuild diesels, retrofit a power grid, or operate mechanical equipment. During breaks, some enjoy talking about hunting and fishing. Others are into golf, tennis, or yoga. And as of 2015, more and more workers are into app games, cruising Facebook, posting on YouTube, and the entire domain of online social media.

**How diverse are we? One in four Americans today is either an immigrant or the second generation of immigrant parents—nearly 80 million people.**

For many years, training programs specific to workplace diversity have been crafted around the topics of race and gender. Organizational leaders, public opinion leaders, and the law have sparked incremental changes in workplace practices that have resulted in greater workforce diversity and inclusion of all workers regardless of cultural heritage, ethnicity, gender, race, or religion. Doing so has often led to more harmonious and effective organizations, happier workers, and greater productivity.

Yet, despite those achievements, even the most diverse workplaces today still include individuals and work groups who dread diversity training or express negative attitudes about promoting the goal of creating a more diverse and inclusive workplace. Looking beyond race and gender, there are many subtle ways that workers may zoom in on the differences and neglect the similarities among one another. In any workplace, there is diversity of abilities and skills, experiences, interests, political beliefs, educational



and aspirational goals, and much more that individuals and groups innately or overtly rely on to classify themselves, which could inevitably lead to an 'us versus them' mindset or even snarky comments or other forms of microaggression.

So, What should we try to take away from our diversity trainings and discussions? Here are a couple important principles that form the foundation for an inclusive and welcoming workplace.

- Empathy, understanding, and caring — Good workplace training programs should include guidance, training activities, and learning experiences for workers to become more empathic and compassionate toward their co-workers and society in general. Workplace empathy is one form of emotional intelligence, in which the individual lowers one's ego and self-interest to sincerely express positive regard and respect for others no matter what, even if one dislikes the other based on appearances or opposing interests. In other words, you don't have to like your co-workers or become similar to your co-workers, but it is advantageous to care for or "feel for" them as everyone works to achieve the organization's common goals. Being empathically concerned for co-workers also means that an individual or group makes sincere attempts to understand and relate to all others, especially those in the organization who are physically apart or hierarchically distant, from a custodian and a department director to a help desk technician, a customer service rep, or a forklift operator.

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○ Communicating and belonging — Diversity training programs should also focus on worker communication skills. If workers are not encouraged to express ideas, share information, and speak out without fear of reprisal or condescension, then even the most diverse workplaces are failing to be inclusive. Diversity training programs should therefore include guidance and step-by-step training for workers on how to bring up new ideas, voice opinions thoughtfully, and get in on the conversations that contribute to the organizational mission.

Indeed, adding empathy and communication training to a diversity program is a winning solution for organizational success.



## PWDC Seeking New Members

The Public Works Diversity Committee (PWDC) is comprised of twelve employees from the six divisions in the department (Administration, Airport, Engineering, Maintenance, Parks and Open Space, and Wastewater). The employees meet monthly in addition to spending time outside of the recurring meeting performing duties related to diversity efforts in the department. Meetings are scheduled every fourth Tuesday from 9 to 11 a.m. Members serve a two-year term. The PWDC identifies and implements action items to assist the department in fostering a work environment that is supportive and inclusive of all employees, and building a workforce that reflects those we serve and empowered to positively influence the culture and direction of our organization and community.

Beginning July 1, the committee will have up to six openings on the committee. We are looking for employees interested in making a difference. If you are interested in joining the committee, discuss this opportunity with your supervisor then talk to any member of the diversity committee or email the committee at [pwdiversity@ci.eugene.or.us](mailto:pwdiversity@ci.eugene.or.us). Not quite sure if you are ready to make the commitment without knowing what your exact role would be? Join us for one of our meetings to find out what we are all about. Contact your division's committee representative and make arrangements to attend one of the meetings.

## PWDC MISSION STATEMENT

*The City of Eugene Public Works Department is committed to fostering understanding, communication and respect among all members in the department.*

*We believe in a department that is accepting of everyone so that we capitalize on the strengths emanating from our differences.*

*By drawing on our individual strengths, we believe we can create an optimum and respectful workplace, one that can attract and retain a diverse workforce, allowing us to serve the community from which we come more effectively.*

*We believe that an inclusive diversity program is pivotal to reaching our professional potential, both individually and collectively.*

### GOAL

*The goal of the PW Diversity Committee is to promote a workplace free of harassment and discrimination. We recognize and respect diverse viewpoints, cultures, and life experiences.*

# Co-Worker's Corner — It's About Us!

## An introduction to the Public works Diversity Committee

### **Brian Kunasek**

Maintenance Worker, Wastewater Division

**Hometown:** Norco, California, where there are more horses than people.

**College:** Lane Community College

**Major:** Welding, General Education

**Professional ambitions:** Do the best job that I can. Never stop learning.

**My biggest adventures:** Hiked the Middle Sister in October.

**This always brings a smile to my face:** Picking my two and half year old daughter, Lyla, up from school.

**Something very few people know about me:** I'm actually a sensitive guy!

**"Getaway" place:** Waldo Lake, East Davis Lake

**Person I would like to have dinner with and where:** I would like to have dinner with my dad at Los Compadres in Florence Oregon.

**Athlete or team I enjoy watching:** Pigman, pig hunter in Texas, and Dual Survival. These are actually reality TV shows.

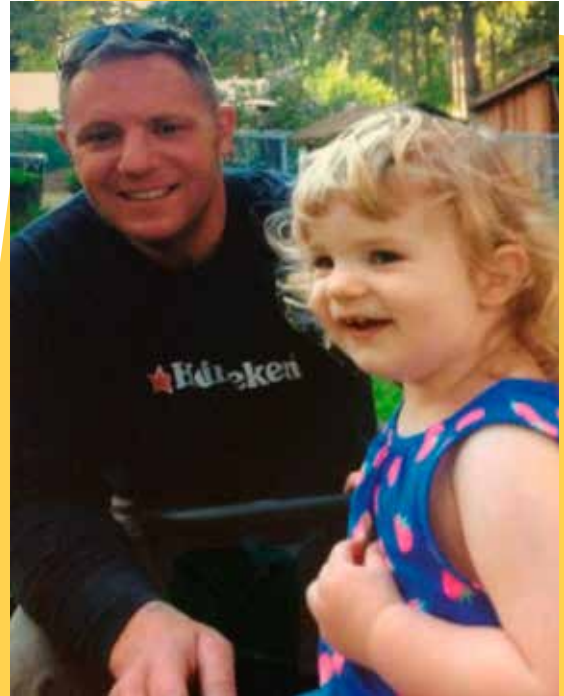
**My dream job is:** BAJA 1000 driver!

**My most prized possession:** My daughter, Lyla.

**Activity in or around Oregon:** Ride Quads, sports shooting and hiking.

**Musical artist or group:** Eric Church

**My teammates describe me as:** Motivated and hard working



*Brian and his daughter*

### **THIS IS YOUR NEWSLETTER!**

If you have an experience, event or perspective that you feel would provide insight into our diverse world that you'd like to share with others, please send it to [pwdiversity@ci.eugene.or.us](mailto:pwdiversity@ci.eugene.or.us).

Article ideas are also encouraged.

Thanks!

# Co-Worker's Corner — It's About Us!

## An introduction to the Public works Diversity Committee



*Andrea with her husband and daughter*

### **Andrea Brown**

Engineering Technician, Engineering Division

Hometown: Veneta, Oregon

College: Oregon State University

Major: Construction Engineering Management

Professional ambitions: Become a Licensed Engineer and retire happily with the City of Eugene.

My biggest adventures: My daughter

This always brings a smile to my face: My family

Game love to play: Slow pitch softball

Something very few people know about me: I Love the outdoors and want to be outdoors as much as possible.

“Getaway” place: Coast – all of it

Person I would like to have dinner with and where: Michael Jordan, he is an inspiration to old and young alike, a Sportsbar

Athlete or team I enjoy watching: College or major league baseball. Professional football team – Indianapolis Colts, and college football - OSU Beavers.

My dream job is: Anything that involves travel where I can take my family.

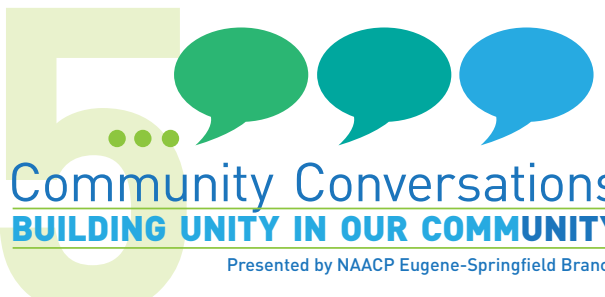
My most prized possession: Two NFL footballs signed by the Manning Brothers.

Activity like to do in or around Oregon: Camping!

Musical artist or group: Garth Brooks

My teammates describe me as: Comic relief!!

# Community Conversations – Building Unity in Our Community



**Community Conversations**  
**BUILDING UNITY IN OUR COMMUNITY**

Presented by NAACP Eugene-Springfield Branch


Second Thursdays  
January – May 2016

- JAN. 14 1 The Danger of a Single Story:**  
The Complexity of Cultural Identity
- FEB. 11 2 Oregon's Cracked Foundations:**  
Our History of Racial Exclusion
- MARCH 10 3 A Thousand Cuts:**  
Reducing Micro-aggressions and Understanding Privilege
- APRIL 14 4 Uneven Playing Fields:**  
Systems of Inequity
- MAY 12 5 Don't Just Dream it. Be it:**  
Concrete Actions for Change

5:30 – 8:00 p.m.  
EWEB Community Room  
North Building, 500 E. 4th Ave., Eugene

Light dinner provided at 5:30 p.m.  
Conversations begin promptly at 6:00 p.m.  
Please RSVP at: [NAACP.LaneCounty.org](http://NAACP.LaneCounty.org) *(space is limited)*

We are committed to holding barrier-free events. To arrange for child care, translation, interpretation or other public accommodations please contact 541-682-5619 at least one week in advance.



The *Community Conversations* series focuses on race, privilege and equity. The first conversation, [The Danger of a Single Story](#), focused on a TED talk by Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie that tells the story of how she found her authentic cultural voice. Adichie states, “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.” The February session discussed Oregon’s Cracked Foundations: Our History of Racial Exclusion.

Three additional conversations are planned and will take place in the Eugene Water & Electric Board’s (EWEB) Community Room (500 East 4th Avenue) at 5:30 p.m. on the second Thursdays of March, April and May.

A light meal will be provided along with child care and translation or interpretive services upon request. With leadership from the Eugene-Springfield NAACP, the Community Conversations initiative is a partnership with City of Eugene, 4J and Bethel school districts, EWEB, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and Lane County with the goal of building unity in the community through shared understanding and meaningful dialogue.

RSVP requested through  
the NAACP website: <http://naacplanecounty.org/>  
or on the FB event page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/624915507649249/>

For more information, please contact Jennifer Lleras Van Der Haeghen,  
Human Rights and Neighborhood Involvement, at 541-682-5619 or  
[Jennifer.E.VanDerHaeghen@ci.eugene.or.us](mailto:Jennifer.E.VanDerHaeghen@ci.eugene.or.us).