



National Weather Service



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# Diversity Matters

Summer 2016

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## Welcome Message

Welcome to the Summer issue of Diversity Matters. Summer is the time to get out into the world, have an adventure, make new friends and see where life can take you. Temper your new adventures with some caution and responsibility and make sure to be on the lookout for new diverse ways to enjoy your time. Enjoy the summer sun, and warm nights under the stars. Find your local Diversity Action Committee and get involved. Bring your diverse views and ideas, be open to sharing and we will all be enriched. Enjoy the newsletter, embrace diversity, and may you find happiness.

## Embrace the Kind, Form and Character of Diversity By: Aaron Sorensen

What is diversity? According to the Random House Unabridged Dictionary the word Diverse means of a different kind, form, character, etc.

I actually pulled the dusty physical dictionary off the shelf so I would find a definition not influenced by the politics and impermanence of the internet. To be diverse is to include a different kind, a different form or character. So how does this translate to people in general and to the workplace specifically?

Diversity is a buzz word that is popular to throw around but in its broad ambiguity it is difficult to pin down without setting up dangerous quotas. When I say that I have a diverse committee I could be talking about the diversity of ideas represented by each committee member, I could be referring to the physical differences or to the philosophies and ideologies that make up each members character. So when you hear about studies that are promoting work place diversity as boosting productivity and innovation how would one know what form of diversity the study is referring to? When a company says that they embrace and promote diversity what does that mean? We all have our own ideas about what diversity means, but the companies' idea of diversity may not match up to the idea of diversity that you may ascribe to it. You have to decide what diversity means to you. It is important to know that there are differences of opinion on what makes up diversity.

I feel that there is a correlation between our background, physical characteristics, sexuality, gender identity, disabilities and our ideas, philosophies and character. I personally feel that having a diversity of ideas, backgrounds and experiences are most beneficial to the workplace in that it provides various approaches to each problem. The correlation between our physical form and our character is what allows us to get to the diverse ideas and experiences that are so beneficial. It is easy for an employer to say we are diverse, look at our workforce. But this is only skin deep. I ask you to look deeper. Notice the ideas, engage in conversation and find what diversity means to you and how it can add value to your workplace and to you personally. Typically the diversity of thought will translate to a diversity of physical appearances, but this should not be assumed. Each person should be weighed on their own personal merits, abilities, and the content of their character while overcoming racism, stereotyping, and conscious & unconscious bias. Decide what diversity means to you, find out what it means to others and come to understand the diverse ideas around diversity.

Embrace diversity: preferably in kind, form and character.



## Drawing Lines - Self Expression in the Workplace

### By: Dave Rowell

There are two truths I would like to look at:

1. Each and everyone one of us judge other people, including people's preferences and choices in attire and personal expression. We often draw lines on what is appropriate and inappropriate – and this holds true in the workplace.
2. Younger persons feel freer in expressing themselves in the workplace and elsewhere, more so than their preceding generations. Personal expression includes clothing choices, but also piercing, tattoos and the like that are more common and more evident. Another trend in personal expression is openness with gender expression. Certainly gender identity has gotten a lot of attention as of late, but just as prevalent, or more so, in practice is expression that is gender-neutral, or gender expansive, etc...



If not experienced already, the day may be near at hand when a new hire, partner, or customer walks through the door and causes you and/or others among the staff to question that 'appropriate' line in terms of attire or some other form of personal expression. Consider:

- What is appropriate professional attire for an office or shop; or when meeting partners and customers. What might be considered 'too casual', or perhaps 'over-dressed'.
- What clothing is appropriate for a male to wear and what clothing is appropriate for a female; do you have different 'gender appropriate' lines for men and women - what might be your different attire *expectations* for men and women.
- Where do you personally draw a line for hair-color, piercings, tattoos, etc.... - how much is too much for the office.
- What types of T-shirts might or might not be acceptable or offensive to you. What types of messages on T-shirts would or would not be OK for the workplace.
- When it comes to garments or accessories indicating religious beliefs – what do you deem acceptable – what you are 'ok with' rather than what is allowed by law.
- We also have lines about grooming, facial hair, make-up, skin exposure, personal hygiene, etc., etc. – where might you have expectations or draw lines in those things.
- And how might any of these lines move when you consider them for the office environment versus outside the office.
- *Why* you draw your own personal lines where you do.

And perhaps the most important question...

- How will you react – and expect other's in the office to react when a line is perceived as crossed.

One note of caution, the questions above are about what you see as appropriate, not what is allowed or disallowed; there are many federal protections in place for things such as religious expression, gender (identity) expression ...

It is suggested that this is a good discussion to have with other team members – maybe ask co-workers the questions above to open up a dialog on the topic. (assuming it can be done openly and respectfully). To take the discussion a step further a picture exercise is also being emailed to all Diversity Focal Points in conjunction with this newsletter. It is hoped the exercise will be shared within your office. In any case you could also do an individual exercise by simply scanning through magazines or even walk down the street, and note what lines in regards to appearance and expression you do draw – as we all do.

## Implementing the Principles of Gender Mainstreaming

By: Dave Rowell

This past March I presented a webinar on Gender Mainstreaming. I have received many emails requesting a recording of the presentation; it can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9gzKDD3Tko&feature=youtu.be>

I, and other members of the Gender Mainstreaming Working Group (GMWG), have also been asked ‘what can be done to start implementing the principles of Gender Mainstreaming’. They a great many things, but to give a short answer with a very short list:

1. Internally it is somewhat a numbers issue in terms of female representation. Additional efforts can be made in the areas of recruiting to ensure an equitable pool as possible from which to hire the best person for the job. Then, once hired, value and leverage all unique strengths brought to the table for the benefit of the organization and the customers it serves. And ensure equitable opportunities of training and tasking that can lead to promotions.
2. Internally it is also a matter of ensuring an absence of inequitable treatment. And that does not have to be the obvious such as being unjustly passed up for promotions, or harassment due to gender. There are many subtle forms of inequities to be eliminated.
3. Externally, it is a matter of raising consciousness recognizing gender differences and being concerned with how our services uniquely impact both men and women; understanding the unique (gendered) needs of our partners and customers, and appropriately tailor and target products and services.

One point that should be reiterated is that gender imbalances, gender equality, and Gender Mainstreaming affects all genders. For one thing, both men and women have unique weather and climate vulnerabilities that impact one sex more than the other. And men and women alike have some hindering cultural expectations. And finally, solutions to imbalances need the attention of all of us, not only our concern, but also our involvement. It is a sad truth, borne out by research, that women are penalized for promoting their own. Thus male allies are needed to be active in solutions to inequalities. Unfortunately, research also demonstrates that changes will not occur unless men change their attitudes and behaviors in some areas.

Gender equality issues are issues for us all, and Gender mainstreaming gives structure to the cause. The first step is making known the issues. From here if you have any suggestions to move on the road to solutions (or if you have any questions regarding gender initiatives in the NWS) please feel free to contact any member of the GMWG [Michelle Hawkins, Vankita Brown, Hope Hasberry, Richard ‘Pete’ Hill, Kati McNeil, Dave Rowell].

Gender Mainstreaming is not an end in itself, but a means to an end - the promise of balanced and equitable impact to all serving and served.



## Learning About Diversity

### By: Billy Williams

It used to be that I felt diversity was a way to single out and give an advantage, called "favoritism", to selected groups over the general population (i.e., me). It wasn't until fairly recently in my long life that I began to see the real theme of diversity, which I take to include respect for and acceptance of (agreement with not needed) those people whose lives...whether because of color or gender or lifestyle...are not like mine.

If a group of people (or an individual) is not respected, I have found from my experience, including my own past thinking, it is because they are thought of as less than human. This doesn't necessarily mean they are thought of as robots or animals, but that they lack one or more human qualities. As only one example from my life, I used to think that people in the LGBT community (which itself is a diverse group, I have found) are not capable of real human love or caring or compassion. In my case, this kind of thinking was, if not started, fed during my years in a cult. I will not say more about that because, as anyone can observe, the same kind of thinking can come from many other sources. Women were for many years not granted the right to vote because men in power looked on them as not capable of making government-running (and other) decisions. This is perhaps the same reason today that women are not recognized sufficiently...in their pay...by men in power. And if you need a stark example of thinking of people as less than human, refer to Hitler's treatment of the Jewish population in the Third Reich. In fact, American treatment of its citizens of Japanese ancestry during the same years appears to reflect some of the same thinking.

How do you correct such thinking? Not, in my opinion, by preaching, which is trying to convince people with words how backward their thinking is. Even if you can get someone to agree verbally, they won't really believe it without seeing for themselves. In my case it started by realizing how much hurt a friend went through...a friend who was repeatedly abused sexually by our cult leader, at times under my nose. Through the examples of some people simply leading their lives, and by some resulting friendships, I came to realize also how much hurting some people suffer when they are subjected to hate and disregard because of their gender, color, lifestyle, religion, and other factors which do not affect their ability to care, give, and contribute to our society. Part of this transition came about because of one friend who is not only a child abuse survivor, but a big fighter in the battle against AIDS and a big supporter of the LGBT community.

Now I see diversity as a fight to get respect by people who have long been disrespected. And I will not criticize anyone for saying what they feel needs to be said. But I do not see peoples' thinking being changed simply by a few magic words from others trying to tell them how wrong they are. Mine certainly wasn't. I think we need to live respect so others can see that people whose lives are different (and aren't we all different from each other?) are as fully human as anyone, just as capable of contributing and caring. I will agree that words can be a part of being an example, but without also living diversity, the words will be empty. Diversity is not the giving of special favors, but the recognition and working to end disrespect and hurting so many are subjected to.

**Awareness.**



**Acceptance.**



**Respect.**



## X-Men and Diversity

By: Joe Pollina



When you hear the word X-Men, what first comes to mind? A nerdy comic book? An action packed film? Weird looking superheroes? Mutants? While the X-Men are all of these, one thing that may not have come to mind, even to those who have read the comic book or seen the movies, is diversity. As an avid fan of the popular comic book, I immediately grasped and embraced the concept, especially as a gay man who didn't always feel "normal". I originally got into the X-Men from watching the cartoon in the '90s. Back then, I was in my teens and early 20s, and even though I was probably old enough to find the message, it really wasn't until I started reading and collecting the comics in 2000 that I would understand what they were really all about. There are many diversity messages within the X-Men which this article will demonstrate.

As a meteorologist, naturally Storm is my favorite among the X-Men. Storm's powers are those of weather manipulation. She is African-American, having grown up as a thief in the streets of Cairo, Egypt. After some years with the X-Men, she had become a team leader for many years and now is headmistress of the academy that trains younger mutants to use their powers to protect and defend those that would hate and fear them... regular mainstream people. What diversity messages can we take away from Storm? One of gender: women can be leaders. One of race: people of color can be leaders. Finally, a combination of the two: women of color can be leaders.



Next we will take a look at the Beast. As his name implies, the beast is a beastly looking character, with blue fur, fangs, pointy ears, and huge muscle. At first glance, what would you think of a guy that looked like that? Is he good or bad? Would you describe him as ugly? He must be a pretty strong with those muscles. His powers are agility, he is acrobatic, and he is very strong. However, he is actually more known for his extreme intelligence more than anything else. Diversity message: Don't judge a book by its cover (Many people might think Beast to be a villain because he is not very attractive. Also, they may not think he is very intelligent because of his looks, agility, and strength.)

Continuing with the Beast; he used to wear a device that projected a holographic image of a regular looking man. He elected to do this because the public would be frightened of what he looked like in his natural form. The image of a "normal" guy made the public react more positively. After years of using the device, he ditched it, embracing his true form, despite what the public thought. Diversity message: You shouldn't have to hide who you really are.



## X-Men and Diversity - Continued

By: Joe Pollina



Our next stop is Professor Xavier. He is the founder of the X-Men. He is also a paraplegic. His powers are telepathic in nature; able to read and control the minds of others. In fact, he is one of the most powerful mutants in the world. There is irony here: he is physically weak because of his handicap, but in actuality, he is one of the strongest people in the world because of his powers. Diversity message: Handicapped people can be leaders.

Cyclops is the next X-Man. His powers are the ability to absorb solar energy and transform it into a concussive burst of plasma. He is the overall leader of the X-Men and he is always wearing a cool pair of sunglasses. He looks pretty normal; however, when he was a child, he became brain damaged from an airplane accident. This brain damage prevents him from controlling his powers. The sunglasses he wears are made of a special “red ruby quartz” and allows him to control his powers. He is in essence handicapped because of this brain damage. Diversity messages #1: Handicapped people can be leaders. Diversity message #2: Sometimes what’s different about a person is not so obvious (unlike people of color, where their “difference” from others is quite apparent, gay people can look like

any other “normal” person).

Rogue is a female X-Man whose power is super strength (she can lift up to 80 tons) and she can absorb the power and memories of anyone she touches. Diversity message: women can be just as strong as men (physically or in any other aspect).

Northstar has the power of superhuman speed, flight, durability and light manipulation. He was one of the first openly gay characters in American comic books. His joining the X-Men sends the message that he is just like anyone else. Diversity message: Gay people should be treated as equals.

Other notable X-Men are: Thunderbird (an Apache Native American), Sunfire (Japanese), Nightcrawler (German), Colossus (Russian), Shadowcat (Jewish female), and Sunspot (Brazilian). The X-Men have teammates from all over the world and beyond (yes, they have extraterrestrial members as well) and from all different faiths.

For further proof that the X-Men are rife with diversity, you need only look at one of the writers of the famous comic book. "The X-Men are hated, feared and despised collectively by humanity for no other reason than that they are mutants. So what we have here, intended or not, is a book that is about racism, bigotry and prejudice." (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/X-Men>)

According to Garret Godwin from NewsBlaze, Charles Xavier was modeled after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He writes, “Dr. King was partially the inspiration for Professor Charles Xavier, the leader of the Marvel Comics mutant superhero group The X-Men. Xavier was both a visionary and a pacifist with the mission that all mutants can work together and co-exist with humans despite living in a world where they’re feared and hated for being ‘different’.” (Godwin, Garrett, "[Dr. King's 80th Birthday](#)". *NewsBlaze*. Retrieved July 14, 2011.).

The X-Men can even be applied to Autism: “Like the world of autism, some appear to be normal but don't act it and some are physically different as well. Why can't they all just ‘act normal’, regardless of their appearance, and especially when they appear normal? **Because they shouldn't have to.**” <http://29marbles.blogspot.com/2006/04/more-thoughts-on-autism-inspired-by-x.html>

When I was younger and coming to terms with my own sexuality, I read the words inside these comics, and thought the exact words that I read inside those bubbles, “why am I so different?”, “why was I made this way?”, “I am different, and that’s ok”. The hairs on my neck actually stood up. The X-Men are fictional, but what I realized is that because there were people actually writing those words, that meant there were people that understood me, real people. They had to have gone through what I was going through to be able to write those words that I was thinking this whole time. I finally realized I wasn’t alone in the world, and that’s where my love affair with the X-Men began. While for me the gay message was clear, it’s not just about being gay, as I have shown in this article. Any minority, gender, or faith can relate to the X-Men (even extraterrestrials). It is their differences that make them strong; it is our diversity that makes us strong!

## Did You Know?

By: Dave Rowell

The United Nations has adopted 17

“Sustainable Development Goals.”



Areas of activity to focus on in creating a better world by 2030.

To us at NOAA number 13 is of great interest. But so too is number 5.



To learn more go to: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

## Have a Great Diversity Tip or Idea?

By: Delyne Kirkham

We love receiving information from you. It's not just about keeping up with diversity news from other offices; it's about participating in it! You help shape the National Weather Service's diversity program by sharing what matters to and works for you and your office. Your contributions can help create a better agency. Simply put... Diversity Matters! Our work is all about you. Send any diversity tips or ideas to [hope.hasberry@noaa.gov](mailto:hope.hasberry@noaa.gov).





# Management Matters

## DIVERSITY IS WHO YOU HIRE-INCLUSION IS HOW YOU TREAT THEM



—Richard “Pete” Hill

The business case for Diversity and Inclusion is inextricably linked to NWS succession planning and by extension our strategic goals. The consequence of ignoring this fact is a diminished capacity to achieve our goals which include:

- Improving weather decision services;
- Delivering improved weather forecasting services to support management of the Nation's water supply;
- Supporting enhanced climate services;

- Improving sector-relevant information in support of economic productivity;
- Integrating environmental forecasting services to support healthy communities and ecosystems; and
- Sustaining a highly-skilled, professional workforce equipped with the training, tools, and infrastructure to meet our mission.

Accomplishing these goals requires competent management and supervision. Ensuring these goals are met for the foreseeable future requires proactive succession planning. Failure to plan for the inevitable loss of a large number of retiring managers and supervisors places our ability to build a Weather-Ready Nation (WRN), in grave danger.

## SUMMER ISSUE

Mitigating this danger requires agency leadership to develop a succession plan in collaboration with the Workforce Management Office (WFMO) and other stakeholders. Developing a succession plan assures continuity, but more importantly, developing a succession plan with diversity and inclusion in mind allows the agency to gain access to a largely untapped talent pool comprised of women and minorities.



Succession planning is a process for identifying and developing internal people with the potential to fill key critical leadership positions in the agency. Succession planning increases the availability of experienced and capable employees that are prepared to assume these roles as they become available.

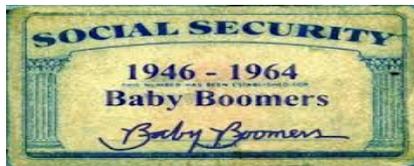
A potential need to assume vacant management and supervisory positions will become a reality beginning next year. A report released by the Government Accounting Office (GAO) in January 2014 predicted, “By September 2017, nearly 600,000 (31 percent) of on board staff will be eligible to retire.”<sup>1</sup> The report covers the total federal workforce.

This announcement served as the proverbial wake-up call because it exposed a critical need for succession planning at the National Weather Service (NWS). The bulk of the projected 2017 losses will come from the supervisory and managerial cadre because this group of workers tends to be older than the non-supervisory employees.<sup>2</sup>



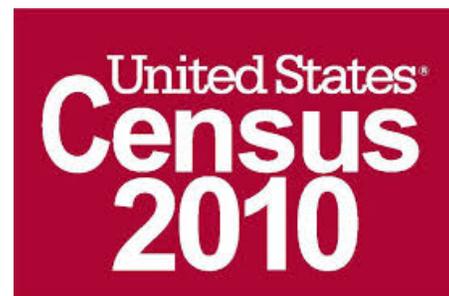
The projected loss of a large number of supervisors highlights the potential risk of losing institutional knowledge, also known as a “Brain drain” The loss of a large number of talented supervisors and managers is a major problem that also presents an excellent opportunity to retool our mentoring programs. Through succession planning the agency can

pair retirement eligible managers and supervisors with well qualified women and minorities to ensure that institutional knowledge is passed on to a new diverse group of leaders.



The baby boom generation is currently the largest generation at NWS and they tend to occupy the vast majority of leadership positions. The majority of the NWS baby boom managers are over the age of fifty. In less than two decades the majority of them will be retired. If we fail to take advantage of their vast reservoir of knowledge we are literally setting the millennial generation on a path to failure.

Succession planning is no longer a luxury because with each passing decade, our nation changes demographically. Within two decades these changing demographics will impact the racial, ethnic, and gender make-up of NWS. This fact is supported by the 2010 Census Report.



The 2010 Census report predicted by 2043<sup>3</sup>, the United States will be a majority minority nation. In fact, the Census Bureau indicated minorities will represent approximately 50 percent of the total national population in less than forty years. These facts coupled with an aging workforce create the perfect business case for linking diversity and inclusion to succession planning.

Lest we forget, the men and women of the National Weather Service are obligated by law to protect all citizens and their property from weather-related harm irrespective of race or gender. Likewise, our approach to succession planning should reflect the same level of excellence.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, *Projections Show a Slower Growing, Older, More Diverse Nation a Half Century from Now.*

<sup>2</sup> MSPB report entitled, *As Supervisors Retire: An Opportunity to Reshape Organizations*

<sup>1</sup> GAO report entitled, *FEDERAL WORKFORCE Recent Trends in Federal Civilian Employment and Compensation*



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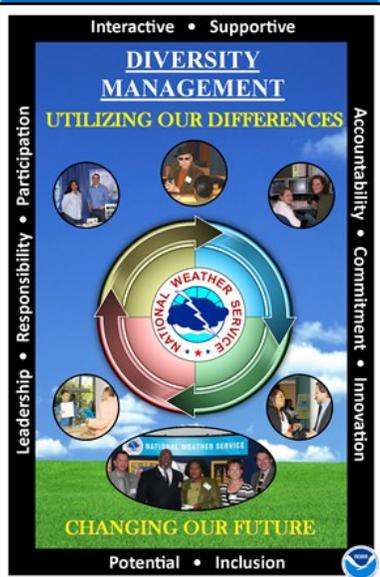
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Want to submit an article?

Great!
Articles are due for the Fall Edition by August 5th, 2016.
Please email to: Hope.Hasberry@noaa.gov and Aaron.Sorensen@noaa.gov



Diversity Facebook Page Launch

In recognition of a growing need to provide an open forum for our workforce to discuss diversity topics, share best practices, and related feedback -- the N.W.S. Diversity Council in collaboration with EODMD launched a Facebook page called "NWS Diversity Matters."

The page is available for voluntary membership by all N.W.S. employees as well as other NOAA line office employees (not to the public or non-NOAA employees). The Facebook page will reach our employees from Guam to Caribou Maine and all of the WFOs and RFCs in between.

You may contact your Diversity Focal Point to get a NWS Diversity Matters FB page invite (https://www.facebook.com/groups/NWSDiversityMatters/), or Hope Hasberry (hope.hasberry@noaa.gov), Earl Breon (earl.breon@noaa.gov), Jason Wright (jason.b.wright@noaa.gov), and Delyne Kirkham (Delyne.kirkham@noaa.gov).

Other Diversity Newsletters: http://www.nws.noaa.gov/oeodm/diversity/toolkit/diversity\_material\_field/commnewsletter.php

Call for Weather and Diversity Photos By Delyne Kirkham

We are looking for interesting weather and diversity pictures from around the National Weather Service (NWS) to enhance the NWS "Diversity Matters" newsletter. We may be including these pictures in the one of the NWS Diversity Matters newsletters, published quarterly, or potentially on any NOAA/NWS website. We will give credit for each photo. By submitting photos, you automatically grant to NOAA NWS the right to publish and use the photos. You further warrant that you own the rights to the photo. You agree that your submission does not, and will not, violate any applicable U.S. or state laws or regulations, or cause a breach of any agreement with any third parties; and that none of the submissions will infringe any copyright, invade any right of privacy, right of publicity, or infringe or violate any rights of any other person or entity. Please share your weather and diversity photos with us, send photos to the editor: aaron.sorensen@noaa.gov



Photo courtesy of Delyne Kirkham.