



Western Region

Summer 2010 Edition



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Director's Corner

Robert M. Tibi

NWS Western Region Director

With the Nation's 234th Birthday approaching, it is important that we remember that freedom is a right and not a privilege. Cautioning Americans not to take their rights for granted, Abraham Lincoln once said, "America will never be destroyed from the outside. If we falter and lose our freedoms, it will be because we destroyed ourselves."

While the virtues of freedom change in America from generation to generation, the definition remains the same as written in the Declaration of Independence by our Nation's Founders. As a Nation, several centuries young, individuals and historians alike debate the interpretation of the Declaration of Independence. With an indirect understanding of our founding members' views of an egalitarian society, we must act on our own conscience. In the workplace, attitude is important in promoting a positive workplace and promoting equality for everyone. Each employee has a moral obligation. Positive attitudes in the workplace are critical to the team effort and foster a positive work environment for all.



NWS Western Region Director Robert Tibi

Witnessing my colleagues over 42 years of Federal Service, 28 of which occurred in the National Weather Service, attitude makes the fundamental difference within every step of the Organization. A positive attitude promotes an open mind, and open mind promotes creativity. I want to thank everyone for their creativity and positive contributions throughout my career. Happy Independence Day to all! Best wishes for the coming years.

June Is Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Awareness Month

Erik Pytlak

Science and Operations Officer
WFO Tuscon, Arizona

June's GLBT Awareness Month (also known as Gay Pride Month) is an officially recognized diversity month throughout the Federal Government. In June 1969, after police stormed a gay nightclub in New York City, days of protests and riots swept several major cities and exposed overt harassment of gay and lesbian people by both the government and society. After tempers cooled, the first anti-discrimination policies were enacted to protect lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people. Since the

1970s, acceptance of gay and lesbian people has increased steadily. Almost all Fortune 500 companies and several states ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, and most offer domestic partner benefits. In 2009, the Matthew Shepard Act became law, and made a crime committed because of one's sexual orientation, or perceived sexual orientation, a federal hate crime. There are ongoing federal policy reviews and bills working through Congress to permanently extend discrimination protection to federal employees and perhaps offer GLBT employees some domestic partner benefits. Several states now allow same sex couples to marry or enter into civil unions.

Unfortunately, discrimination against gay and lesbian people continues. Recent surveys indicate that over 80% of gay and lesbian people have experienced some form of verbal harassment in the last five years, and a 2009 Pew Study indicated that gay and lesbian people are now the most discriminated group in the U.S. Over half of all states still allow people to be fired simply because of the sexual orientation, or even their perceived sexual orientation. The federal government is not immune, even though strong protections against sexual orientation discrimination have been in place since the 1990s. In 2009, the federal government was successfully sued by a woman who was denied a top-level position at the Library of Congress simply because she is transgendered.

However, the tide of acceptance continues to grow. Since 2009, a lesbian woman was elected mayor of Houston, TX, several openly gay men and lesbian women were elected or re-elected to the House of Representatives, and the Director of the Office of Personnel Management became the highest ranking openly gay administrator in the Federal Government. Closer to home, several hundred gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered people work in the National Weather Service in all levels of our organization and over 1200 of our straight employees have an openly gay brother, sister, parent, child, or close friend.

The National Weather Service will continue to be affected as acceptance of gay and lesbian people continues to grow. Recent surveys indicate that while about half of all people over the age of 40 support strong civil rights protections for gay and lesbian people, over two-thirds of those under 30 support stronger protections, and over half support gay marriage. New employees coming into the NWS are much more likely to have gay friends since the average age of coming out has dropped from about 27 in 1990 to as low as 17 in 2009. Those GLBT people we hire in the next few years are more likely to be "out" as a lesbian woman, gay man, bisexual, or transgendered, are more likely to have accepting friends -- both gay and straight, and are more likely to be in a long-term relationship. Thus the language we use, the policies we implement, and the way we interact with each other and our external customers will continue to become more inclusive for the people we serve, and the people who work with us.

The National Weather Service, through the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Management (OEODM), and the diversity program leaders in WFOs, RFCs, national centers, and regional headquarters, have been working together to raise awareness of sexual orientation differences in our workplace, and to encourage both gay and straight employees to work together more effectively to support our agency's mission.



Several resources are already available, with more on the way in the coming months. We encourage all NWS employees during this month to be more aware of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people they work with, and to value everyone's contribution to our agency – regardless of sexual orientation.

Some valuable on-line resources:

Dept. of Commerce Sexual Orientation Policy page: <http://www.osec.doc.gov/ocr/publications/sodiscrimination/so.html>

Federal GLOBE: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Employees in the Federal Government: <http://www.fedglobe.org/home.html>

The 2009 Pew Research study: <http://pewforum.org.docs/?DocID=481>

The National Weather Service OEODM Website: <http://www.weather.gov/eo>

The NWS Western Region Diversity Sharepoint Page: <http://wr-s-sharepoint/diversity/default.aspx>

GLBT Awareness Month Resources from the NWS Western Region Diversity Action Committee (DAC) Video Library: The Laramie Project and Call Me Malcolm.

An Email List-Serv Designed Especially for Women in Science

Tanja Fransen | Connie Clarstrom

WCM | Persons With Disabilities Special Emphasis Program Manager

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The National Weather Service presents many unique challenges to women in the workplace. Several years ago the Women in Science List-Serv was created to give employees a forum in which to discuss issues that arise, or questions that they have. The list-serv not only has women members, but many men as well, all people who are looking to maximize their work-life balance. Discussions include:

- Health issues (migraines and tension headaches seem to be a problem shared by many)
- Sleep coping techniques for shift and non-shift workers
- Discussion on the various types of leave, and when to use them
- Benefits of shift work
- Leadership discussions
- Diversity discussions (Generations at work, mentoring, activities to do in the workplace, etc)
- Retention of women in the workplace
- Job-sharing
- Juggling shiftwork, daycare and family
- Staying healthy
- Retirement
- Married couples in the NWS
- General questions and interactions

The list is a great mentoring tool for new employees as well as for existing employees. Members include a wide variety of women in different positions across the NWS. In addition there are representatives from various diversity committees within the NWS as well as representatives from the NWS Diversity office who are willing to answer questions that other list members may not have the answers to.

To sign up for this list, go to: <http://infolist.nws.noaa.gov/read/login/>

If you do not already have an account with the list-serv, you will need to create one. Otherwise, log in, and go to the All Forums tab. Select "Show More"

Freedom and Diversity

Jeffrey Cote

Diversity Focal Point

WFO Spokane, Washington

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Those are well-known words from the United States Declaration of Independence (US 1776). But what do they mean to you? And are the words from that document and others like it all there is to freedom? Are there boundaries? Does freedom exist at all? Coinciding with the patriotic celebrations of summer, I offered colleagues at WFO Spokane some concepts of freedom and invited them to contemplate the relationship between freedom and diversity. A few of those concepts are presented to you here, with the same invitation.

The idea of freedom can be expressed politically and philosophically. Documents drafted during the infancy of the United States may be thought of as expressions of political freedom. Yet politics and philosophy habitually overlap. The Declaration of Independence itself contains ideological or value statements. In an October 1958 Oxford lecture: Two Concepts of Liberty, philosopher Isaiah Berlin spoke of negative and positive lib-

erty, and posed questions about their role in traditional political philosophies. Negative liberty is the absence of obstacles or constraints. On this subject Berlin said, "What is the area within which [one] is or should be left to do or be what [one] is able to do or be, without interference by other persons?" Positive liberty is action or possibility of action in such a way as to take control of one's life and realize one's purposes. On this subject Berlin said, "What, or who, is the source of control or interference that can deter-



mine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?" Unconstrained from traditional politics, these concepts can be personalized, and you can begin to ask what they mean for your daily interactions?

Before you can take up these questions, there are other concepts to be considered. One is free will. Does it exist? In the American Heritage New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, Third Edition (2005, Houghton Mifflin Company), free will is defined as "the ability to choose, think, and act voluntarily." It goes on to state, "For many philosophers, to believe in free will is to believe that human beings can be the authors of their own actions and to reject the idea that human actions are determined by external conditions or fate."

Still, the question of how "free" we are is complicated by the contrasting concepts of human agency and natural forces. Natural forces are unthinking deterministic processes (like the eruption of a volcano). Human agency is the capacity to make choices and to impose those choices on the world; it allows us to ask, "Should this have happened?" Tied in is the concept of moral agency which, in simplest form, is a capacity to determine between right and wrong. Yet again we get to an impasse because, in a world of many cultures, what frames of reference do we use to gauge right and wrong? And are everyone's capacities the same?

Before I go, there is one more concept: choice. Choice presumes more than one possibility to select from. We make thousands of decisions each day, many in the simple minutiae and others in more important interactions. Why do we make the choices we do? It may be reasoned we aren't entirely free when we make choices, influenced by motives and drives borne from our psychological or personal characteristics and sociological factors.

There is no single answer to the question of freedom and diversity. It's possible their relationship is a symbiotic sort, at times beneficial and others parasitic. In closing, as I try to emphasize in all diversity materials, as you contemplate some of these concepts and their relationship to diversity remember some of the reasons behind our efforts with diversity awareness. I think that is best expressed by our office's diversity motto: "Peering into Mirrors, Looking out Windows and Opening Doors." Stated plainly, it's a motto promoting the exploration of self and the world community and nurturing welcome connections between both.

Census 2010: How Will Your Office's Outreach Program Adjust?

Todd Hall

Diversity Action Committee Chair

Western Region Diversity Action Committee

With the 2010 Census becoming the first 'high-tech' Census, a challenge is placed on each NWS office across the Nation. How will each office's outreach program adjust once this data is at our fingertips? With the availability of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), increased amounts of computer storage and processing power, science is becoming an integral part of analyzing the data collected. Similarly through the use of federal workforce surveys, the NWS can assess how diverse its organization is, how it treats its employees as an agency, and where it needs to improve. The data from federal workforce surveys is also compared statistically to the National Civilian Labor Force (NCLF), derived from the U.S. Census Bureau data. In comparison to the NCLF, did you know that the National Weather Service is under-represented in every ethnicity and gender category except White/Caucasian Males and Asian-American/Pacific Islander Males? For more information, visit the MD-715 Status Report on the NWS Office of Equal Opportunity

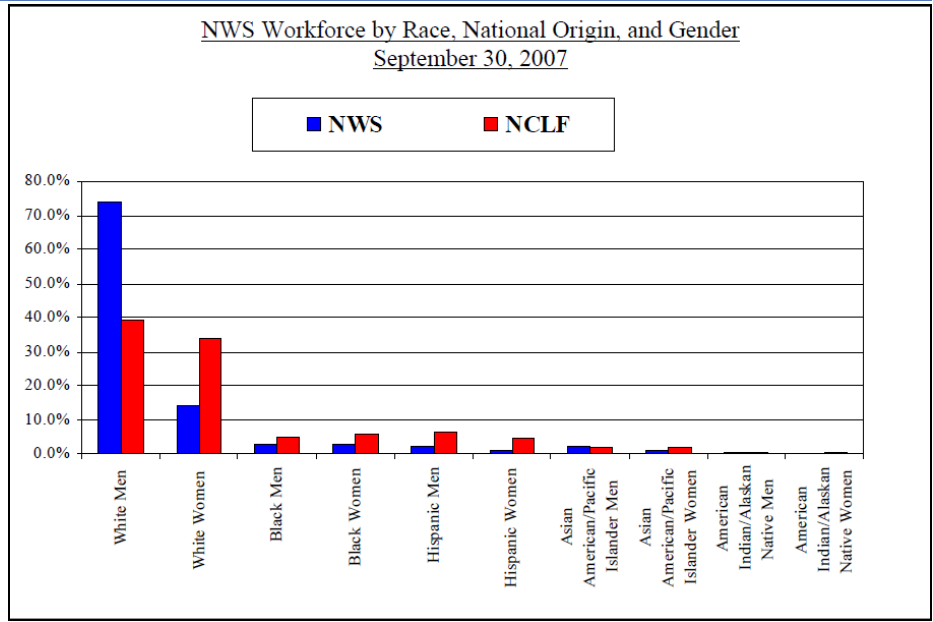


and Diversity Management (OEODM) [page](#). Many offices can improve the depth and accuracy of their diversity quarterly reports and ‘diversify’ them by researching specific demographics within their county warning areas.

Outreach programs can become more efficient by ‘targeting’ Storm-Ready and educational talks and presentations in areas of high population density of under-represented groups.

Utilizing the World-Wide Web, offices can become well-informed about their county warning areas. There are two ways that EEO outreach can be conducted: office team members can perform talks and presentations at [Mi-](#)

[nity-Serving Institutions](#) (MSI), colleges and universities with high-concentrations of under-represented groups, or talks and presentations in specific areas to ‘target’ future potential employment for the National Weather Service. This would include educating community groups, classrooms, and after-school programs about the function of the National Weather Service and its mission statement. If an office were to search for a starting point, the best resource is found on the Census Bureau [website](#). By typing in a zip code, you can learn much about specific portions of the county warning area.



In the latter part of 2009, Corby Dickerson, the Diversity Focal Point in Missoula contacted me about clarification between MSIs and EEO Outreach. In explaining the difference between the two, he was surprised to find out that Montana, almost 90% White/Caucasian, had seven MSIs and two within his own CWA. Despite the high percentage of White/Caucasian population in Montana, he was able to find that Zip Code 59860 had a higher demographic of the American Indian or Alaska Native group (14.6 % in 59860 vs. 6.1% in the State vs. 0.8% Nationally). From that information, he was able to tailor his office’s outreach talks to the Polson High School in Polson, Montana, about 90 minutes from his office. The outreach talks were efficient because WFO Missoula was able to ‘double-count’ this activity not only on their monthly WR WCM report but also their office’s quarterly diversity report. Using the data available from the Census, other Western Region offices may be able to follow the actions of Corby and tailor their outreach programs accordingly.

Corby’s success by utilizing the U.S. Census Bureau enabled his office to learn more about the people they serve. Utilizing the information above, diversity focal points have a starting point to begin their search and a launching point for incorporating the EEO element into their outreach programs. By utilizing this data, each Western Region office can ‘target’ certain areas of their CWA, ‘diversify’ their outreach programs, and become more efficient at performing outreach functions. By March 2011, the U.S. Census Bureau will release the count of the Nation’s citizens and we will have an informed and modern look at how each office’s demographics have been changed since the last census in 2000.

Additional Resources:

http://www.nws.noaa.gov/eo/docs/EEO_Status_Report_2007.pdf

<http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html>

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/edlite-minorityinst.html>

Asian/Pacific American Month

Brooke Bingaman

Asian/Pacific American Special Emphasis Program Manager

Western Region Diversity Action Committee

Pioneers, Mountain Men, Trappers, Lewis & Clark, Gold Prospectors, Outlaws...these are all words that most of us associate with the development of the American West in the United States. However, we rarely think of Chinese immigrants when we conjure up images of the “Old West”.

Central Pacific Railroad of California was the company responsible for the western leg of the Transcontinental RR and began work in 1863. They started in Sacramento, CA and laid track eastward towards the meeting point with Union Pacific RR at Promontory Summit, UT. Due to the Civil War and the Gold Rush, it was very difficult to find laborers in the mid 1860's. Charles Crocker, one of the four investors for Central Pacific RR, brought up the idea of employing the Chinese to Samuel Montague, Chief Engineer for Central Pacific RR. At first, it was thought that the Chinese would be too fragile or weak for such intense labor, especially working in the treacherous conditions across the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Within a short time, the Chinese proved their worth and were the only men willing to do the hazardous labor. In his 1865 annual report, Montague stated, “It became apparent early in the season that the amount of labor likely to be required during the summer could only be supplied by employing the Chinese element in our population. Some distrust was at first felt regarding capacity of this class for the services required, but the experiment has proved eminently successful. They are faithful and industrious, and under proper supervision, soon become skillful in the performance of their duty. Many of them are becoming very expert in drilling, blasting, and other departments of rock work.” Soon, 90% of the laborers for the Central Pacific RR's transcontinental project were Chinese and they went on to win a \$10,000 bet. Union Pacific RR was responsible for laying track from Omaha, NE to Utah. As the two RR companies approached the meeting point, Union Pacific broke a record by laying 8.5 miles of track in one day. They challenged Central Pacific with money on the line and the Chinese laborers promptly won the wager by laying 10 miles of track in a day!

One reason for celebrating Asian Pacific American Heritage Month during May was the fact that the Transcontinental Railroad was completed on May 10, 1869. Known as one of the greatest technological feats of the 19th century, the Transcontinental Railroad was instrumental in the development of the West and much of the success of this feat was due to Chinese laborers. This railroad was a true representation of East meets West, both literally, as the Eastern and Western U.S. were connected via rail, and figuratively, as Asian immigrants became part of a new western culture. Unfortunately, in the historical photographs that document the ceremony of the “Golden Spike” where the two rails were joined, no Chinese workers were in the photos...a sad misrepresentation of such a historic moment. For those of us working in the Western Region of the NWS, we should use Asian Pacific American Heritage Month to remember and be grateful for the many contributions of the Chinese people to the history of our region.

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