

East Bay Community Foundation Chair Helen Troxel's remarks to staff and trustees on the launching of LBE Initiative (at an all foundation briefing held on September 10, 2002).

I can't tell you how exciting it is for me to see all of you here today because when I first joined the Foundation board eight short years ago there were only 5 of you, yes, we had only 5 paid employees then. Look at us now! Thanks to your hard work we have been able to grow this Foundation and impact the community in ways we only dreamed of eight years ago. We have a great deal to be proud of! The phenomenal growth and success of our many initiatives, and affiliated community foundations has given the East Bay Community Foundation cutting edge status in the foundation world. With phenomenal growth there comes a time when there is a need for periodic introspection and that is why we are here today.

This session is called Leading by Example. What do we mean by that? What does the term diversity mean to each of us? As I look around this room we look pretty diverse here, don't we? So why are we here? As I look closer, however, I realize that each of us here has had a very different personal journey in our experience and our understanding of that concept, diversity. There are some in this room who would say "Hey, we have come a long way since the 60's. There has been real progress in achieving cross-racial understanding and acceptance in this country. We can all point to exceptional people of color who have made it.... such as Hector Ruiz, who as a child grew up in a Mexican border town and is now chair and CEO of Advanced Micro Devices, Kim NG, a Chinese American woman who is vice president and assistant general manager of the New York Yankees, or Ruth Simmons, the daughter of a share cropper who was President of Smith College and is now President of Brown University. We have Jennifer Lopez, a Puerto Rican who is the biggest pop icon in America today and Cruz Bustamante, who is currently Lieutenant governor of our great state of California who was elected in an election where less than 13 % of the voters were Latino. I know people in this room, people of color, who have overcome humble beginnings to become a major success story. My own father was an immigrant from rural China who never learned to read or write until he was 12 years old. His first experience with formal education was a missionary school near Wushi. He ended up graduating with a PhD from Stanford University. There is no doubt that there have been significant changes in attitudes towards equality and integration and that the need to address issues of diversity has become a major concern of education, business and politics.

There are others in this room who would say, "Yes, that period of overt racism that existed in the 60's is generally over but in spite of growing diversity and the blurring of color lines, the U. S. remains very racially segregated. Sunday morning is probably the most segregated time in America. Too many minorities are being left out in making real economic and social gains for themselves. Inequity remains a facet of the American social order. One can see this most clearly in our inner cities where middle class Asians, Blacks, Latinos and Anglos have moved into the suburbs leaving the most unskilled isolated without role models or connections to the economic mainstream.

So both of these views on diversity are true. Our own life experience determines which set of rose-colored glasses we put on to shape our basic premises and attitudes towards diversity. I challenge each of you here today to examine your own personal attitudes. If you can, try putting on both sets of glasses. You might surprise yourself and you see the world a little differently.

There is another major influence that shapes public policy and attitudes towards diversity and that is this country's understanding of race that is polarized along a black-white axis. The black white dynamic has structured the way Americans understand and treat race. When new Latino or Asian Americans arrive in this country, they enter into a polarized situation that is defined and shaped by the history of racial prejudice against African Americans. Asians and Latinos face challenges that African Americans do not. Their needs cannot be identified by employing a black-white lens. Outside of America, Asians do not identify themselves as a group called Asian but as 30 different ethnicities showing diverse and contrasting levels of affluence, poverty, education and literacy. As for Latinos, the 2000 census offered 63 racial categories from which to choose for self identification. 43% of Latinos picked other as their racial category. 97% of the 15.4 million people who chose other were Latino and 48% of the people nationwide who identified themselves as Latino picked white as their racial category. The term Latino is a recent invention to cover all Spanish -speaking peoples who would rather see themselves as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban or some South American country. The issues that face Asians and Latinos are quite complex and require a fresh lens adapted to their particular needs. Public policy based on the African American experience does not often work for other minorities. We need to replace the black white paradigm with a multicultural framework.

My saying this does not negate the importance of issues facing African Americans. Blackwell, Kwoh and Pasteur in their book "Searching for the Uncommon Common Ground" states: "If anything, social and economic justice for all Americans will not be achieved until the black-white dilemma is honestly and productively confronted." The key to unlocking the value of our increasingly diverse society is through resolving the structural inequities that perpetuate the black white divide.

I mentioned the 2000 census a few minutes ago. California's population is one of the most diverse in the nation; it has the nation's highest percentage of foreign-born residents. 26% of the state's nearly 35 million residents were born in another country. Almost half of all Californians were either born in another country or are the children of foreign-born parents. Statistics also tell us that 2/3rds of all Californians are people of color. Currently more than half of all children in California are minorities, largely Latino. Those are incredible statistics!

As many of you know, California has wide extremes of haves and have-nots. Increasingly the population of "have-nots" is becoming a greater percentage of the California landscape and unless institutions throughout California respond to this, by the year 2030 we could have a severe crisis. By 2030, it is predicted that 22.4% of the population in this country will be 65 and over, nearly 1 out of 4. Here in California this

demographic shift will result in having an age-ethnic stratified society with most of the workers made up largely of minorities supporting an increasing number of elderly made up largely of Anglos. In California, for every 1000 workers we will have 602 dependents. Of these dependents 59% will be elderly, only 41% will be children. By 2030, only 1/3rd of the children in California will be Anglo.

In our recent needs analysis of Contra Costa and Alameda counties, issues of race, class, education, skills and access to resources and services were researched with some interesting results. Let's look at the city of Oakland. Those of you working primarily in Alameda County know that half of all the residents in Alameda County live in Oakland. Of that 1/3rd are immigrants with language barriers, limited marketable work skills, poor access to medical care, etc. Half of all the residents that need Alameda County services reside in Oakland and 60 % of the children that enter Oakland schools do not complete high school. If this trend continues, think what that portends for us in the year 2030? Oakland is not a unique situation. In many other urban communities throughout California we are seeing the same trend. In Contra Costa, Richmond, and Pittsburgh are having similar problems.

As your board chair and as a member of our community I have a strong commitment to the work we are doing in the Leading by Example project. We are at a crossroads. It is imperative that we all work to create public policy that addresses diversity, inclusion and equity in every aspect of our lives so that every racial and ethnic community in California feels that they are a part of and have a stake in the system. We need to make the level of investment that will effectively develop the next generation of leaders in our communities. We need to see that they are leading our institutions and brought onto our boards. We need to make sure that our own business practices encourages economic development in all of our communities

The Leading by Example project begins to address how our foundation can position itself to be a more effective leader in addressing diversity issues in the communities we serve. We will be looking within at our organizational structures and practices to see if there are changes we might need to make or goals we might want to set. We want to examine how we can develop a deeper rapport with communities of color and how do we encourage the communities we serve to increasingly see this institution as their institution. The issues of diversity, inclusion and equity are very complex. There are no quick answers and making fundamental changes will take time.

In conclusion I would like to encourage each of you to begin your own personal diversity journey by learning as much about other ethnic groups as possible. Begin by reading. I have learned so much about the Latino, Black and South East Asian cultures by reading these books in the last 6 months. Of these I would highly recommend two outstanding books that informed most of the comments that I have made here today. They are "Searching for the Uncommon Common Ground" by Blackwell, Kwoh and Pateur and "The Burden of Support: Young Latinos in an Aging Society" written by Hayes-Bautista, Schink and Chapa. These two books will transform your thinking on the issues of diversity.

I would also like to challenge each of you to think about our work with diversity from a multi-cultural perspective. We need to go beyond the black-white paradigm. Today Asians and Latinos are the fastest growing populations and currently make up 48% of California's population. For us to effectively work with these communities, we must support solutions that are tailored to their specific needs. Thank you very much.