

## Inclusivity is the I-85

The concept of diversity is one that has been explored, discussed, accepted, encouraged, and re-explored all over again in a continuous roundabout since the beginnings of time to our present day. Whether it be college admissions, a new workplace, social media, the clothing industry, or even a small suburban neighborhood, diversity has always been kept at close quarters, always flashing out at us like a car's left blinker, being a reminder to our society of its importance.

Lucky for us, our current times put an emphasis on encouraging and even, at times, seeking out the variety in culture, race, gender, and ethnic backgrounds that our world has to offer. As we drive down the roads of a hopeful future, we recognize the efforts taken to push diversity into the limelight of everyday life. Mass protests, cultural festivals, and even the simple gestures of respect and interest have accelerated positive acknowledgement over centuries of societal construction, acting as the white and yellow lines in between lanes, creating appropriate boundaries and guiding people to an exit ramp called acceptance.

If diversity is the goal, then inclusivity must be the solution. For if we become divided based on differences that we all have and then refuse to acknowledge or accept these differences, how will we unite together and embrace what makes us dissimilar? How will we stop making U-turns on the path to connection, and realize we have a wide, open road in front of us to drive through without the worry of obstacles in our way?

Malcolm Forbes said that diversity is the art of thinking independently together. When thinking about diversity, a common thread between all of us is the idea of cultural and social separation, the idea of finding what makes you different from others and using those things to your advantage. What many don't understand is that this is only the first step. The way you merge onto a freeway does not and will not dictate the rest of your drive down it.

So then, what is the second step? How can we look past ourselves, as hard as that can be, and realize we have only started to speed up on this freeway of life, going at most a measly two or three miles an hour above the speed limit? The second step is being aware and having respect for the culture, experiences, and origins that you are not familiar with. Confusion, fear, and even disgust have always been associated with discovering parts of diversity that you may not have known about, creating more separation in a community. A roadblock forms, one that no car can pass through without ramming through it and damaging itself and other cars in the lane.

Removing such a roadblock will prove crucial as our world develops. Illustrating diversity creates an image of different, separate lanes, each having a variety of paint jobs and car models as they all race down divided roads. Putting a new mindset into place can be as easy as turning on your front headlights to see clearly. Inclusivity means combining these lanes into one big road, into a single highway, where different pathways are not only acknowledged but accepted, and embraced, allowing cars within them to merge into different lanes, move past each other, and cooperate to ensure a safe and enjoyable drive, despite the destination you might be heading to.

If cars can do it, we can, too.