

Embracing Diversity

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Diversity: How should it be measured? By numbers? By specific examples? By methods of compliance? As we move to fill in gaps, perhaps we can accomplish this with a view toward the end result.

When I asked an Asian American actor once what role ultimately he would like to play, he looked at me and said, "For once, I would like to be the guy next door. I have a house. I mow the lawn. I take my daughters to school. Yet I have never been cast as anything but a gang member or

a martial arts expert." What he was talking about was a pre-conceived sense that Asian males could be cast as kung-fu masters, but not be envisioned as the "guy next door."

As an Asian American woman in higher education for over two decades, it is obvious to me that this "guy next door" phenomenon also exists in academe. Thus diversity, in this sense, exists not only to address disparities, but also to change the landscape of education at various levels: within the classroom, in administration, and in curriculum.

True diversity is about inclusion and the ultimate invisibility of differences -- the guy next door -- seamlessly enriching the culture of learning within a global context. Diversity thus begins with embracing, rather than complying with sets of guidelines.