

## **What is Diversity? It's More than Race or Gender**

“Diversity” as used here refers to human attributes that are different from your own and from those of groups to which you belong.

When you look at the people in the following image, what diversity do you see?

You probably said you noticed an African American, an Asian American, an Arab, an older woman, a younger man with a physical disability, etc. What you observed is what we call “visible” diversity. Visible diversity is generally those things we cannot change and are external, such as age, race, ethnicity, gender, and physical attributes.

However, diversity goes beyond this to what we call “invisible” diversity. Invisible diversity includes those attributes that are not readily seen, such as work experience, marital status, educational background, parental status, income, religious beliefs and affiliations, geographic location, or socioeconomic status.

For example, you probably assume the Indian you see was born and raised either in the United States or India. However, she was born and raised in Jamaica. Indians arrived in Jamaica in the 1800s and remain a part of the fabric of that island nation today.

It is the combination of diversity attributes, both visible and invisible, that define an individual’s “personal” diversity. No one individual’s personal diversity is exactly like another’s. So, when we recognize, value, and embrace diversity, we are recognizing, valuing, and embracing the uniqueness of each individual.

While each individual is unique, he or she generally has many attributes that are similar to those of others. In life, you will find that people whom you believe are “just like you” are more different than you think, and people you perceive as “different” have a surprising amount in common with you.

Take time to reflect on one person you consider to be “just like you” and see if you can identify ways in which the person is different from you. Also, reflect on one person you consider to be “different” and see if you can identify ways in which the person is like you.