

# ***Diversity: The Invention of a Concept* by Peter Wood**

## **Reading Guide – EDFD 645 Dr. Raymond W. “Donny” Lee, Jr.**

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### **Chapter One -- Diversity in America**

1. Contrast the meaning of the traditional idea of diversity as opposed to the more contemporary “doctrine” of *diversity* (italics, as provided by Wood) as suggested by Wood. What might be implications of confusing or juxtaposing the two?
2. As Wood uses these terms, define what he suggests they mean:
  - a. Diversilogues
  - b. Diversidacts
  - c. Diversicrats
  - d. Diversiphiles

### **Chapter Two – Imagined Diversity**

1. Wood dichotomizes diversity into *diversity I* and *diversity II*. Contrast these conceptually and by example.
2. Wood states, “Real diversity is often profoundly provocative. To encounter people who are fundamentally unlike yourself is fundamentally unsettling” (p. 29) Provide a short analysis of this assertion using either Wood’s points, your own, or others’.
3. John Sykes (as quoted by Wood, p. 35) suggests a progression that diversity advocates follow: tolerated, embraced, and celebrated. What societal or cultural venues could we see such a progression? Provide an opinion supported by examples and illustrations of this idea.
4. Wood suggests that “artificial diversity’s illusion of fairness is really a flickering of several separate fires on the cave walls [alluding to Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave* which is discussed earlier]. One is the idea that educational access in the present can make up for denial of educational opportunity in the past. . . . [It] is based on the idea that group affiliation by birth is a reasonable stand-in for worldview or cultural outlook” (pp. 42-43). Discuss these suggested limitations of “artificial diversity” and how they affect cultural and societal institutions today.

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5. What deleterious effects “artificial diversity” (as described by Wood on page 42 and following) might have on individuals, groups, and cultural and societal institutions.

### **Chapter Three – Diversity before *Diversity***

1. How does the conception and definition of “culture” affect the way we prescribe and proscribe particular ways of acting and reacting to differences among peoples.
2. How does the traditional, historical reality of diversity and the ways various peoples have dealt with cultural differences affect how diversity as a concept and more specifically, judgment and toleration as corollaries, have evolved today? (Can you see a “politically correct” *Ripley’s Believe it or Not* today as contrasted with an edition from fifty years ago?)

### **Chapter Four – The Language of Diversity**

1. Wood asserts, “*Race* and *diversity* thus makes an interesting pair,” (p. 87) as he discusses his view that race is the center of diversity. After reading and analyzing his thoughts on this specific notion, agree or disagree and provide support for your position.
2. Wood provides four meanings for diversity. Briefly describe each and provide a brief evaluation or critique of each.
  - a. Categorization
  - b. Representation
  - c. Ideology
  - d. Social Scientific Bumbling
3. Wood presents some commonly used metaphors for diversity. Using either what he has provided, or others, choose one that most aptly captures your conception of diversity as it is currently reflected by diversity advocates today. Be sure to expound on your metaphor as well as say why it is your choice.

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4. How could these two phrases be reconciled: “Diversity in Unity” and “Unity in Diversity”? Or can they be reconciled? Explain either way.

### **Chapter Five – *Bakke* and Beyond**

1. June 28, 1978 marks a significant date in the “diversity movement.” Describe what happened and why it is significant.
2. Powell’s argument in *Bakke* reflects an emerging idea that the “*experience* of ethnic diversity is a fundamental part of a good education” (p. 110). Evaluate this idea in light of *Bakke* and surrounding arguments as well as any other sources or experiences. (One consideration: Is there any empirical evidence that this doctrine is even true?) True or not, what ramifications has this *doctrine* had on higher education as well as lower education since the 1970s?
3. Wood asks, “Are we really sure we know what *racial* diversity is?” (p. 120). Using his explication of this question, how would you answer and why? Does *racial* diversity produce *intellectual* diversity (per *Bakke* and sympathetic ideologues), and does it matter? Why or why not?
4. Compare and contrast the conception of diversity of ideas, race, and experience, and how the three are constructed to interact among the others. Can assumptions be made about the interrelationships among the three, and if so, what might they be? What implications arise from this triad of diversity for the culture and society?
5. As Wood suggests that no one argues “that social ‘uniformity’ or ethnic ‘homogeneity’ make for a better education or a more just society,” (p. 135) one is left with the question, what then is the opposite of diversity, or perhaps better stated, what is the counter concept to diversity as it is described in Wood’s text?
6. Wood examines Patricia Gurin’s, “Expert Report of Patricia Gurin” beginning on page 137. He says it is a “fascinating attempt to put the ideological claims of diversity on some kind of scientific footing.” After reading his analysis, do you think she has succeeded? Why or why not?
7. What would be the implications of whether Gurin has succeeded in providing a scientific basis for diversity and diversity practices, especially as seen in higher education, lower education, and hiring and admissions practices?

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### **Chapter Six – Diverse Gods**

1. According to Wood, how has the diversity movement manifested itself within organized religion in America? What effect has this manifestation produced?
2. Provide a brief analysis of the implications of religious tolerance, i.e., “tolerance is not enough and that what is wanted is a kind of affirmation or group identity” (p. 168). How do these same implications reach into higher education and education in general?

### **Chapter Seven – *Diversity* Afflicts the Arts**

1. How do “artistic spokesmen for their victim groups” (p. 177) further the diversity movement’s hold on the arts in culture? (Also refer to Wood’s discussion of the artist as *exemplar* and *mediator* between social worlds on page 191). What are the ramifications?
2. Wood points out that at least two of the diversity movement’s goals in the arts are (1) didactic; and (2) liberation from reliance on stereotypes. What implications might these have for not only art forms and expressions but for those consuming the art forms (e.g., children, students, etc.)?

### **Chapter Seven – Identity Business**

1. How has business affected education with respect to its commitment to (ne fear of) the diversity movement, particularly with regard to personnel?
2. What is a “diversity consultant” and how do they operate?

### **Chapter Nine – *Diversity* on Campus**

1. Wood asserts, “*Diversity* is probably the most powerful concept on American college campuses today; it is certainly the most pervasive” (p. 228). Agree or disagree and provide supporting evidence.
2. Wood suggests five implications of *diversity* on college campuses. Briefly describe each and provide a brief implication.
  - a. Faculty recruitment

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- b. Acceptance or at least acquiescence of existing faculty to racial quota hiring
  - c. Establishment of new identity-focused courses
  - d. Reshaping broader curriculum
  - e. Creating incentives to trim or eliminate academic requirements, standards, and expectations
3. Contrast the idyllic view of *diversity* as seen by its advocates and ideologues with the real world of *diversity* (according to Wood). Would you say his analysis is correct? Why or why not?
  4. On pages 248-249, Wood provides a parable of sorts about a student applicant at the Boston University School of Law. Read this account and provide an analysis.
  5. Wood asserts that campus *diversity* is seldom “inclusive;” rather, it is “accusatory and divisive” (p. 253). He goes on to say that, “The ‘differences’ that come to the fore are those of students who are aggressive in pushing their agendas aimed at gaining power and privilege, not those of the mostly imaginary ideal of cultural exchange.” This is framed in Wood’s historical analysis of the creation of groups of oppressors and the oppressed and the interjection of grievances into this dynamic. Is campus *diversity* agenda-driven? If so, what evidence and implications would there be? If not, where has Wood missed the boat? How does his historical analysis contribute to his thesis?

**Chapter Twelve – Multitudes**

1. Using Wood’s three-prongs of institutionalized *diversity*, briefly describe each prong and its implications:
  - a. Politics and Economics
  - b. Culture
  - c. Demography and Choice

**Overall Book**

1. What is your overall impression of the book? Why?