

Multiculturalism in the United States

Who is an American? This question is very difficult to answer. According to the Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary the definition is: American: adj. 1. Pertaining to the United States of America. 2. pertaining to North or South America. -n 1.a citizen of the United States. 2. an inhabitant of America. This definition is still unclear. What is to pertain? According to the same source: Pertain: v. 1. have reference; relate 2. belong as an adjunct, function, quality, etc. - pertaining to having to do with; belonging or relating to.

After reading these definitions I figured out that an American is someone who belongs, is related or has something to do with the United States of America. But it is still difficult to know who is an American. I believe that this difficulty has to do with the multiculturalism that exists in this country.

The United States doesn't have a unique culture. In fact it is the world's most multicultural country. The country has a lot of different cultures, and not one is similar to the others. No culture is better or worse than another. USA is different from other countries because that in this country are living representatives of all cultures. It is normal to meet people from all over the world in most every city; what is not normal is the idea of understanding that a lot of people are Americans, people born and raised in the US. These citizens might not seem to be Americans, but they are as American as any American.

Ronald Takaki in his essay, "An Educated and Cultural Literate Person Must Study America's Multicultural Reality", gives an excellent example of what I meant when I said that some citizens might not seem to be American. Takaki was born in Hawaii, one of the 50 states. After graduating from high school, he decided to study on the mainland. He recalls that a lot of the students and even professors asked him how long he had been in America, and where did he learned to speak English. His answer was that he had been born in the US and that his family had been there for three generations (Takaki 486).

As the world is changing, people have to realize that Multiculturalism is a part of the United States. Americans have to accept and be proud of their heritages. According to Kenneth T. Jackson in his article "Too Many Have Let Enthusiasm Outrun Reason", everybody is responsible to maintain the culture "... the maintenance of distinctive cultures should be the function of synagogues, churches, music festivals, ethnic celebrations, and, most especially, dinner tables. The public schools should emphasize common traditions and common values" (Jackson 485).

Linda Chavez in her article, "Demystifying Multiculturalism", states what could happen in the future. She says that "... America must be multicultural. And it is becoming more so everyday as new immigrants bring their cultures with them" (Chavez 491). She also points out what is happening with multiculturalism when she says that " In the multiculturalists' world view, African Americans, Puerto Ricans or Chinese Americans living in New York City have more in common with persons of their ancestral group living in Lagos or San Juan or Hong Kong than they do with other New Yorkers who are white" (Chavez 491).

Multiculturalism is generating a lot of interest among concerned people in the United States. Americans are becoming more aware of the importance of multiculturalism in the country. Both the public and private sectors are focusing more time, money and energy in the spread of information about various cultures. For example the beneficiary of spread of multiculturalism will be the United States of America because the country will be more powerful and united.

White Americans are beginning to understand that they are not the only owners of the United States. They are a part of it, and they have to get used to sharing privileges and disadvantages with other American citizens of different ethnic backgrounds. They also have to get used to calling other people Americans, even if for them they don't seem to be. If white Americans interact with other cultures they will help their country to unite as one nation. My definition of an American will be: a citizen of the multicultural country of The United States of America.

Works Cited

Takaki, Ronald. "An Educated and Cultural Literate Person Must Study America's Multicultural Reality." In *Current Issues and Enduring Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking and Argument, with readings*. 4th. Eds. Sylvan Barnet and Hugo Bedeau. Boston: Bedford, 1996. 486-89. From this same text I also used Kenneth T. Jackson's "Too many Have Let Enthusiasm Outun Reason," 481-85; and "Demystifying Multiculturalism" by Linda Chavez, 490-95.

