

This piece was written for a local newspaper, *The Olympian* while serving as a member of the Diversity Panel from 2007 through 2008.

We can't work through issues if we attack one another

By David Whitfield | For The Olympian • Published December 26, 2008

This is my final column working with The Olympian's Diversity Panel. I write with deep regrets.

I have attempted to inform, educate and create conversations on a variety of diversity issues. I believe if we want to make a difference, it is essential to understand, embrace and work with the facts about diversity. I use the term "facts" in lieu of "truth" because some of us just can't handle the truth.

My conclusion is based on responses by some Olympian readers. Very few readers responded to the facts; they chose to "shoot the messenger" and each other. We can't work through our issues if we choose to spend energy attacking each other.

I wrote about race, misogyny, sexism, social justice, treatment of our veterans, how we distance ourselves from others — especially those we differ with — how we lie to children and the need to find commonalities among us.

Race is still a powerful little four-letter word, causing discomfort, animosity, hatred and violence. When we remain silent regarding hate crimes against those we differ with, we are complicit. Silence is consent. "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter," said Martin Luther King Jr.

I still wonder about the United States being called a Christian nation. How do we reconcile being a Christian nation with vitriol, hatred and violence? I realize this is a sensitive subject for some; and obviously, everyone isn't Christian and everyone isn't hateful and violent.

Alive and well

I wrote that sexism and misogyny are alive and well. About 640,000 women are trafficked across borders annually for sex trade, sweat shops and other despicable acts. About 30,000 end up in the United States, many as sex slaves. And what about the approximately 25,000 children who die daily on this planet because of the lack of clean drinking water, a \$1 malaria pill and a \$10 mosquito net? Don't forget those large corporations that go into developing countries, extract

their natural resources and leave them worse off than they were. How do we explain that? Why do we tolerate it?

I wrote of ongoing horrific treatment of veterans who swore and signed their name to put their life on the line for this country. There is much lying about the plight of the veteran. When leaders lie, soldiers die. I think we should re-establish the draft; that way, the defense burden would be shared more equitably.

If we seriously embrace the commonalities among us and treat each other with compassion and equity, we are more able to adapt, collaborate, and advance toward becoming a kinder and gentler nation.

The time has come.

I think Ezra Pound, the poet, put it best: "And the days aren't long enough; and the nights aren't full enough; And life goes by like a mouse in the meadow, not even shaking the grass."

Those are code words for, if not now, when? If not us, who? Let's do it before it's too late.

