Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in Outdoor Education:
A Perspective from the USA

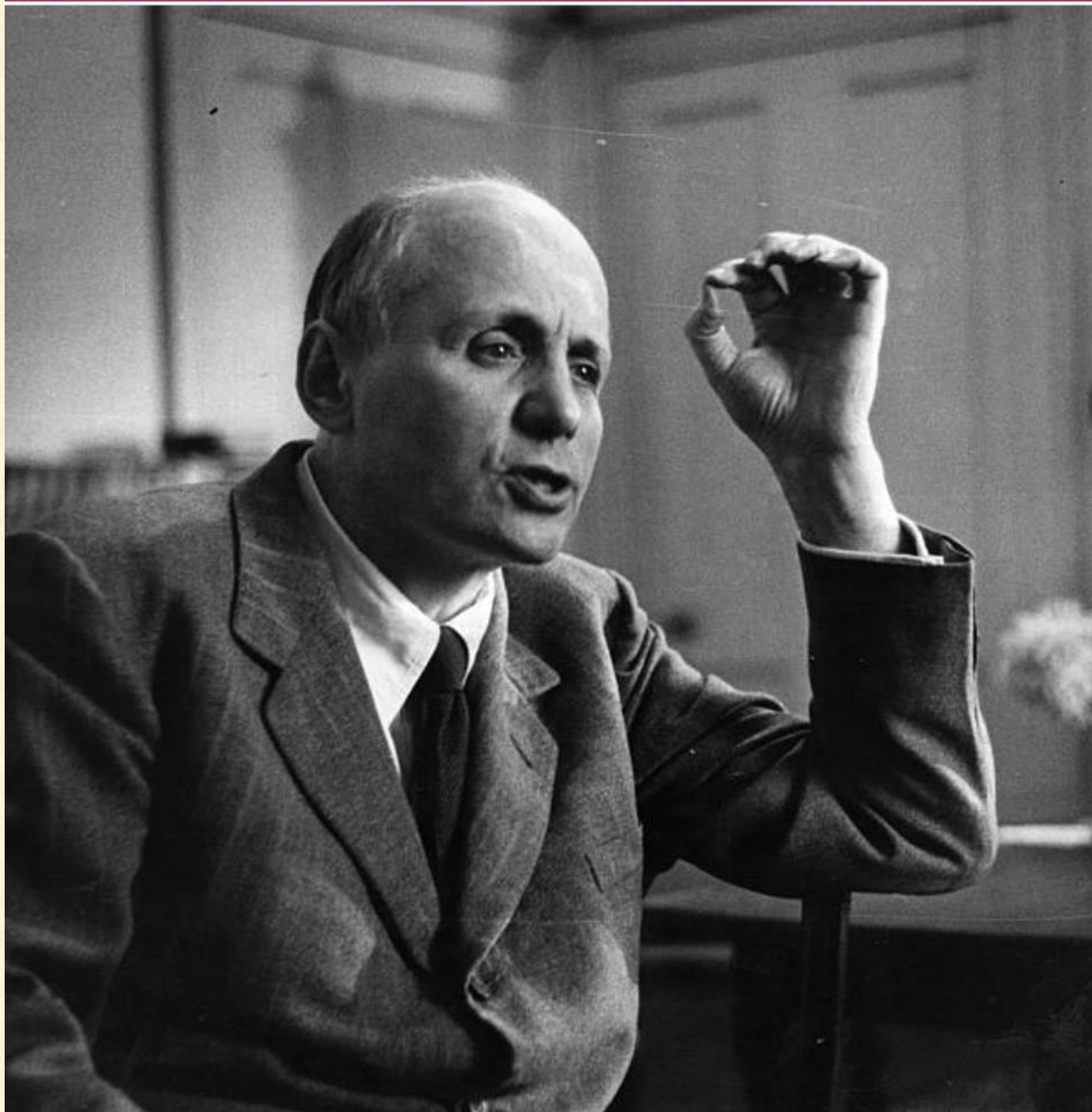https://www.viristar.com/aee-aprc-dei-2023

Overview

- What is DEI?
- DEI as Complex Systems Issue
- Concepts and Issues
- Why is DEI an Issue?
- DEI in the USA
- DEI in USA Outdoor Education
- Obstacles
- Opportunities
- Additional Resources

Boundaries

- A perspective from the USA

- Framed though American values & my personal values—you may not agree

- I will say what I believe to be true; some might be shown wrong

- An incomplete picture

- I'm still learning

- Not a prescription, or answers, but I humbly share ideas, challenges, failures and successes

- DEI work varies widely from region to region, country to country

- Use this in any way you might find helpful (or not at all)

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What is Diversity, Equity, Inclusion?

What is Diversity, Equity, Inclusion?

- Resources are not distributed fairly

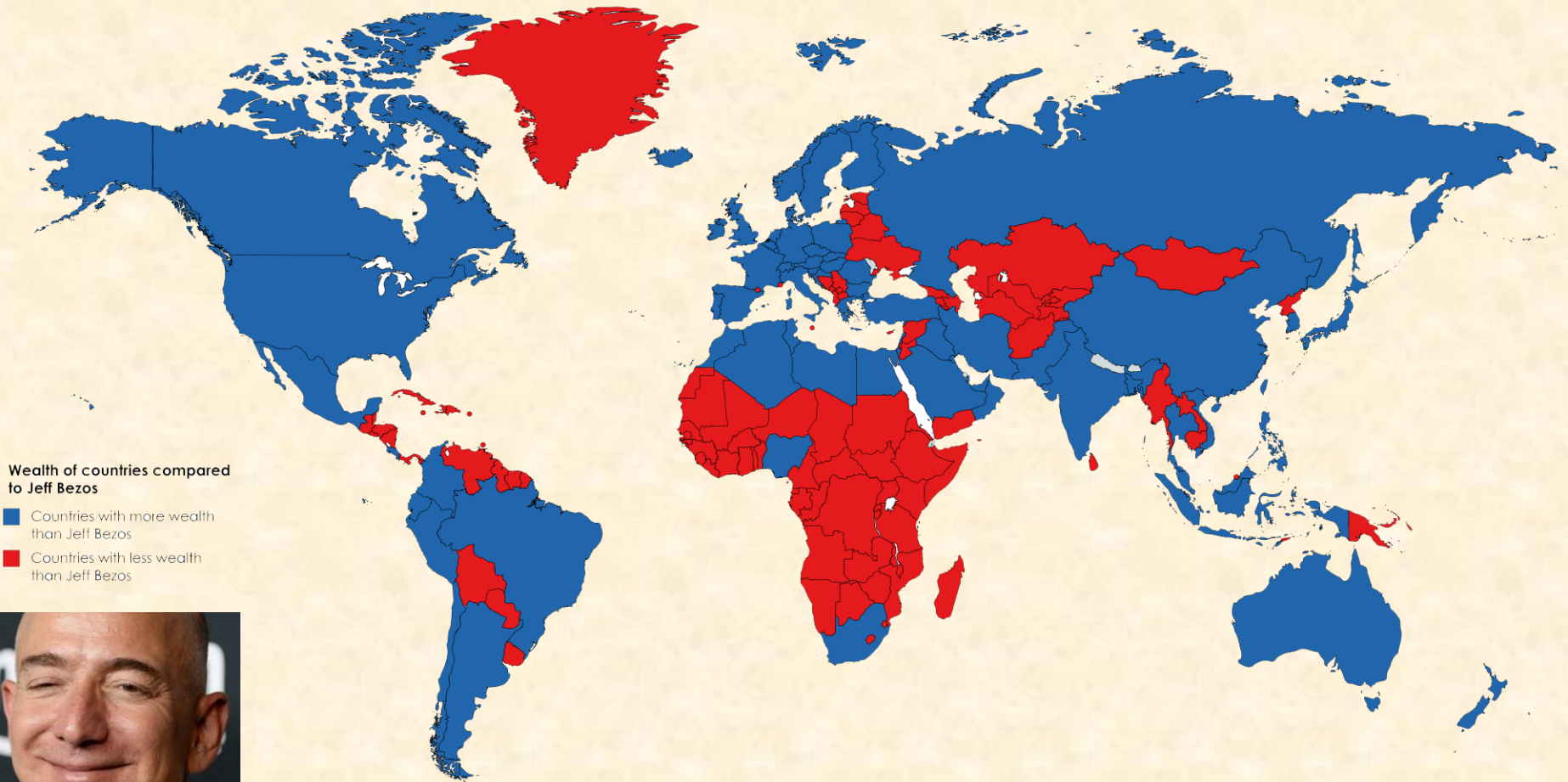# What is Diversity, Equity, Inclusion?

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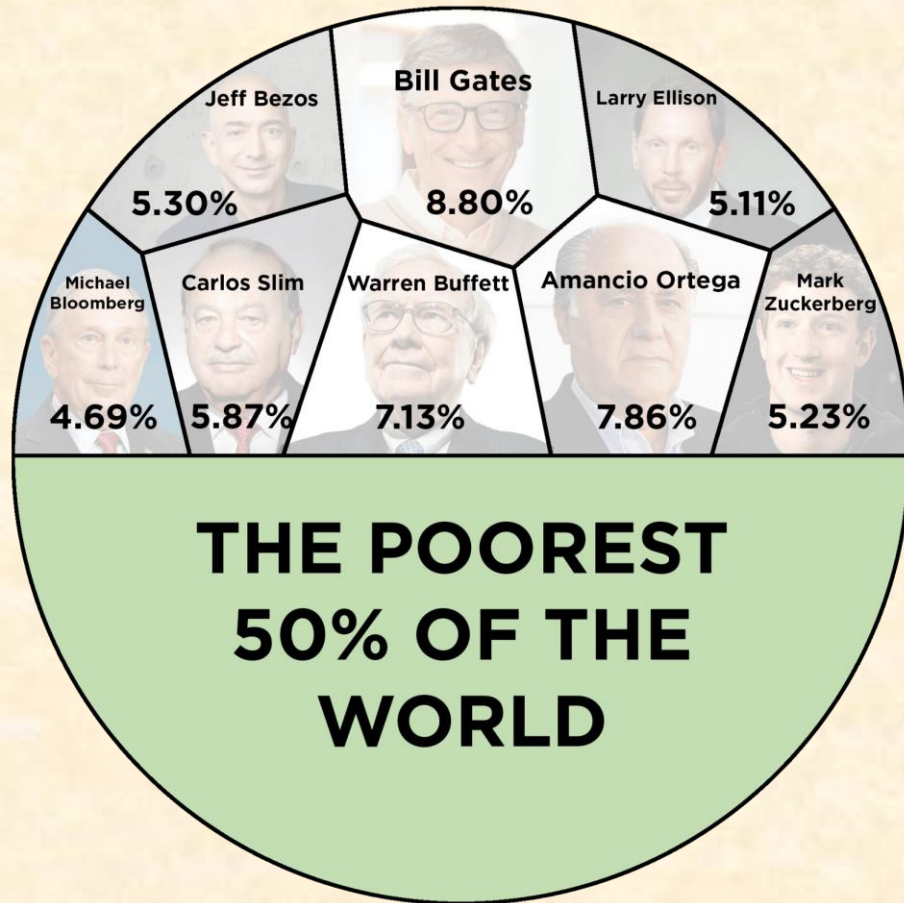# What is Diversity, Equity, Inclusion?
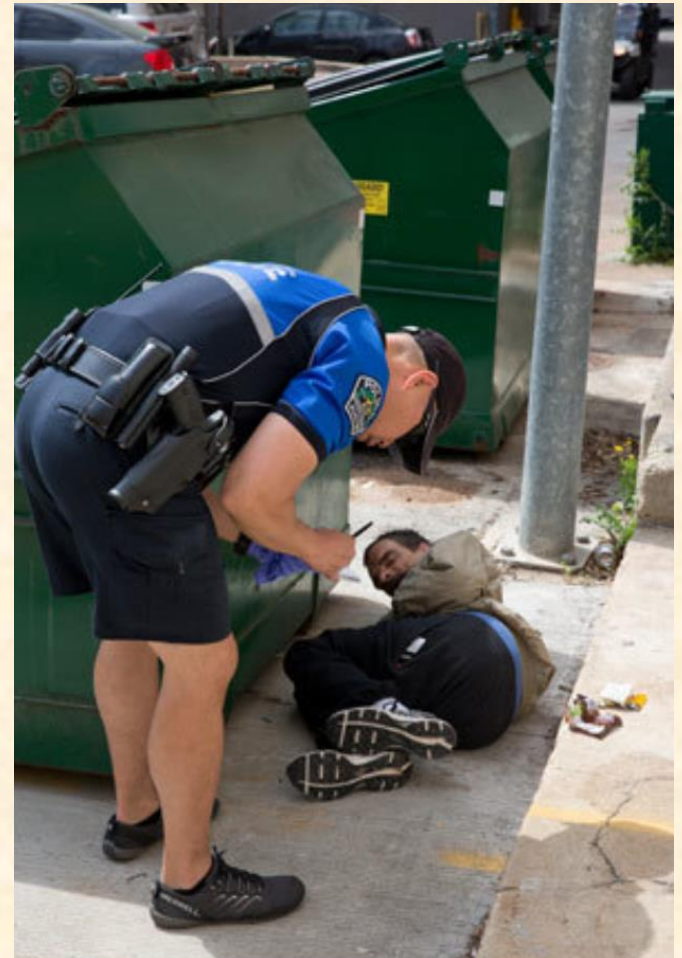
What is Diversity, Equity, Inclusion?

Wealth of countries compared to Jeff Bezos

- Countries with more wealth than Jeff Bezos
- Countries with less wealth than Jeff Bezos

Created with mapchart.net ©

What is Diversity, Equity, Inclusion?

THE WORLD'S WEALTH INEQUALITY

Jeff Bezos — 5.30%
Bill Gates — 8.80%
Larry Ellison — 5.11%
Michael Bloomberg — 4.69%
Carlos Slim — 5.87%
Warren Buffett — 7.13%
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THE POOREST 50% OF THE WORLD

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What is Diversity, Equity, Inclusion?

The Seattle Times

King County councilmember proposes spending $1 million to bus homeless people out of the region

Metropolitan King County Councilmember Reagan Dunn says there's a substantial number of people who would take advantage of a Greyhound ticket as... (Ellen M. Banner / The Seattle Times) **More** ⌄

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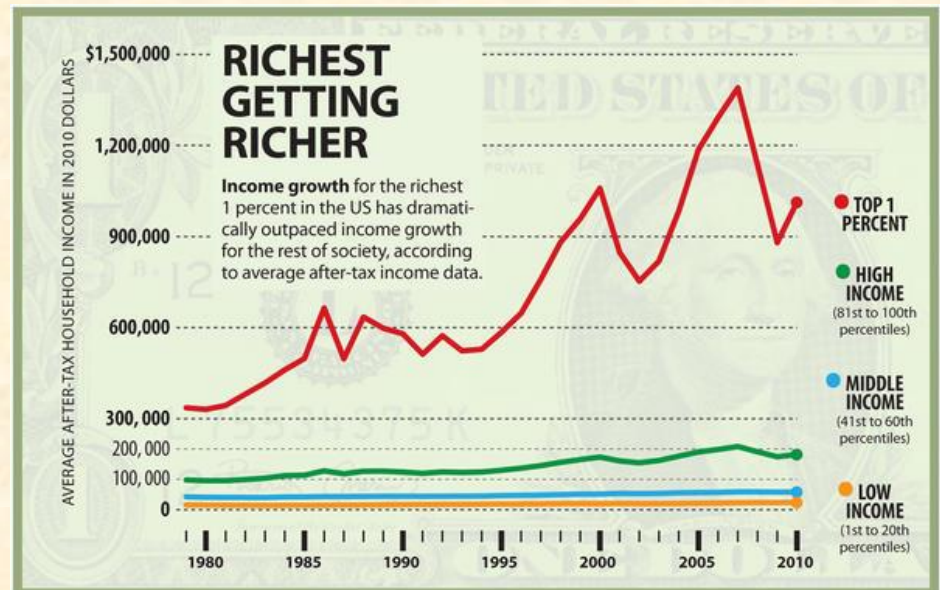
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RICHEST GETTING RICHER

Income growth for the richest 1 percent in the US has dramatically outpaced income growth for the rest of society, according to average after-tax income data.

- ● TOP 1 PERCENT
- ● HIGH INCOME (81st to 100th percentiles)
- ● MIDDLE INCOME (41st to 60th percentiles)
- ● LOW INCOME (1st to 20th percentiles)

AVERAGE AFTER-TAX HOUSEHOLD INCOME IN 2010 DOLLARS

$1,500,000
1,200,000
900,000
600,000
300,000
200,000
100,000
0

1980   1985   1990   1995   2000   2005   2010
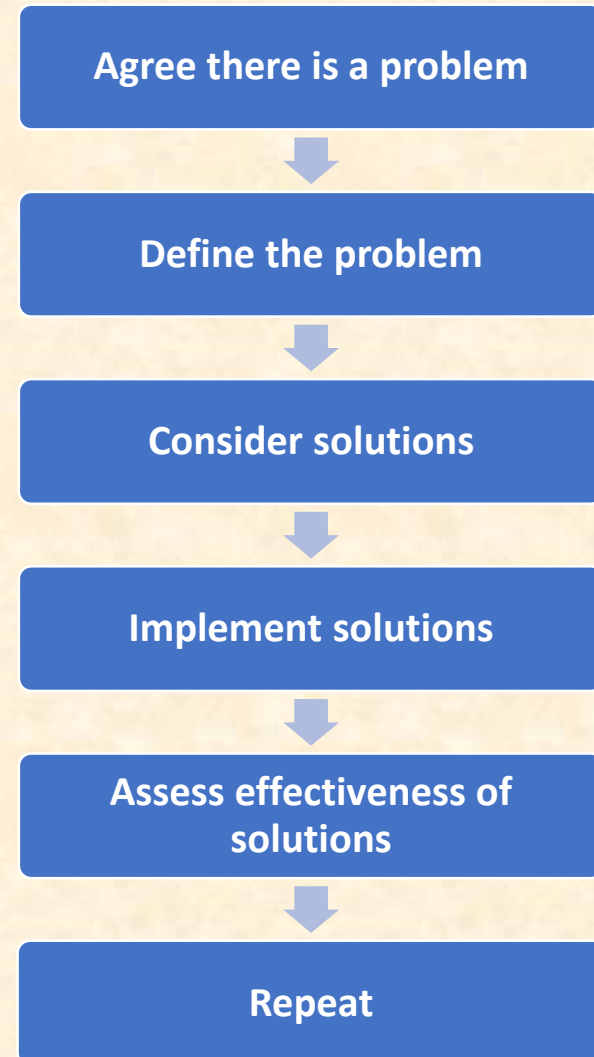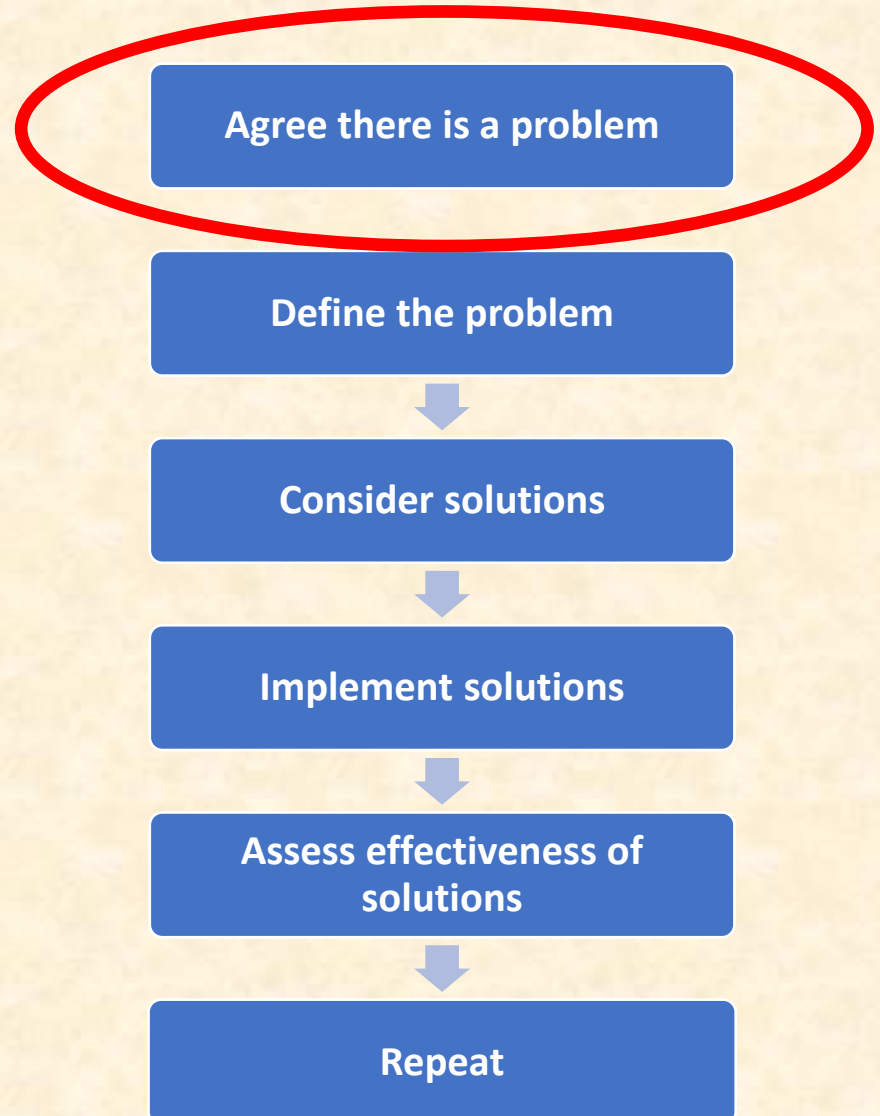
Inequity, Exclusion: A Complex System

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- Not thoroughly described; no complete models

- Subjectivity: who gets how much help?

- Issues of morality, philosophy, economics, evolutionary biology and human behavior, sociology, anthropology, systems theory, &more

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Agree there is a problem

↓

Define the problem

↓

Consider solutions

↓

Implement solutions

↓

Assess effectiveness of solutions

↓

Repeat

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DEI: A Complex System

Effects at multiple levels. For example:

Society, culture--women undervalued

Workplace/school--racism

Family--LGBT exclusion

Individual—denial of role in privilege and oppression

- Concepts, practices, goals ever-evolving
- As complex as other systems issues like climate crisis, global refugee flows

Concepts and Issues

Concepts and Issues

Definitions and standards are fluid; little universal agreement

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Equity work

Equity and Inclusion

+ Justice

+ Access

+ Belonging

Formerly: Equal Opportunity, Diversity, Diversity & Inclusion

Tomorrow: ??

Diversity

"Being composed of a variety of elements or qualities."

Because of these differences, persons wrongly experience systemic advantages or disadvantages

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Dimensions (incomplete list):

Ability, handicap	Family/parental status	Marital status	Race
Age	Gender	Military/veteran	Religion, religious creed
Color (skin)	Gender identity, including	status	Sex
Culture	gender expression	National origin	Sexual orientation
Ethnicity, ethnic	Genetic information	Nationality	Socio-economic (class)
origin	Geographical location	Political affiliation	status

Note: Diversity is a characteristic of a group, not a person

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Equity

Fairness; justice; freedom from bias or favoritism.

Equity work recognizes historic and current systemic privilege and oppression (advantages and barriers)

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Image credit: RWJF

Inclusion

Being open to and not excluding members or participants, particularly those historically disenfranchised, on the grounds of certain characteristics.

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"What you do with the diversity you have."

"Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance."

It is possible to have diversity without inclusivity.

Elements of Inclusion

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Cultural competence. The ability to work effectively with others from different backgrounds or cultures.

Cultural Destructiveness — Cultural Incapacity — Cultural Blindness — Cultural Pre-competence — Cultural Competence — Cultural Proficiency

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Cultural Destructiveness · Cultural Incapacity · Cultural Blindness · Cultural Pre-competence · Cultural Competence · Cultural Proficiency

Implicit Bias. Unconscious prejudice and stereotyping

- Pervasive
- Usually favor one's in-group
- May not align with one's declared beliefs

WHAT WE DON'T THINK WE THINK

Privilege and Oppression

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Individuals are systematically excluded from access to resources based on absence of in-group characteristics, without moral justification.

Benefits of access are unearned and sometimes unrecognized or denied.

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When USA formed,
to be able to vote:

- White
- Male
- Property-owning
- Protestant

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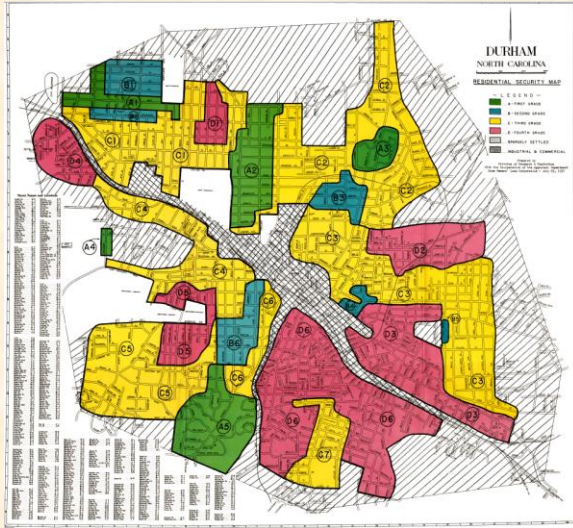- Property-owning
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Some characteristics that confer privilege in USA today:

- White
- Male
- Heterosexual
- Able-bodied
- American
- Christian
- High financial security
- Married
- Native English speaker

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Privilege and Oppression

Red-lining

Border wall
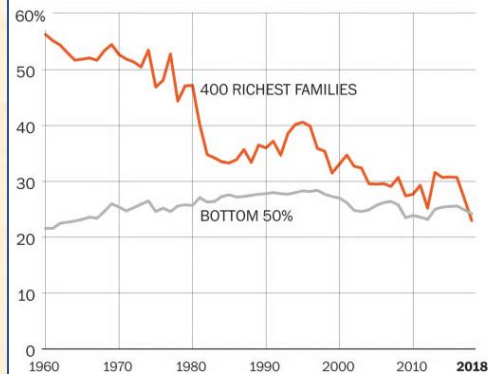
Tax cuts for the rich

Trans-phobia

Your Turn

How have you personally been affected by—positively or negatively—systems of privilege and oppression?

Why Do These Issues Exist?

NO DOGS
NEGROES
MEXICANS

LONESTAR RESTAURANT ASSN.
Dallas, Texas

How Can These Tendencies Be Moderated?

- High quality character education
- By all aspects of society: parents, teachers, political leaders, activists, religious leaders, business leaders, public figures
- Which leads to laws and policies that institutionalize respect and inclusion

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POLITICO

Outward Bound for senators?

By ANDIE COLLER | 01/06/2009 04:29 AM EST

Q: Ever think about organizing a program for members of Congress?

A: ...We had some Outward Bound programs offered...I think sailing would be a phenomenal way to do it...but you have to be willing to work in a team...we could try for an easy Outward Bound experience, where we're sailing somewhere but we get others to help us...

Freshman Colorado Sen. Mark Udall, seen here on Election Day, is a former instructor, course director and decade-long executive director at the Colorado Outward Bound School.

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How is this being addressed in the US?

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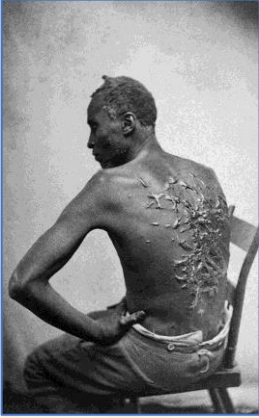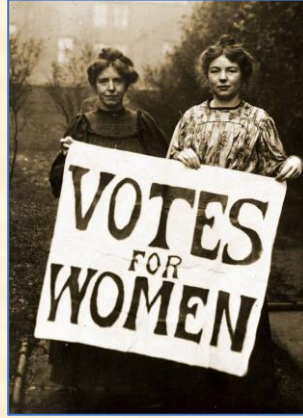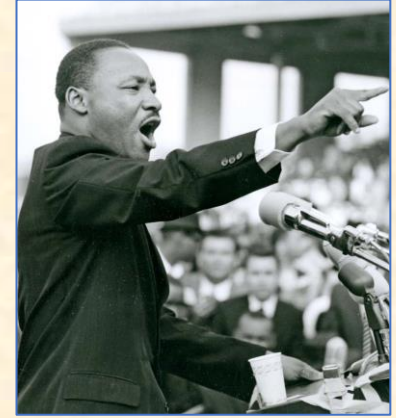
1865

1920

1960's

How is this being addressed in the US?

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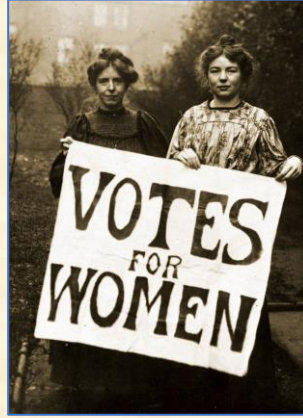
1920

1960's

2018

2016

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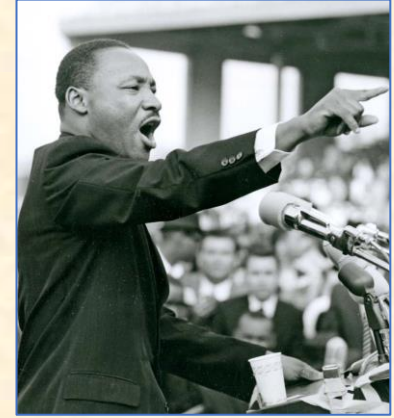
What's Happening in OE in the US?

What's Happening in OE in the US?

- A variety of efforts
- What follows is not comprehensive
- Efforts focus on LGBTQ, racial, and some other issues
- Some groups doing a lot, others nothing

General Best Practice Topics:

- Staff
- Application & Introduction
- Program Structure
- Participant Orientation
- Equipment
- Curriculum

- Trans* Inclusivity
- Cultural Inclusivity
- Religious Inclusivity
- Ability Inclusivity
- Sleeping arrangements
- Privacy
- Continuous Improvement

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Staff

- Train staff on DEI issues, practices
- Training can include mental health, psychological first aid
- Train on attributes, needs of all populations, including scholarship students
- Admin and field staff diversity can match participant diversity

Application & Introduction

- Materials in native language of participants/parents
- Provide support in filling out paperwork such as application medical forms
- Include mental health questions in medical screening
- Ask about cultural needs, including attire & prayer
- Ask about race/ethnicity & gender; use information to improve experiences
- Provide non-binary gender option on forms
- Provide hygiene information to all participants, regardless of gender
- Refer to caregiver/guardian, not mom/dad
- Scholarships can perpetuate exclusion by creating barriers and limits
- A focus on international/independent school participants can perpetuate exclusion

Program Structure

- Provide short and close-to-home programs to increase accessibility
- Provide transportation assistance
- Provide programming for intact groups
- Provide culturally relevant food

Participant Orientation

- Use inclusive language
- Employ gender-neutral pronouns ("they") and adjectives ("Latinx")
- Encourage participants to give you and others feedback on inclusive behavior (or lack of)
- Use language "As a self-identified man/woman…" early on
- Use "…whom I perceive to be male/female (or girl/boy)" rather than "man," "woman," "girl," "boy" unless you know how person identifies.
- Use "any gender" rather than "either gender," "girls and boys," "female and male."
- Use "women" rather than "girls" to refer to adult females
- Provide hygiene training (e.g. menstruation hygiene) to all, without assuming who is female.

Equipment

- Provide gear for students without their own
- Don't assume clothing preference based on apparent gender, e.g. offer female-presenting person pink apparel.
- For gendered equipment like backpacks, ensure participants can use any gear that fits.
- Provide supplies for culturally specific hygiene needs (e.g. hair, skin)
- Gender-neutral bathrooms good

ALL GENDER RESTROOM

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Curriculum

- Include DEI curriculum, if you are prepared to do so
- Don't ignore quiet, female etc. voices, especially over loud, assertive males from dominant race/culture
- Confront stereotypes: e.g. male instructors teach cleaning & cooking; female instructors teach technical skills
- Make programming culturally appropriate—relevant to participant experiences, including multiple perspectives, and congruent with different learning styles
- Not all students need "challenge" and to build "resilience"—some already come with life challenges, and instead need community and safe spaces
- Don't expect a participant to represent their entire cultural group
- Discourage microaggressions (subtle or implicit put-downs)
- Use readings from not just those from the dominant culture
- Leave No Trace: being loud and leaving offerings to honor ancestors can be culturally appropriate behaviors
- You can be an ally to others even if you are of the dominant culture
- Use land acknowledgements to recognize indigenous history and land ownership

Trans* Inclusivity

- Ask for all participants' gender pronouns
- Do not refer to people as "transgendered"—gender does not happen to a person
- Remember not all persons who identify as trans* have made physical changes
- Physical transition is referred to as "gender confirmation surgery" not "gender reassignment" or "sex change"
- Medical protocols should distinguish between gender identity and sex

Cultural & Religious Inclusivity

Cultural Inclusivity

- Consult, get permission, get to know another culture before using cultural elements

Religious Inclusivity

- Remember ethnicity is not the same as faith
- Honor reasonable needs (e.g. attire, prayer times)

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Ability Inclusivity

- Honor the terms people use to self-identify (Deaf person, person who is deaf)
- Don't assume a person with a disability needs your assistance
- Ensure all participants can be part of activities; avoid excusing participants
- Don't touch assistance devices (wheelchair, cane, prosthetics) without asking first
- Don't finish sentences for those with speech impairments
- Use "accessible" rather than "handicapped"

Sleeping arrangements

- Provide single-gender and gender-neutral sleeping options
- Ask about sleeping preference: people you feel comfortable sharing sleeping space with
- Optional self-identify gender, so staff can see if mixed gender group needed
- Ask kids, not just their parents
- No one answer for every situation

Privacy, Continuous Improvement

Privacy

- Useful to provide for changing, showering, using bathroom

Continuous Improvement

- Use Inclusion Incident Reports to track and respond systemically to issues

Specific Examples

GAP YEAR
ASSOCIATION

Evolving the Gap Year Movement begins with DEIA.

DIVERSITY

EQUITY

ACCESS

INCLUSION
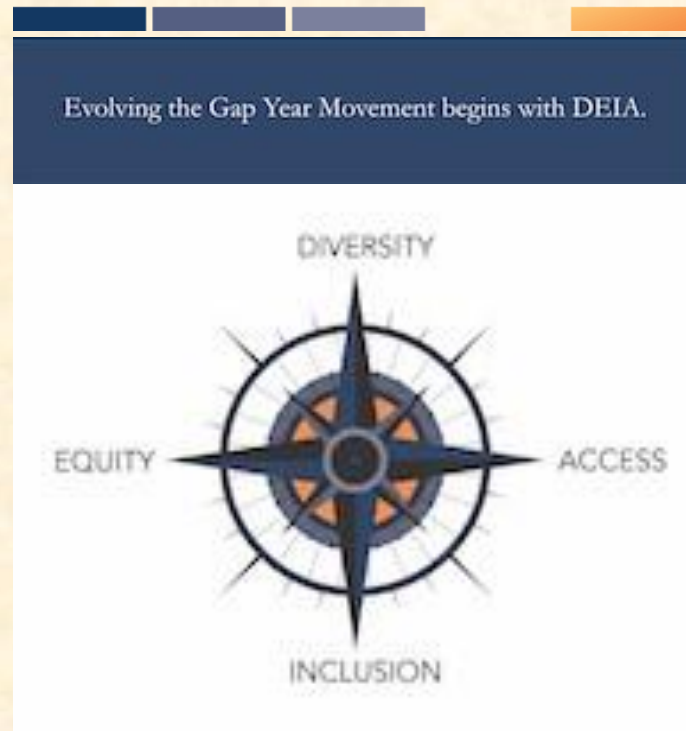
DEIA Self-Assessment

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OUTWARD BOUND
CALIFORNIA

- Plans still in development
- Hired a Director of Equity (part time)
- Equity Advisory Council—staff, Board give advice
- Hired consultant to do audit
- Equity in risk management: emotional safety briefings, staff training
- Ask what students' gender identity is, starting in screening
- Hold organizational cultural assessments with staff
- Expectations that staff are doing personal work
  - Readings and discussions
  - Monthly brown bag lunch, "article club"
  - Staff hold each other accountable for engaging
- Offer LGBTQ-specific open enrollment programming

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- Student experience analysis: follow-up with students, parents
- Looking at Board diversity
- Personal development for staff: call-to-action emails to staff on issues
- Removing bias from hiring practices, staff retention:
  - Job announcements, interview questions not creating barriers to access
  - Paid internship to recruit and train diverse staff pool
  - Subsidize staff housing
- Offering scholarships
- Building local ropes course to make programs accessible
- Invite all students to write appreciation letters, not just scholarship students
- Provide gear as needed

Your Turn

What things is your organization doing to support diversity, equity and inclusion?

Obstacles

- No agreed-upon strategy
- No unified effort
- Limited motivation
- Internal resistance
- Self-deception
- OE structurally linked to perpetuating systems of privilege and oppression
    - Male archetypes (hero's journey, conqueror)
    - White male leaders
    - Built for middle/upper classes of dominant culture
- Impractical to escape all elements of society built on privilege and oppression
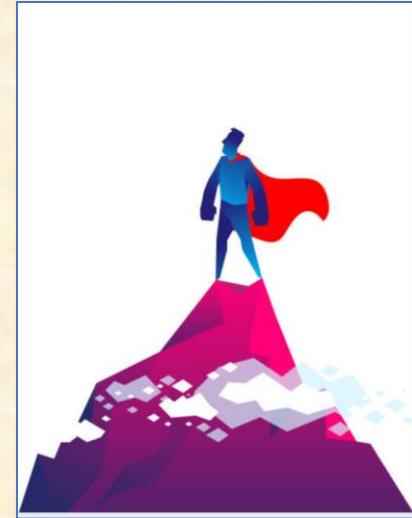
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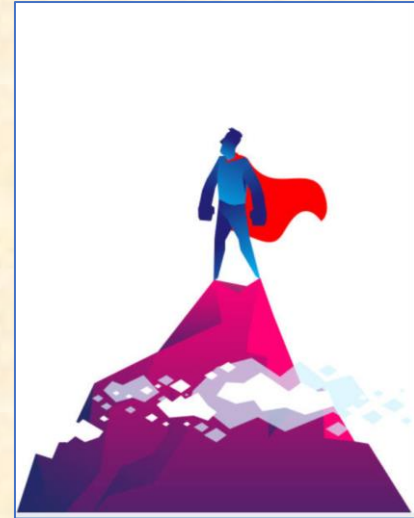- Impractical to escape all elements of society built on privilege and oppression

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Opportunities

Opportunities

Action Steps

- Consider how privilege and oppression has benefited you

- Explore your own unconscious bias

- Work to change culture by your actions every day

- Work to change culture by voting, donating, activism

- You can't change everything, but you can change something

- Managers: build, implement a DEI strategy

- Instructors: advocate for attention to DEI

Your Turn

What are some things you can do to address issues of diversity, equity and inclusion?

Further Resources

(US-centric)

- **Community**
  - The experiential education
  - Your participants, staff, stakeholders
- **Online resources**
  - People of the Global Majority, pgmone.org
  - National Service Inclusion Project, serviceandinclusion.org
  - DEI & psychological risk management resources: bit.ly/equity-prm
  - Inclusion-Oriented Incident Reporting
  - Supporting LGBTQIA+ participants on outdoor and travel experiences
  - Pronouns
  - An intro to queer inclusivity in the outdoors
- **Consultants**
  - Experienced DEI consultants who know your culture
  - The Avarna Group, theavarnagroup.com (USA)
- **Written resources**
  - White Fragility, Robin DiAngelo
  - Black Faces, White Spaces, Carolyn Finney
  - Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?, Beverly Tatum
  - Blindspot, Anthony Greenwald & Mahzarin Banaji
  - White Privilege and Male Privilege, Peggy McIntosh
  - Diversity Is Useless Without Inclusivity, Christine Riordan

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Diversity, Equity & Inclusion in Outdoor Education:
A Perspective from the USA

https://www.viristar.com/aee-aprc-dei-2023