

ON DIVERSITY

Andre H. Sayles

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PREFACE

Among its missions, the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College is charged to “conduct studies and develop policy recommendations on matters affecting the Army’s future; and other issues of importance to the leadership of the Army.” I can’t think of a more appropriate subject for the first of the “Army Issue Papers” that the Army War College will publish than Colonel Andre Sayles’ paper “On Diversity.” He has captured a subject of vital interest to the Army and its future.

Colonel Sayles’ thesis, “the same, but different,” gives us honest and heartfelt insights into the feelings of soldiers from a minority perspective. Part of the challenge of leading a culturally, racially and ethnically diverse Army is to forge a cohesive, fully integrated military organization while keeping sight of the basic human desire to spend some time with folks who “are the same.” Colonel Sayles’ essay is imbued in the basic values of our country and our Army, which is why it delivers such a powerful message. By developing the Army’s *Consideration of Others Program*, he has also touched on not only physical, but social and gender related differences in people.

The U.S. Army War College is pleased to be able to facilitate the publication and distribution of this paper.

LARRY M. WORTZEL
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Director, Strategic Studies Institute

FOREWORD

I had the rare opportunity and privilege to be the Faculty Instructor and Project Adviser for Colonel Andre Sayles when he wrote this letter, “On Diversity,” to his classmates in the Army War College Class of 1998.

The word “diversity” brings many mixed emotions and heated discussions in both the military and civilian community. The United States military has gone through many Equal Opportunity and Human Relations programs since the 1960s. We can be proud that the military, and especially the Army, has come a long way in integrating minorities and women into the force. However, we still have a long way to go. The total Army means the integration of men and women from a wide range of ethnic, racial, educational, cultural, and religious backgrounds. We have formed military coalitions with nations with soldiers from backgrounds vastly different from ours.

The dialogue on leading and managing diverse organizations will continue. Dialogue is the most important issue here. We may not agree on what diversity means. However, we must agree that we all come from diverse backgrounds with diverse ideas. Colonel Sayles provides us the opportunity to discuss, in a civilized forum, ideas and issues that are extremely important to the military and to American society. As his letter states, “We must transcend any notion of pursuing diversity issues because of political correctness or other less than genuine concerns. It is simply the right thing to do.”

Colonel Sayles logically and calmly asks questions about diversity and its effect on the future of organizations, individual soldiers, and leaders. He provides important arguments in support of the Army’s *Consideration of Others Program*. His thought-provoking discussion of diversity in the military meets his goal of providing dialogue that will be “helpful in your efforts to achieve the understanding that we all seek” on this difficult subject—“On Diversity.”

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

COLONEL ANDRE H. SAYLES is a Professor of Electrical Engineering at the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York. He is the Deputy Head of the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and currently is the senior African-American officer at the Academy. Upon graduation from the U.S. Military Academy in 1973, Colonel Sayles was commissioned in the Army Corps of Engineers. His military service includes assignments with the 902nd Engineer Company (Float Bridge) at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, and the 54th Engineer Battalion in Wilflecken, Germany. He is a 1987 graduate of the Naval College of Command and Staff where he received a Master's degree in national security and strategic studies. He holds a Master's degree in management from Salve Regina University, and a Master of Science and Ph.D. in electrical engineering from Georgia Institute of Technology. He is a 1998 graduate of the U.S. Army War College. He is a member of many professional organizations and has published more than 25 articles in professional journals and proceedings.

ON DIVERSITY

Introduction.

Organizations across America are continuing to address issues related to living and working in a culturally diverse environment. Currently, the Army is addressing diversity by implementing the *Consideration of Others Program*. This effort originated at the U.S. Military Academy during the early 1990s, and was subsequently adopted by the Military District of Washington. Since diversity is a theme for the U.S. Army War College Class of 1998, I offer this letter in support of the *Consideration of Others Program* and as a culmination to our continuous dialogue on diversity throughout the past 9 months. I hope to encourage you to return to the mainstream of service to our nation with a positive outlook on the value of diversity and an understanding of how we can build on that value to the benefit of both the individual and the organization.

What is Diversity?

The meaning of diversity depends upon both the person and the context. In a group of several individuals, we can expect diversity. Differences may be derived from an endless list of possibilities, including place of birth, social status, language, culture, height, weight, and age. All of us have taken part in discussions regarding how soldiers from the south may have a perspective different from soldiers from the north. At times, we even make generalizations about individuals from particular states or regions within states. The same is true when we compare life in a rural

environment with life in the city. I mention these possibilities because I want to encourage an understanding of the importance of differences in people. At the same time, I suggest that we are all novices when it comes to working with diversity issues. Accordingly, we need to do the best we can to focus on the primary differences that affect the workplace before addressing sources of diversity that have a lesser impact on our organization.

From my experiences in the Army, we should be concerned about the primary differences in people based on ethnicity, gender, and religion. Ethnic diversity issues are often derived from cultural differences that can lead to misunderstandings. In contrast, racial differences are usually based on physical and biological characteristics. Although two people of different races can have a similar culture, we often associate minority races with a stereotypical ethnic minority culture. In theory, racial differences should not lead to misunderstandings unless cultural or some other differences are also present. However, minorities in the Army usually have a culture that differs from what I will call the dominant military culture. In cases where cultural differences between two people are insignificant, racial biases can still hinder the relationship. For convenience, I have lumped ethnicity and race together. If we can make significant progress in understanding the three general areas of ethnicity, gender, and religion, then a second order effect will be an increased appreciation of the many other possible differences in people.

When we talk about diversity, we are talking about relationships between individuals or between the individual and the institution, especially where the institution reflects the attitude of its leadership. Diversity concerns are often associated with a minority population, although diversity does not always imply minority. Minority issues are derived from the concerns of or about racial or ethnic minorities. Gender issues originate because of differences between men and women. Therefore, when we want to speak collectively about those who are most affected by gender and ethnic minority issues, we should refer to this group as women and minorities. Although common ground exists between gender and ethnic issues, there are also some fundamental differences. If we intend to get to the core of gender issues, we want to avoid lumping women into the minority category. We have both minority women and majority women. Therefore, minority women have two overlapping sets of concerns. We should speak of women when we refer to gender concerns and minorities when we talk about ethnic minority issues. Currently, women and minorities in uniform make up approximately 46 percent of the Army and 52 percent of the Army NCO Corps.

The Same or Different?

Over the years, we have seen a number of approaches to building diverse environments. For example, some of us say that the best way to handle diversity is to treat everyone **the same**. During the past few months, I have heard several classmates say that they just wanted to be treated the same as everyone else. Not too long ago, one of my favorite statements was that we do not have men or women soldiers, we just have

soldiers—essentially implying that everyone should be looked upon as the same. Assimilation refers to the cultural absorption of a minority group into a larger body. This assimilation requires the minority group to abandon its culture in favor of the organizational culture. The success of assimilation depends on how well the minority group can adapt to and become the same as the main cultural group.

In some organizations we see an approach to diversity that focuses primarily on individual **differences**. In the private sector, this notion is frequently driven by economics because it may be more profitable to ask a Hispanic employee to sell the company's products in an Hispanic community than it would be to have a member of the majority population go to that location. Instead of considering everyone to be the same, women and minorities are frequently thought of as being different. It may make good business sense to leverage differences and sponsor programs that will prepare organizations for the time when racial minorities will make up more than 50 percent of the workforce. The success of an approach that focuses primarily on differences may depend on how well the organization can provide an environment in which women and minorities can be productive and continue to receive promotions.

I am convinced that the most effective way of encouraging diversity is to combine these two approaches and consider people to be **the same—but different**. We have to understand how people are the same and how they are different in order to successfully manage diversity. We must realize that our military culture has evolved over many years. To every soldier who signs up, the Army is already a work in progress with an established culture—a culture that we

cannot expect to change quickly. It is up to the individual to make the adjustment to adequately conform to this dominant military culture. For some soldiers, the changes are comparatively minor. For women and minorities, however, the required adjustment is usually greater because of gender and ethnic differences.

If we recognize that a dominant military culture exists, then women and minorities will conform to that culture to a certain extent in order to be successful, but they will also differ from that culture. It is not adequate to simply treat women and minorities the same as everyone else. It is also not enough to just look upon them as being different. If we treat every person the same all the time, on the surface it would seem as though we could never make a mistake. However, the first problem would be that everyone is not the same. The second problem would be that the objective of our dealings with others should not be to avoid mistakes or to protect ourselves. Similarly, if we only see others as being different, our approach will create its own set of problems. We will fail to create the best possible environment because we must all be the same for the sake of efficiency and good order and discipline in our organization.

The Key to Success.

The concept of “same but different” will enable us to continue to build effective organizations as the impact of diversity becomes greater in the next century. We must develop a clear understanding of how we are the same and how we are different. We must complement that understanding with knowledge of when individuals should be treated the same and when they need to be treated differently. We need to under-

stand our organizational culture and the extent to which we want those who are different to adapt to that culture. If we ask for 100 percent adaptation or assimilation, we are asking some individuals to give up all of their past. If we ask for no adaptation, then our organization has no culture of its own and it fails. This balance between the individual’s need to align with the organizational culture and the organization’s need to recognize individual differences leads to success in managing diversity. This balance of “same but different” creates an environment in which each of us can excel by working to our full potential.

Why Consideration of Others?

Consideration can be defined as thoughtful regard for others. It may be possible to respect another person, but occasionally treat that person poorly. However, if we are considerate of others, we will consistently treat them with respect and dignity. Consideration requires full-time respect for others, regardless of our personal feelings towards them. When we adopt consideration of others as a way of life, we will see that it spans the full range of human interactions. We cannot be considerate of others and simultaneously treat them poorly regardless of differences attributed to gender, race, ethnicity, culture, and religion, or other factors such as alcohol use, hatred, medical limitations, or personal opinion. **Consideration is a philosophy for dealing with others that is independent of circumstances or physical characteristics.**

The ability to be considerate of others can be achieved through sensitivity training. The objective is a deeper understanding of others and oneself through an

exchange of thoughts and expression of feelings. This understanding focuses mostly on how people are different. We can never achieve perfect sensitivity. The growth process must occur over many years. Sensitivity is like a curve that approaches a straight line or asymptote but never actually reaches that line. The farther the curve is from the asymptote, the greater our likelihood of being inconsiderate. As our sensitivity develops and we start to understand people better, we move along the curve and get closer to the asymptote. Eventually, we reach a point where our understanding of differences allows us to know both the meaning and the application of consideration of others. We will continue to make mistakes because we can never reach the asymptote, but our sensitivity will be elevated to the point that we will know when we have made a mistake, and we will understand that we must go back to the individual and “set things right” at the first opportunity. Without sensitivity training, we will make mistakes in how we treat people and not realize that we have been inconsiderate. Since we can never reach perfection, consideration of others training must be a continuous process over the duration of a career. Many years of working to understand others will bring us closer and closer to the elusive asymptote of perfection without ever reaching it.

We Need to Communicate.

Understanding others can be achieved through a series of frank, face-to-face discussions. People fail to understand each other because they do not communicate with each other. They do not communicate with each other because they are separated from one another. The Army’s *Consideration of Others Program* brings soldiers together in

small groups to facilitate communication and promote understanding. Eventually, we learn to speak different cultural languages. We understand how we are the same within the institutional culture and how we are different. Ultimately, we begin to understand how we must all subordinate our individual views for the benefit of the organization. We also begin to see when and how the organization should respect our differences. We learn how we each look upon ourselves as an individual, but also as part of an organization. We are beginning to achieve our goals when the institution looks back at us and sees the same picture. Through consideration of others, we are not directly changing the institutional culture. We are changing the way people in the organization behave. Over time, this changing behavior will have a positive impact on the institutional culture from the bottom up. Moreover, an increase of women and minority senior leadership could have a complementary effect from the top down.

Gold or Platinum?

As written by Major General Robert F. Foley and Major Denise A. Goudreau in their article, “Consideration of Others,” the Golden Rule is the essence of such consideration.¹ We want to be able to treat others with respect and dignity just as we want them to treat us with the same respect and dignity. The Golden Rule comes from several places in the Bible, most importantly Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31. Similar maxims can be found in other religions in either positive or negative form (e.g., do not do to others what you would not want them to do to you). In Matthew, the Golden Rule is positive and can be stated as “So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them. This is the law and the prophet.”

The Golden Rule is an objective that we should establish for ourselves in our interactions with others. However, we must be careful of how we interpret the rule and, more importantly, how our subordinates view it. Treating others the way we want them to treat us is valid at the macroscopic level or as a general way of working with people. For example, it makes sense to interpret Matthew 7:12 as treat others with kindness because we want others to treat us with kindness. It would be a mistake, however, for us to use our own culture or our own preferences as the sole basis for determining how we treat others. For example, a Christian wants to be treated like a Christian, but it would not be appropriate for a Christian to treat a Muslim like a Christian. Similarly, a man should not necessarily treat a woman the way a man wants to be treated. If we interpret the Golden Rule in this literal manner of treating others the way we want to be treated, the *Consideration of Others Program* will not necessarily change the way we approach diversity. We are born knowing how we want to be treated and do not need training to enable us to treat others as if they were like us. This interpretation of the Golden Rule obviously has some shortcomings.

From Gold to Platinum to Rainbow.

Consideration of others is about understanding other people so that we can treat them accordingly. The Golden Rule should be interpreted as “treat others as you would have them treat you *if you were in their place.*”² We can capture this interpretation in what I have heard others call the Platinum Rule, and what I recently began calling the Rainbow Rule. This extension of

the Golden Rule can be stated as “treat others the way they would have you treat them.” My motivation for calling this the Rainbow Rule is based on the myth that a rainbow extends from a pot of gold. This parallels the manner in which I have shown the Rainbow Rule as an extension of the Golden Rule. It is also interesting to note how the colors of the rainbow are joined together for a single purpose in the same band of refracted light, but with each color retaining its distinction or difference. This is exactly how we build effective diverse organizations. Individuals must join together and be the same for the sake of the organization, while the organization respects individual differences and allows those differences to be visible.

The Rainbow Rule is a straightforward way of understanding the importance of consideration of others. If our objective is to “treat others the way they would have us treat them,” then we must understand other people before we can know how they want to be treated. The *Consideration of Others Program* brings our soldiers together in a small group setting so that they can begin to understand each other better. With this understanding, the soldiers are armed with the tools that they need to start treating others the way they should to be treated or the way they want to be treated. Christians must understand Muslims in order to treat Muslims the way they want to be treated. Men must understand women, and majorities must understand ethnic minorities. Likewise, women must understand men and minorities must understand the majority population. In the latter case, women and minorities may have a head start because they are already working in a majority dominated culture and to an extent will understand that culture by default.³ Their understanding of the dominant culture is necessary for success of the organization

and success of individuals within the organization.

From Today to Tomorrow.

The *Consideration of Others Program* is important in our efforts to create a better environment within today's Army. The program will be even more important in preparing the Army for the future. As America becomes more diverse, the Army will also become more diverse. By the year 2025, minorities in America will likely increase from the current 28 percent to approximately 40 percent of our national population. This minority population change will be largely due to the increasing number of Hispanics.

Women and minorities will play a major role in the Army of the future. Their combined population in the Army will likely increase from the current 46 percent to well over 50 percent early in the next century. This implies that we need to learn more about diversity now so that our growth as an institution will not be inhibited by changing demographics. Today's focus should encourage an environment that will ensure a transition to a future in which diversity is an effectiveness multiplier instead of mandated training.

A Glimpse into the Future.

The Army of the future will likely include small warfighting elements that combine in a variety of configurations, move quickly to any place in the world, and connect through vision and voice to any point on earth. The individual soldier may be outfitted in climate-controlled, individual armor with protective defense against chemical agents,

small arms fires, and adverse environmental conditions. Global communications via satellite will complement regional communications via wireless or cellular systems enhanced by unmanned aerial vehicles. At the touch of a button or perhaps in response to an inconspicuous mental or physical gesture, the head-worn display will provide the positions of enemy and friendly forces, targeting information, mission status, and environmental conditions. The individual weapon will be able to automatically identify and target the enemy. The land warrior will have no concerns about temporary environmental conditions such as day and night. Likewise, the ability to be extracted or resupplied at just the right time will be taken for granted.

Although none of us can predict the future, the point that I want to make about the Army After Next in this abbreviated scenario is that our forces will be integrated and fast-moving. In fact, we may not have a separate Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps in 2025. We may have a single service or perhaps two services. Regardless of the exact nature of the future force structure, it will demand total integration of personnel. Our effectiveness in 2025 will depend on the extent to which men and women and people of color and whites are interchangeable. My use of interchangeable does not imply that women and minorities will be assimilated into a single culture. It means that all of our soldiers will understand each other and can make an immediate adjustment to accommodate the person at his or her side. Interchangeable also means that by 2025, women and men will perform the same job functions. In today's Army, that would imply that women would eventually be introduced into all branches. In a future scenario, the integrated environment may make little or no distinction between branches—if we have branches at all.

Regardless, the pace of conflict in 2025 will dictate that soldiers be interchangeable. We will not have the time to stop a fast-moving operation and raise the heads-up display to check soldiers for gender, religion, or ethnicity before going into battle.

We Must Move Forward.

If our “mark on the wall” for 2025 is total integration and interchangeability of service members, we need to look backwards from the Army After Next time period and ask what that means today. It means that we need to vigorously pursue consideration of others in hopes that all soldiers have reached the necessary understanding of others by early in the next century. We must continue the integration of women into all Army opportunities. It is critical to the Army After Next that we move forward from our current posture on gender integrated training and fighting. If we retreat from gender integration initiatives, the second order effect throughout the Army will be an attitude that women are a problem. We are ill-prepared to deal with such a backlash. This negative attitude will not easily die. If we stop progress now, it will take years to get back to the point where we accept the critical role of women in the future. We cannot stop and restart the integration process on the fly. When dealing with people, transitions take generations. The year 2025 is only 27 years away. If we look back 27 years from today to 1971 and think about progress we have made, it becomes obvious that integration is a slow process because it affects the culture of an organization. We can reach our target in the next century only if we continue to seek out and implement new integration opportunities from this point forward.

Effective Diverse Environment?

I have talked about the need to build diverse environments by using the notion of the “same but different.” This concept accounts for the ways in which people are the same as well as how they are different. Organizations that expect individuals to totally assimilate by giving up their own culture will always operate at less than the optimum solution. The same is true for an organization that only focuses on differences.

Women and minorities can and must adapt to the Army culture. Common ground is necessary in any organization. At the same time, leaders must understand that individuals need to nurture their differences. In his autobiography, General Colin Powell talked about the environment at Fort Leavenworth as follows:

Nevertheless, we had made it this far up the ladder precisely because we had the ability to shift back into the white-dominated world on Monday morning. Leavenworth represented integration in the best sense of the word. Blacks could hang around with brothers in their free time, and no one gave it any more thought than the fact that West Pointers, tankers, or engineers went off by themselves. That was exactly the kind of integration we had been fighting for, to be permitted our blackness and also to be able to make it in a mostly white world.⁴

General Powell describes his Fort Leavenworth environment as a place where he was the same for the good of the organization, but was allowed to be different. Of importance is the suggestion that others recognized the need for black students to nurture their differences during off-duty time. This brings me to some specific examples of the “same but different” concept.

We Need Role Models.

To a certain extent, all soldiers are the same. This means that men can mentor women and whites can mentor blacks, at least to the extent that they are the same. The mentorship that we can offer our subordinates will adequately provide for their needs, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or religion. On the other hand, a small part of a woman's mentorship needs often can only be provided by another woman. The same is true for minorities. However, the fact that a black soldier can only get the last 5 percent of his or her mentorship needs from another black soldier is no reason for a white soldier to avoid providing the first 95 percent of the mentorship as reflected in the extent to which the two soldiers may be the same. We all can and should seek to satisfy the mentorship needs of our fellow soldiers and subordinates, regardless of our differences.

A very important part of an effective diverse environment is ensuring that role models are available to all members of the organization. An organization that has women and minority members should have visible women and minority leadership at the highest levels. Our environment should inspire subordinates to work to their full potential and create opportunities for success as a reward for that hard work. Women and minorities will only know for sure that they can achieve success through hard work if they have seen it done by one of their own. They need to believe that they can be the same, but different and still make it to the top. They need to know that they can be successful without abandoning all of their differences in order to fully emulate the dominant culture. Women and minority role models that go beyond tokenism in an organization prove that stories about glass ceilings and "good old boy" networks are not

true. For the Army, these women and minority role models need to ultimately be at all levels in all branches.

Tolerance Promotes Understanding.

Women and minorities nurture their differences by sharing experiences with those who have a common background. We should be supportive when women or minorities spend time together nurturing their differences as a break from many hours or days of being the same for the sake of the organization. These opportunities to nurture differences often give women and minorities the strength to do a better job of being the same when the time comes to do so. For example, when Hispanic soldiers are speaking Spanish after work, they are not conspiring against the organization. They are nurturing their differences as a break from spending the work day being the same. The same applies to a group of women who may have lunch or dinner together.

The *Consideration of Others Program* will eventually lead us to an understanding of these differences and the impact upon our organization. It will become clear why a black soldier in a stressful environment may want to share quarters with another black soldier for the sake of having a few minutes to nurture differences after duty. **It has nothing to do with segregation, but everything to do with integration.** We will understand how the soldier's preference fits in with mission requirements that may prevent such a living arrangement. We will understand how a woman's approach to communication may be different from a man's approach. We will understand how men can work side-by-side with women in a professional relationship without fear of

sexual harassment claims. We will understand how majorities can work with minorities without fear of racial bias allegations. We will understand the adjustment that women and minorities must make in adapting to the Army culture. We will understand why some women and minorities have concerns about being left out of social networks. We will understand how being ignored socially deprives women and minorities of an important opportunity to sell their competence. We will understand how some women and minorities feel that they must behave like white males in order to be successful. We will become comfortable with all soldiers because we will understand each other.

Summary.

As leaders, we are asked to establish a long-term vision for our organization and to point our subordinates in the direction of that vision. A realistic projection for diversity in the Army is that we will need to achieve total integration early in the next century. Our approach to diversity should be based on the "same but different" concept. We will need to expect our service members to become the same within the organizational culture while the organization recognizes that individuals need to hold onto some of their differences.

I can see three levels to my suggested approach to building an effective, diverse environment. At the first level, the organization recognizes the need to expect people to be the same, while respecting their differences. At the second level, the organization uses programs like *Consideration of Others* to help members understand differences and learn to treat others the way they want to be treated. At the third level,

the organization recognizes the value of differences and makes use of the alternative perspectives to create the best possible working environment.

For clarity, I will briefly outline these three levels. The first level is a decision to buy into the "same but different" concept. We must accept the argument that total assimilation will never lead to the best possible environment for our subordinates. If we ask our soldiers to completely give up who they are in order to become the same as our organizational culture, the backlash will eventually show itself in the form of discontent and frustration. At the same time, as leaders we must expect our subordinates to take pride in the organization and adapt to its culture. At this level we simply want to recognize that there needs to be a balance between adaptation to the organizational culture and respect for individual differences.

After buying into the "same but different" concept, we can move to the second level by beginning to understand how we are different. Initially, we need to focus on the key differences of ethnicity, gender, and religion. An effective approach to understanding differences is already built into the *Consideration of Others Program*. Simply talking and listening in a small group setting will go a long way. **We must keep in mind that our road to sensitivity is always under construction.** We can never be perfect. As we work harder to understand differences, we will become comfortable with our daily interactions. We will understand how others want to be treated. We will begin to sense when others want to be treated the same and when they want us to respect their differences.

At the third level of diversity management, we have already accepted the "same

but different” concept and have achieved a basic understanding of differences. Eventually, we will become comfortable with those who are of a different gender, ethnicity, or religion. Our reduced inhibitions will allow us to appreciate diversity. Those strange opinions and unorthodox approaches to problems that come with diversity will no longer be dismissed without discussion. Instead, they will be considered alongside traditional views. We will begin to value diversity and incorporate alternative approaches into our ways of doing business. We will be effectively managing diversity.

This approach to diversity applies to other organizations as well as the Army.⁵ We need to understand where we are headed, but know that we cannot get there in a day or a few years. Our goal is to build an integrated environment in which each person can work to his or her potential while knowing that accomplishments will be recognized and due promotion opportunities will be granted. Men, women, majorities, and minorities will better understand each other and learn to work with each other to the extent that they will become interchangeable. Simply stated, we will be able to treat others the way they should be treated.

AFTERWORD

My letter to War College classmates was a voluntary effort. I hoped to make a contribution to the Class of 1998 and inspire each member to support the *Consideration of Others Program*. I have seen it work. Future Army War College students will have the benefit of a new diversity program that will be in place for the Class of 1999. How we manage the *Consideration of Others Program* over the next few years will determine where we will be in 2010 and beyond. It is important that we make the educational investment now.

Thoughts on Terminology.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer some personal thoughts. At the risk of expressing an opinion that is subject to controversy, I want to share some thoughts on terminology. The black population in America continues to search for an identity. About 30 years ago we decided that we wanted to be called "black" after rejecting the given names of colored and Negro. "Afro-American" was also used for many years as an alternative to the use of black. Afro-American is sometimes thought of as a more distinguished or official designation because it was used by the Library of Congress and many other academic institutions that wanted to start new programs in black studies. This use of Afro-American still exists because there is no pressure to undergo the expense of change.

A few years ago, "African-American" became popular. In theory, African-American implies descendants of Africa or, more specifically, descendants of African slaves. However, a small percentage of

blacks do not necessarily consider themselves to be African-American because they are not descendants of slaves. The bottom line is that many blacks do not have a preference. Those who do have a preference usually would rather not be called Afro-American. Most new literature avoids this term as well. This means that it would be safe to avoid the use of Afro-American while using black and African-American on an interchangeable basis. Keep in mind that Army literature mostly reflects the use of African-American, and that black is a more global term that also includes those who are not Americans.

Learning through Experience.

My views on diversity are primarily based on personal observations. In that regard, I am more of an experimentalist than a theorist. Thus, I have not relied extensively on other sources. After many years of interacting with cadets, staff, and faculty at West Point, I have concluded that diversity boils down to a balance between how we are the same and how we are different. I applied the "same but different" model to many situations during my first 9 months at the War College. I feel that I now have a new understanding of diversity and how to make it work for the individual as well as the organization.

I appreciate the comments and inquiries from students and faculty that led to my interest in following up on our discussions of diversity. I want to thank Jan Rauker for providing a helpful perspective on diversity issues throughout the year. I am also very grateful to the students who reviewed earlier drafts of the letter, and to Ron Miller who helped with the translation of the Golden Rule. I have been particularly

inspired by the enthusiasm of three staff and faculty members, Colonel Tom Watts, Dr. Herb Barber, and Ms. Jenny Silkett. Finally, I want to acknowledge the support of Dr. Cheryl Miller, Dr. Rita Nethersole, and Dr. Sandra Adell from outside of the Army War College.

In conclusion, we must transcend any notion of pursuing diversity issues because of political correctness or other less than genuine concerns. It is simply the right and decent thing to do. I hope that this letter has been helpful in your efforts to achieve the humane understanding that we all seek.

At this point, it has become obvious that this letter will be distributed beyond my War College classmates. In that regard, I ask that the original intent always be kept in mind.

ENDNOTES

1. Major General Robert F. Foley and Major Denise A. Goudreau, "Consideration of Others," *Military Review*, January-February 1996, pp. 25-28.

2. A discussion of the Golden Rule can be found in *The Interpreter's Bible*, New York: Abingdon Press, 1951, Vol. VII, pp. 329-330. The 12-volume set is available to most military chaplains.

3. The argument that women are more comfortable than men when in the position of leading a diverse organization can be supported by the notion that women must adjust to the dominant military culture in order to be successful. If the dominant organizational culture is derived from male leadership, then out of necessity women will understand men better than men understand women. It follows that women may be more comfortable when leading men than men may be when leading women. A similar argument may apply to majority/minority leadership.

4. General Colin Powell, with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1995, p. 120.

5. The "same but different" concept can be applied at many levels in many different organizations. In an international setting, we would like to see different nations treating each other with respect and dignity. Understanding differences is critical to that process since respect and dignity takes on different meanings in different cultures. Our ability to shape the international environment and spread American values depends on our understanding of how other cultures are the same as the American culture and how they are different. Effective diversity programs in the Army will give our soldiers a better foundation for understanding how to operate in the international arena.