

GET REAL: WHAT MATTERS IS WE ARE ALL HUMAN BEINGS BY VANNESS HARRIS, LOS ANGELES

Many of us come from interracial relationships. Society, friends, and family then press us into deciding which culture we wish to live in or interact with. We overly concern ourselves with fitting into a certain social structure to maintain a relative sense of happiness. People seem to fear a loss of identity if their ethnicity isn't highlighted or in focus. To truly discover the real self, we must first begin to understand the nature of our lives as human beings.

We must seek to define our value in respect to each other, the environment and ourselves. Then, and only then, will the significance of being born into a particular culture be clear. The beauty of being from a mixed background is the opportunity to digest aspects of human life from different perspectives. But we, as common mortals, blind to the vastness of human potential, utilize differences between us to segregate, alienate, and discriminate against our fellow man.

But, humanity's diversity is really just life expressing its inherent potential — the potential to manifest itself in all phenomena. It is an aspect of our existence that should be treasured and revered, while bearing in mind that physical characteristics give no true indication of a person's value. The only way to truly understand each other is to engage in heartfelt dialogue.

Mentally, we have dulled our ability to perceive the true nature of our existence. We invest most of our time and effort in material wealth. If we were to spend as much time seeking to understand each other as we do searching for transient fortune, we would discover that the human being is life's most valuable commodity. Mankind has created everything that we've been seeking to obtain, so mankind should be at the forefront of our developmental efforts. We must seek to strengthen our intellect *through* diversity, through cultural exchanges.

What starts as a thought, eventually becomes a reality. Skewed or tainted thinking based on a flawed philosophy often leads to harmful action — racial segregation, hate crimes, even race wars. Buddhism has offered us a strong philosophical base from which to develop our wisdom. With our minds united on a goal loftier than our own self-advancement, our actions will be less likely to inhibit the steady growth of others.

Spiritually, we quest for continual nourishment. On a fundamental level, our survival as a race depends on the harmony we create among each other. In President Ikeda's *Discussions on Youth*, volume 2, he says:

Those unable to see people of other ethnicities as human beings the same as themselves are spiritually impoverished. They have no sound philosophy of life. They do not ponder life's more profound questions. They care for their own petty concerns. Our society is filled with people who are consumed with HUNGER — at the mercy of unrestrained greed and ANIMALITY — picking on the weak and fawning on the strong. These negative tendencies are what make our society discriminate against and ignore human rights. We are all human beings. That is what matters.

When we, as Buddhists, conquer our fears of dealing with diversity, our movement for world peace will advance 100-fold.

Title: What Matter Is We All Are Human Beings

Subject: World Tribune 03/26/99 n.3235 p.12 WT990326p12

Author: Vanness Harris

Keywords: Beings Diversity Harris Human Matter Real Tolerance Tribune Vanness World