

## Cultural diversity is coming

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by Lawrence Calder  
News-Sun Staff Writer

Trying to understand people of other cultures can only lead to frustration, so we should cut it out, the speaker said Thursday.

Instead, we should strive for cultural sensitivity, said Phillip E. Walker, a San Francisco actor and author devoted to cultural awareness. Walker spoke about overcoming racism at a teacher-staff-administrator "in service" session for North and South High School and Clark State Community College, which sponsored this visit.

At South, Walker presented a play about American's impact on our history and society.

Americans are racist by nature partly because we live in pockets of relative isolation among myriad other cultures. But the 400-year process that developed a Nation of racists can be reversed, Walker said.

America is becoming more culturally diverse, and the separatism that is a source of comfort to many people is going to be unavailable as more interracial workforces, friendships and marriages happen, he said.

"What use to be the majority is now the minority in California, and it will happen in Ohio before you find your grave," he said.



Phillip E Walker  
News-Sun photo by Scott Kissell

Everyone does some things, perhaps unconsciously, simply because of their heritage, he said.

"We in the United States have a weird concept that, if it comes from England, it's culture. If it comes from anyplace else, it's ethnic," Walker said. "The truth is we are all ethnic; England is ethnic too."

The Nation was founded on racism and sexism, when Black men were counted as three-fifths of a man and women were not counted at all. Racism is now an inevitable part of being American, Walker said.

"Even the books used to teach our children are loaded with it..."

We have to admit that we're racist before developing techniques to getting it out of our system."

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To be a racist is not to be a bad person - it's part of our heritage, but we have to face our racism and deal with it."

- - Phillip E Walker

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Racial slurs will come up in any homogenous group, such as the Friday-night poker game, and it's up to an individual to object to it, he said.

"You can't understand what someone else is going through unless you've walked in his/her shoes. You can't understand what it's like to grow up a Black child in the ghetto. I can't understand PMS - I just will never *get* it, no matter how hard I try," he said.

The solution instead is to be sensitive, to regard the different person as the expert on their experiences, and to take their words as fact, he said.

"Teach it to the children. I know it's uncomfortable, but put it on the table for discussion. Even if the only thing we accomplish in this generation is to make it comfortable to talk about our racism, maybe the next generation can start working on strategies to overcome it.

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