



**John Walsh**  
Editor

## DIVERSITY REVISITED

When I arrived in Orlando for the GIS a few weeks ago, I didn't expect to run into a buzz saw. That buzz saw consisted of a number of people – including several GCSAA board members – who vehemently took issue with my column last month (“The right kind of diversity,” page 6, January). In that column, I tried to make the point that pushing for more ethnic and gender diversity within the superintendent's profession just for the sake of diversity wasn't as important as having the best-qualified people for the job. Apparently, I didn't make that point as effectively as I wanted to because there are passionate people who felt I was opposed to opportunities for minorities and women.

First, let me state clearly that I agree the game of golf and the industry that serves it should be a big tent that's open to anyone who wants to come in. No one can dispute that broad participation by all segments of society is great for the health of golf.

Second, I specifically tried to draw a distinction between diversity in golf in general and diversity within a professional association such as the GCSAA. There's a difference between actively trying to diversify the segment of society that plays golf regularly (which is easier to accomplish) as opposed to diversifying a group of professionals in golf course management (which is more difficult to accomplish). One is playing a sport that can be started and stopped throughout one's life. It's a hobby. The other is making a lifelong commitment after following a certain educational track. It's a profession. There's a big difference in how people approach each of those. Nonetheless, people seemed to have overlooked this paragraph in my last column:

“Targeting blacks and women to play golf is a different issue, part of which is because of the stagnant number of golfers and rounds played nationally. Involving blacks and females in the game at a young age will increase the odds of them being more involved in the game, including the business side of it, later in life. There are several much needed programs addressing this.”

I don't necessarily like or dislike the fact that the vast majority of superintendents are white males, but as long as the door is open to all and discrimination doesn't exist, I'm not sure having an association that “looks like America” should be a top priority for the GCSAA. Having an association consisting of the best, most-qualified, most-committed professionals should be.

Another concern expressed to me was that I didn't mention Hispanics. The reason I didn't is because now-GCSAA president David Downing specifically mentioned blacks and women in his comments at the Carolinas GCSA conference this past November. He didn't mention Hispanics as a group of people lacking representation in the association.

Additionally, some folks took issue with the fact that I didn't call the GCSAA to ask it about its diversity initiatives before writing the column. Frankly, other than Downing's general comments about the matter, I didn't know the GCSAA had a diversity committee. Furthermore, I wasn't taking issue with concept of diversity in general but rather the idea of not having “enough” of certain types of people in an organization. It suggests the question: How do you define “enough”?

The bottom line is that I, too, want everyone to feel comfortable in the game of golf, including the business side of it. Some people I talked with feel strongly that the industry should do a better job of opening its doors to those other than white males. Maybe I'm naive, but I never realized the doors were closed to anyone.

Perhaps, by expressing a different viewpoint and not choosing my words as carefully as I could have, an open dialogue can lead to new thinking about the concept of diversity in the industry. I'm open to learning more about what you think, so write me or post your thoughts on our Web message board. **GCI**

We would like to hear from you. Please post any comments you have about this column on our message board, which is at [www.golfcourseindustry.com/messageboard](http://www.golfcourseindustry.com/messageboard).



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