

The Silent Minority

Written by: Enrique Ruiz, CM, PgMP | July 19, 2016



I was born in Colorado yet my name, Enrique Ruiz, implies a more Hispanic origin. As a child it was inconsequential with a nickname of “Ricky.” At the age of eight I went to live in Mexico City and stayed there for another eight years becoming a teenager, fluent in two languages (with no foreign accent in either) and adept with at least one culture. Then, I returned to the United States to live in Southern California and continue with my education. Culture shock hit me in my home country. I had never seen so many African-American boys up close and personal. Their physical size was daunting compared to the more typical smaller framed Mexican. I then met “Chicano’s” who touted Latin identities with their dress, accents, tattoos and unmistakable “low rider” cars. This was a foreign sight to me even though I traveled extensively throughout Mexico. Chicanos did not represent the Mexicans I grew up knowing. The cliques of skin heads, gangs, whites, Asians and multiple “birds-of-a-feather” groupings had their own unique way of communicating with you through visual snares, graffiti, the pounding of a bat or the shimmer of a switchblade to name a few tactics. The country of my birth, a country known for its melting-pot opportunity, was not what I thought it was going to be as an impressionable youth. We had insults, fights and stabbings between various groups all clamoring for survival, presence, recognition and identity.

Fighting for identity is something that is very much in my life. Ang Lee, Taiwanese born American Film Director

(Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon) I am Hispanic American with a naturalized father from Mexico. My mother is from Virginia. Life brought my parents together yet in the background lurked smears for people of my kind as ‘spicks,’ ‘wetbacks’ and other sundry names. My “kind” had a reputation for being hard workers but we were directly, or indirectly, classified at the bottom of the social ladder in America. Migrating across countries and cultures has an

effect on your self-esteem and your identity. You want to fit in but you don't want to be told what "bucket" you should be in. You feel you have something to offer but you don't want to spend your time arguing why you deserve to be treated right. "White privilege" for the many seemed palpable, "reverse discrimination" rhetoric was disheartening. What does a young aspiring youth do? I became a "silent minority." I contemplated changing the name given to me at birth to something more American to avoid being classified by others. Instead, I did other things to keep myself "American looking." As I entered the workforce after High School for example, I didn't let the world know that I could speak another language. I silenced my voice more often than not to avoid critiques. I was very pleasant but usually ate and worked alone. I did not want any racially pejorative words to be associated with my name. I was an American, or so I wanted to believe. Stereotypical dialogue provides ample fodder to pigeon-hole people into "buckets." The number of people who change their name (from any culture) to fit in America indicates that this is not an isolated scenario; it is just one symptom of a larger problem, suppressed engagement. One day, after a dozen or so years of silence with regard to my Spanish speaking ability, I was asked to be a liaison between a manufacturing firm in California and a *maquiladora* in Mexicali. Finally, my long repressed language came back to life. I have since used this skill in every position held since then leading up to the massive 2010 Census data capture operation. Racism continues to exist in America impairing the rate of progress we can collectively sustain. Whether it be for a presidential race wanting either "black" or "white" representation to the diatribe last month from the Republican Representative Don Young (has served 41 years in Congress) who stated in a radio interview that when he was a boy in California, his father "used to hire 50 to 60 wetbacks to pick tomatoes on his farm." We continue to persist misinformed, derogatory racial undertones to define a populace. Many individuals are afraid to speak out, share their thoughts, their backgrounds. Humiliation and slander is painful. How many individuals in your organization have repressed skills, or backgrounds, walking the hallways? Being bilingual is an asset for most organizations but I didn't advertise this skill, and others. "Silent Minority" individuals are everywhere and they have different identifiers depending upon their culture, background or persuasion (i.e.- "closeted"). They withhold, yet they are on your payroll. They do as asked but don't expose all of their thoughts. Your organization may have hidden intellectual capital that has not been exploited for a win-win outcome. Human nature can be divisive. Denigrating others to uplift us can be a quick elixir of "feel good" rhetoric but all too often our ideas, norms and 'facts' are outdated. We have an obligation to stay informed and dispel "old thinking" which impairs social progress. Diverse people offer an unparalleled diversity of thought. We revel in the advances of Mexicans, Asians, Africans, Europeans and yes... Americans. In this country, we are all Americans! Original Host Link: America's Diversity Leader -

<http://blog.americasdiversityleader.com/2013/04/the-silent-minority.html>

About the Author

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Enrique 'Rick' Ruiz is President of PositivePsyche.Biz Corp, a management consulting and training firm in the Washington DC area. He earned an MBA in the UK and has led large diverse teams in Canada, Mexico, United Kingdom and across the US. Rick is PgMP and CM certified, has managed a one billion dollar program (100% customer satisfaction) and an operation up to 15,000 people strong, is an inventor (1 patent, 2 pending) with a family of six children and is an author of six books including *Wisher*, *Washer*, *Wishy-Washy* (a new approach to viewing motivation).