

More Stimulus Questions for Dynamic Diversity Dinners Discussions

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Over the early months of Diversity Dinners, please be sure to use the sheet in your member packet entitled "Suggestions--Getting Acquainted and Starting Discussion". Those questions are framed carefully to encourage us to report on how our *unique* upbringing, circumstances and life experiences have shaped us. In later months, the questions below also are meant to be answered from the *personal* perspective: Describe not only your understandings but how you have come to them -- and what has caused them to stick, to evolve, or to change.

1. Human Motivations: What makes people tick? Are people basically good? What are historic and contemporary realities that may be affecting human behavior?
2. Civilization: Define "civilized" and "civilization"? Has the human race, or parts of it, been making progress?
3. Ethics: What principles have been most important in guiding public and your own personal decisions and conduct? How well have these been working -- for society, for you?
4. *Social Rules Exercise* by Sandra Wearne: If you were given the power and authority to create a new set of rules to govern society, what would they be? Would you change these if you knew that the instant your rules went into effect, you would be transformed into a completely different person and you would be subject to your rules, but you had no way to predict who you would become? (This is harder than it sounds so think it over. It is okay to base your rules on assumptions, provided that you specify what they are. SW)
5. The Primary Roles of Government: What have they been, could, and should they be? (Sparked by The Nation 11/7/2005, p 26: e.g. Defend personal /individual or public/community interests? Protect freedoms and rights of individuals, groups, institutions, and/or corporations? Allow or provide a reasonable standard of living -- including what dimensions? Care for the weak or temporally weak? Enable and/or regulate private enterprise? Protect the public from criminal behavior? Corruption? Greed? Overwhelming power?)
6. Religion, Democracy, Capitalism/Socialism: Are these at odds? Which has been the most powerful, where and why? Is national or global agreement on a hierarchy of power and responsibility important? What would be the most benign, humane and constructive roles for democracy, economics and religion relative to each other? How does the dominance of certain economic or religious systems or interests make just government difficult?
7. Reasons for Being: How did we come to be living our lives? Where does any "purpose in life" come from?
8. Life: When does a life begin? What was it like before you were born and what will it be like after you die? What about for a dog, a bug, or tree? Should life end when capabilities and joys cease?
9. Super/Natural: Is there a God? If so, like what and with what powers, that come from where? Why do some people "believe in the supernatural" and others do not? Who should speak for certain sources of wisdom? How may god/s be useful or confusing as myth or metaphor? Where does "faith" come from? What warrants faith?
10. Genetics and Socialization: Is "Nature" or "Nurture" a greater influence? How do they function together? How can and should these be manipulated, using what precepts?
11. Suffering: Why is there so much suffering and pain -- from poor health, deprivation and violence, crime and war? Does pain and suffering serve any useful function? Can it distort thoughts, learning or expectations?
12. Happiness: What is happiness? Can you be happy without being sad? Does everyone feel approximately the same amount of happiness/sadness in one's lifetime? Why, why not? How can happiness be pursued without being blind to sobering realities and responsibilities?
13. Identity: What have you already been, done and accomplished in life? If you were to die tomorrow, how do you think you will be remembered? Do you know and value aspects of yourself that seem to be less recognized and appreciated by others? What would you like to do and to have accomplished before you die, that you haven't done (enough of) yet? How do you want others to collaborate and carry on?