

Diversity Statement • Kristy Menage Bernie, MS, RDH, RYT – September, 2015

My experience in working with diverse populations and cultures has been realized through my association leadership/volunteerism, owning an oral healthcare industry consulting company and facilitating continuing education in North America. In the 30 years since graduating I have had the opportunity to work with a variety of people from all walks of life and cultures.

In my role, need and talent prevail over cultural differences and with this focus I have embraced making changes for the positive with diverse populations through my work in access to care via the American Dental Hygienists' Association and California Dental Hygienists' Association (CDHA). As President of the CDHA, I advocated for Registered Dental Hygienist in Alternative Practice (RDHAP) curricula that resulted in a partnership with the University of the Pacific. This is one of only two programs for the RDHAP in the state today; the RDHAP is meeting the needs of diverse populations which would otherwise not be met. In reference to 'talent' I have been a staunch supporter of those dental hygienists who are willing to step forward to expand access to care and those whose cultural diversity assist in meeting these needs.

As I travel North America, I am acutely aware of cultural differences and take care to tailor presentations that work to meet those differences. Recently as a speaker at the Pacific Dental Conference, in Vancouver, Canada, I was amazed by the audience's appreciation and enthusiasm regarding my efforts to assure the presentation centered on their realities and technologies. For example, many USA speakers spend time over viewing products and technologies that are not available in Canada; this is frustrating for the learner and minimizes learning opportunities. Even within the United States, it is critical to honor and acknowledge our differences while maximizing the opportunities to advance optimal oral health.

While all of us have dealt with racism, cultural, social, physical, socioeconomic or gender bias in one way or another the important fact is that it exists. My opportunity has been to dispel any bias through action.

Through leadership, my business and my personal life I have strived to 'right the wrong' where ever and when ever possible. I look forward to the time when these types of barriers are no longer an issue; however, I acknowledge that this is an ongoing process. I pride myself on my abilities to see these inequities and stand by my position of equality and unity.