

# Celebration of Family Diversity

By Alston R. Drummond

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I define diversity by recognizing a group that shares a core commonality while celebrating the unique differences of its membership. I have been blessed with a family who demonstrates and celebrates diversity in almost every way imaginable. My nuclear family is made up of my mother, my mother's partner, my younger brother, and me. My father and mother are divorced, but Daddy and his side of the family are still very close to my mothers and their family.

My mother and father are both African-American. My other mother is of Scots and German background. Both my mothers also have Native American blood -- Mohegan and Blackfoot. My extended family of grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins also includes citizens of Denmark, Great Britain, Canada, Nigeria, and the Bahamas, as well as children adopted from China, Vietnam, and Romania.

Religious diversity is another hallmark of my family. Most of us are Christian, but we worship as independent Pentecostals, African Methodist Episcopalians, American Baptists, Anglicans, and Presbyterians. Our theological spectrum ranges from evangelical fundamentalist to Christian social activist. We also have several goddess worshipers and other pagans in the family. Six of us, including my mother's grandmother, my mother's partner, and both of her parents are ordained ministers.

While most in my family graduated from high school, several did not have that opportunity. In terms of vocations and careers, my family members hold very diverse positions. We are clergy, short-order cooks, barbers, professors, mill workers, mill owners, officers in the Navy and the Air Force, housekeepers, engineers, therapists, nurses, social workers, automobile executives, high school teachers, motivational speakers, secretaries, and house painters, just to name a few. Given the diversity of educational levels and professions, it is not surprising that my family also represents all rungs of the economic ladder. The homeless, the working poor, the middle class, and the wealthy are found on both sides of my family.

When it comes to our political views, we have career military officers and war-protesting pacifists. We have staunch Republicans, liberal Democrats, Socialists, and independents. Most of us supported and have benefited from the Civil Rights Movement for Black Americans, and many of us support the civil and marriage rights of gays and lesbians. Family members with opposing views still treat each other with love, respect, and welcome.

In my family everyone is deeply loved, and there is room for everyone, whoever they are and whatever they are like. Our family gains visibility through the ways we celebrate our family diversity.

Somehow in small town South Carolina, the buckle of the Bible Belt, my interracial, lesbian-led family has managed to stand proud and fit in. We are active in sports, music, church, community volunteer activities, booster clubs, and neighborhood fellowship. People know us for who we are. They appreciate our goodness, kindness, and integrity. People see the true love, honor, respect and care that my mothers have for each other. They see how well-loved and cared for my brother and I are. It is almost as if people cannot help being happy when they see how happy and blessed my family is.

*Alston graduated from high school in Spartanburg, SC last spring and will be attending Auburn University this fall to study engineering. He was very involved in Youth Voices -- a student leadership group that impacts change in the local community.*