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## Diversity, Culture, and Bicycling, Blog 3

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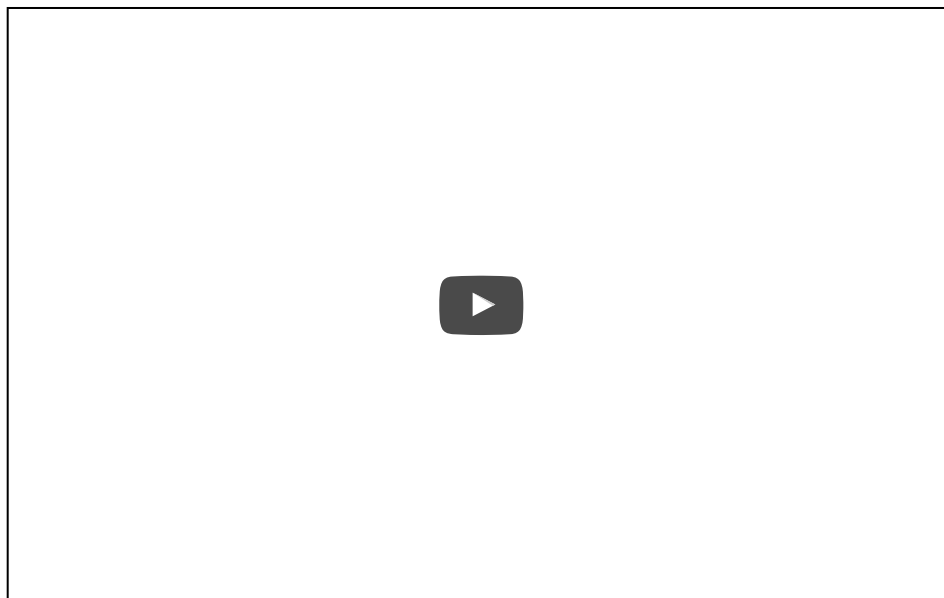
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## Diversity Culture and Bicycling during the UCI

# A HISTORY OF CYCLING CULTURE & DIVERSITY

OCTOBER 7, 2015 | LEAVE A COMMENT



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## CYCLING CULTURE AND DIVERSITY

SEPTEMBER 22, 2015 | LEAVE A COMMENT

After viewing the various sources pertaining to culture, diversity, and biking in the past 150 years, I feel that there is most definitely a biking culture. From the plethora of races, clubs, meetings, and events hosted in various parts of the world, there is a culture that is developed. If we use the same definition used previously in the blog “culture is the shared beliefs, values, and norms of a group of people”, I feel that those individuals who participate in these events, therefore, constitute a cycling culture.



Around the world, there are countless events that bring the entire world together. For example, the Tour de France, without a doubt the most famous of events in the world of competitive cycling. But there is still much racism that holds back the feeling of diversity in this particular cycling culture. From Ji Cheng, the first Chinese rider to compete in the tour being called “chinaman” by NBC’s Phil Liggett, to Kevin Reza being the only black rider in last year’s Tour de France allegedly being called a “dirty negro” by Switzerland’s Michael Albasini. It is hard to believe that there is a cultural diversity after instances such as these occur, but there is no doubt that all people from around the world are able to be brought together to revel in the activities, whether participating or not.



**Bob Cesca**  
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[@bikesnobnyc](#) You called it. During the Paris circuit, Phil referred to Ji Cheng as a "Chinaman." I'm not making that up.

What about cultural diversity in cycling closer to home? Does this culture reflect the diversity of the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? This is a question that is difficult to answer for a number of reasons. The competitive cycling world, as I have previously mentioned, has always been predominantly white. But luckily, strides have been made in the last century that have allowed diversity to come into fruition in the cycling world. While it is easy to be disheartened by the lack of cultural diversity, we, as global citizens, can help aid in the progression. How do you think we can help this progression? Feel free to comment below in the comments section.



Around the states, there have been movement made to promote cultural diversity in the cycling world and so far, they have proved successful! I urge you to read “The New Majority: Pedaling Towards Equity”, which I will provide by link below. This report challenges this racial stereotype about the cultural diversity in the cycling world.

### [The New Majority: Pedaling Towards Equity](#)

In this pdf, the goal of associations such as Multicultural Communities for Mobility, the Girls Bike Club, the Atlanta Bicycle Coalition and Red, Bike and Green, is to promote and ensure better access to bicycling infrastructure in all types of communities. This goal for better diversity in the cycling world is working and it is important to support and defend associations such as these in the cycling culture.



In Richmond, we have our very own cycling culture. Aside from the city hosting the UCI Bike Race Championships, there are countless “bike gangs” that host events around the city. These aren’t the classic biking gangs like the Hells Angels who are seen as famous outlaws. Our Richmond constituents promote and host events that bring the community together such as bike races, cycle building workshops, and the famous tall-bike jousting. This cycling culture is clearly about bringing people together, regardless of background, to revel in their shared interest: cycling.



(Photo by Zach Gibson)

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## DIVERSITY IN THE WHEELMAN

SEPTEMBER 20, 2015 | [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

The Wheelman was a cycling publication that was very popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It inspired countless Americans to begin cycling and definitely spurred the movement. The magazine ran up until 1923 as a cycling and overall sport magazine. While cycling is a sport that, today, can be enjoyed by most everyone, things were quite different at the time The Wheelman was in circulation.

### THE WHEELMAN

AN ILLUSTRATED MAGAZINE

OF

### CYCLING LITERATURE AND NEWS

Even just glancing at the first few chapter of The Wheelman, one can see the direct audience as predominantly 1) upper class 2) white 3) men. These three categories set a level of privilege for these individuals making it extremely difficult for members of different class systems to participate without discrimination. Even on the second page, the claim that “The Wheelman will be a high-class American organ of bicycle and tricycle opinion and sentiment” and “wheelman, as a rule, are gentlemen, and gentlemen in the truest sense of the term...” casts the attitude of grandeur and pomp over anyone who is not an upper class white male.



Women and African Americans were of the most discriminated of groups in the cycling world as the upper class white constituency deemed them “not worthy” of the competitive cycling world. It is nearly impossible to find examples of diversity in *The Wheelman*, except for those small excerpts of entertainment such as the Arab singer (18) and the “negro minstrels” (118). What *The Wheelman* fails to mention is the inspiring racers such as Marshall Taylor, the first World Champion African American cyclist and the many women cyclists at the conclusion of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



**MAJ TAYLOR.**

Marshall Taylor was one of the greatest cyclists in the world around the 19<sup>th</sup> century, competing against and beating almost everyone in his path, eventually winning the title of World Champion. Yet, at almost every race, Taylor faced extreme racism and threats, forcing him to eventually quit cycling due to the extreme discrimination (Pvcycling, 2013). Taylor was one of the only African-American cyclists and was even banned from competing against white racers, as was the rule made by The League of American Wheelman, which excluded African-American competitors from membership. Taylor inspired African-Americans to join the cycling world, and the first African American club was named after him in 1979 (Wikipedia).

Another aspect of the diversity of cycling in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that The Wheelman fails to mention is the role of women in the cycling world. Since competitive cycling inspired so many of the middle class to begin cycling for pleasure and exercise, women were interested in pursuing competitive racing as well. This is something The Wheelman obviously fails to recognize accordingly, but that doesn't mean that women did not have a hard time assimilating into racing culture.





In *Cycling and Society*, Paul Rosen goes into detail on what is known as the “bicycle boom”, a period when conventional practices, beliefs and values were challenged, especially by women. This relates directly to a previous blog post of mine on Culture, thus proving there was such thing as a Women’s Cycling Culture at the turn of the century. As Rosen explains, “it is difficult to determine the extent to which women’s racing was taken seriously as a sport or merely viewed as entertainment... routinely staged between acts of the theater. or on the programmes of freak shows” (Rosen, 51).

In summary, even though *The Wheelman* did not effectively discuss the diversity of the cycling world, does not mean it did not exist. Although, its existence was not an easy one, facing much discrimination and racism.

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## WHAT IS DIVERSITY?

SEPTEMBER 19, 2015 | LEAVE A COMMENT

What is Diversity? It seems almost silly to ask that question. But similar to culture, there are infinite definitions. When most people think of diversity, they likely think of the entire world. Maybe that typical picture of children from different countries holding hands around the world comes to mind. Children dressed in their country's clothing, the various shades of skin color, holding an object that relates to the majority of people in that place.

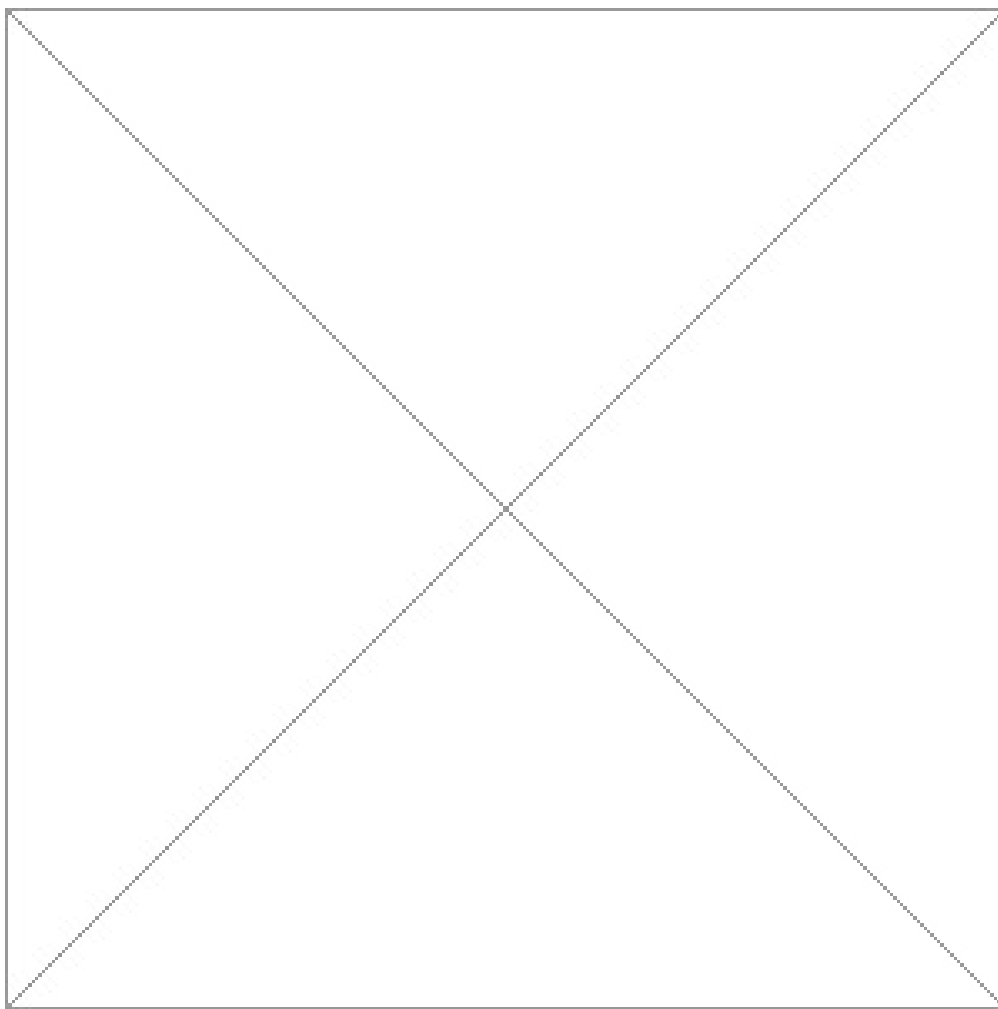


But can diversity really be defined by where people are from? What about gender, wealth, language? Do these factors come into play? Dr. Marylin Sanders Mobley discusses these factors as her role of Vice President for Inclusion, Diversity and Equal Opportunity at Case Western Reserve University. She brings up a very interesting term called the Paradox of Diversity, explaining the differentiating beliefs that people have regarding diversity in America today. To some, the level of diversity we have in the United States is an accomplishment and in summary, we have done all we can in its progression. The opposing side claims that while there have been great strides in its movement, this is only the beginning and that we have a long way to go in terms of true diversity.

### The Paradox of Diversity: Dr. Marylin Sanders ...



The United States has always been known as a place of opportunity and freedom, drawing people to move here for a variety of reasons. As immigration boomed in the 1890's, the United States welcomed individuals from all over the world with the Statue of Liberty calling out "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breath free..." It is the desire for the "American Dream"; the idea of starting out at the bottom and through hard work and perseverance, the house with white picket fence will be yours. Since the United States can be seen as the "Melting Pot" effect, diversity is represented by the multitude of nationalities, ethnicities and races dating back from the earliest days of American history.



While I believe that we have made bounds in terms of diversity in the United States, we have much more progress to achieve. Even though nearly every American can trace their ancestral roots to countries far away, there is still much negativity and animosity towards newly arriving migrants and even long-standing Americans based on their diversity, in this case, likely their appearance. This is a problem because those who seem to oppose this diversity forget that their ancestors came to the U.S. only within the last 200 years. This diversity is what defines the United States, and every other country as well. Michael Gavin, in the video below, relates the story of the death of individual named “David” who was one of the last native speakers of a language in Vanuatu. He emphasizes the importance of cultural diversity and how we need to hold onto our diversity in every possible way.

## Why cultural diversity matters | Michael Gavin...



VCU prides itself in the motto “VCU: Embrace Diversity” and as a student here, I believe that diversity is very well represented on campus. Every class is represented by a large number of foreign exchange students, first and second-generation immigrants, and students of all various social, economic, religious, sexual, etc, backgrounds. I love this diversity because it has allowed me to learn about a wide variety of people from all different groups.

In terms of the UCI Bike Race Championships, I believe diversity will be very well represented. With 1,000 men and women coming from about 75 countries all over the world, an immense wealth of culture, race, and religion will be present in Richmond. It will be an opportunity for even more diversity in Richmond, allowing everyone, local or visiting, to learn about each other’s way of life.

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# WHAT IS CULTURE?

SEPTEMBER 18, 2015 | LEAVE A COMMENT

Culture is an integral part of humanity day in and day out. We use the word “culture” to describe the various types of people who exist in the world and the apparent differences between countries, religions, ethnicities, etc. The problem with the term “culture” is that there are almost infinite definitions.



Since my studies at VCU are based on International Studies, the term “culture” has come up as a subject of analysis in nearly every class. But how can we take so many definitions to identify what culture really is. In the past four years, I’ve begun looking at the idea as a large tree. Imagine a country or nation state as the base of the tree. The various groups of individuals based on race, ethnicity, religion, etc, are the

branches. Off of each of these branches are smaller limbs that constitute social status, economic situations, political involvement, etc. Then the people themselves are the leaves.



With so many different variables, what is it that connects these people? I've taken to use a term for "culture" as explained to me in an old anthropology class. Culture is (I'm paraphrasing here) a shared set of beliefs, values, and norms shared within a group of people. These people are connected through family, social lives, work, religion, you name it! The glue that really holds these people together is those shared beliefs, values and norms.



Since we are talking about the UCI Road World Championships, its important to address the question of whether there is such thing as a “sports culture”. In the United States and countless other countries around the world, sports are a national phenomenon. The role of football, basketball, soccer, tennis, cycling, and swimming, for example, are a leading factor in national pride, economics, and world relations.

### U.S sports culture



As expressed in the above documentary, the role of sports in life around the world is immense. Therefore, I strongly believe that there is such thing as a sports culture. Sports from a young age inspire teambuilding, camaraderie and even the mixing of individuals from various cultures. Since the ancient



times, gladiator fighting was a phenomenon shared between people, bringing together the royalty and the bourgeoisie based on their shared beliefs, values, and norms.



The three members of the panel in the video discuss the cultural significance of sports from a young age. Sports encourage community building, competitiveness, and character building— all of these important aspects of culture. But likely the most important aspect of sports culture has to do with the understanding of morals in team decision-making at a young age. These decisions involve the dimensions of Individualism vs. Collectivism, as discussed in the following TedTalk with Saba Safdar.

Everything you always wanted to know about ...



Safdar relates the work of Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social psychologist famous for developing the ideas of cultural dimensions. The dimension of Individualism vs. Collectivism can also be seen as “I” vs. “We”. Since these dimensions deal with culture, we are talking about how members of a culture deal with the

beliefs, values, and norms of others. The implementation of the individualism dimension is obviously “I” based. With the introduction of sports, the growth of moral value is heightened by the collaboration in teamwork, turning the “I” of Individualism, into the “We” of Collectivism.

Sports are most definitely an aspect of culture as they are a phenomenon that affects groups of people in connection with their shared beliefs, norms and values.

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Everything you always wanted to know about ...



## U.S sports culture



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# WELCOME!

SEPTEMBER 18, 2015 | [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

Hi there!

My name is Mike F. and I'm a senior studying International Social Justice with a minor in Religious Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, Virginia.

Richmond is extremely lucky to be hosting the UCI Road World Championships this year and there is much going on around the city.

On this blog, I'll be talking about the UCI Road World Championships in terms of Diversity and Culture. I hope that you all will find the submissions interesting and I also hope that you are able to watch some of the races!

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# HELLO WORLD!

SEPTEMBER 16, 2015 | [1 COMMENT](#)