

Saying Hello Makes All The Difference

Written by: Lynette Hanover

It was a few minutes past 7 AM as I walked across the snow covered street, hurriedly past one bus shelter, through a walk way, and across a 4 lane road to the LaSalle bus stop. As I stood there in my black down coat, wool hat, double layer pink scarf, and insulated mittens I peered at the others who waited shivering with me. Generally speaking I am a "Hello" type of person who can talk with anyone about nearly any topic, yet on this cold winter day I simply wanted to be quiet. The thought of talking as the cold wind gusts blew around our bodies made me re-affirm that the very best choice was to stay quiet. After about a 5 minute wait the long bus pulled up and quietly one by one my fellow Chicagoans boarded as I waited for my turn in the middle of the swarm. After a few steps up I tapped my pass against the electronic reader and squeezed past a few passengers as I managed to find an open seat near the rear.

As I sat I lifted my black leather brief case to my lap and closed my eyes, I dreamed of Hawaiian beaches with sand between my toes, a perfect warmth of sun on my body, and a shimmering blue ocean view. As the bus made its way south toward the tall immense density of downtown the aisle was getting more and more crowded with commuters. I could feel the coats of strangers against my body as they pushed past, and slowly opened my eyes as I left the tranquility of my warm fantasy and began to take notice of the people around me.

Many say mid-westerns are friendly. Well, if friendly means a silent polite then this would pass that definition. I gazed around in a slow somewhat methodical manner and took my time to observe the passengers before me. The man who looks like Prince Harry with a brown coat, gold wedding band, and North Face back pack; the 20-something recent college grad with a Kate Spade red bag, too bright pink lipstick, and white wool coat with knee-high heeled boots; the plain dark haired girl with fashionable purple framed glasses who jerked her body as she played games on her cell....so many people were together to share this occasion on a dreary winter day.

The near silence as we moved south was only interrupted with an occasional "excuse me" as someone made their way through the packed in body to body chasm of people for the exit. I sat there thinking of this silence as it reminded me of a farm out in the middle of the quiet country side where the next neighbor was miles away. Quiet...where the rooster wakes you with the morning dawn and the sounds of live stock could be heard faintly in the background. Only, here we were in the metropolis. Tooting horns, truck sounds, footsteps, coughs, sneezes, and "excuse mes."

How have we become this way? I sat there pondering the culture of our city happily drenched in appreciation for the diversity in skin colors, lifestyles, viewpoints, ethnicities, beliefs, and ideas that are represented by the millions of people who call Chicago home. Yet, there is more that can be done to bring us together in a much more connected way beyond simply a shared polite bus ride.

Rather than the silo existence that we share with "strangers" imagine what our city could be like if we embraced our "neighbors" with a "hello," saying "good morning," or simply sharing a smile. Have we all just created our personalities to blend in with an existing culture so that we can assimilate? True creation comes not necessarily from what already

exists, it starts with vision. From vision it has the opportunity to morph into a beautiful, connected, fulfilling reality, one that no person before could conceive of as a cultural reality.

Imagine a world with everyone being friends, each person being a family member, connecting with each other, sharing, laughing, being embraced by the feeling of everyone being valued. Positive momentum can start with a simple "Hello" and today is a perfect day to begin.

Love and Happiness...
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I wish you the very best always.