



## Three Challenges When Encouraging Inclusion

NRPA Quick Reads

by Shalini Mirpuri, February 23, 2022

**Here are three challenges we often hear when encouraging people to adopt more inclusive perspectives in the field—and our perspective on each:**

*“You’re bringing politics into parks.”* – Being aware of inclusive principles and actively seeking more inclusive language is not about “politics” or being “politically correct”. It is about treating people with dignity and not making assumptions about a community. Park and recreation professionals play a vital role in meeting the evolving needs of their communities by fostering cultures that prioritize everyone’s wellbeing.

*“Talking about race is inherently racist.”* – When we say we can’t see race or racial differences, the intention may be to communicate that we don’t treat someone differently based on their race. Yet that means we’re also choosing to ignore racial disparities and histories of violence against certain groups of people and how a person’s race/ethnicity is a defining characteristic of who they are. We believe that to ignore how race has played a role in parks and recreation is to ignore the impacts of history. We must address the past to create a better future, and there is virtue and value in recognizing our differences so that we can commit to building relationships despite them.

*“Parks and Rec isn’t a place for these discussions.”* – On the contrary, difference meets on the playground: we operate at the intersection of differences in race, gender identity, religion, socioeconomic status, geography, age, and ability. Quality parks and recreation are essential to individual and community health, well-being, and resilience. This is a critical time for parks and recreation to be having these discussions.