



# Camp Diversity: A Call to Action

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According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 1900, only one in eight Americans was of a race other than white. Today that ratio is one in four, and by 2050, an estimated one in three Americans will be African American, Hispanic, Native American, or Asian / Pacific Islander.

We all understand and have heard and read that shifting demographics in the United States affect communities and should compel camp professionals to ask the questions: Does our camp reflect the faces of a diverse community? Who are the children and staff that make up our camp communities? How can we ensure that we deliver the highest quality, most culturally sensitive camp programs?

Camps are finding themselves in the middle of a drastic demographic shift. Recruiting campers from schools and communities that used to be primarily Caucasian may now be 25 percent African American and 15 percent Hispanic. A camp accustomed to operating within a European cultural context can struggle to engage new campers. The potential campers' families view the camp as an organization that is run by and serves Caucasian children only. In order for the camp to engage new families, it has to learn about the social organization and leadership of diverse families and how to communicate with them in culturally appropriate ways, or its survival is compromised.

Diversity is a reality. Because social and economic change is here, camps must understand the need for cultural competence. If camps don't improve, it will be a challenge for them to fulfill the social contract made with families — that the skills a child learns at camp will contribute to his or her success in the classroom and make him or her a successful, contributing adult in the future. A diverse camp community will ensure that the promise we make to families is fulfilled.

Building a camp's cultural competence:

- Increases respect and mutual understanding among those involved.
- Increases creativity in problem solving through new perspectives, ideas, and strategies.
- Decreases unwanted surprises that might slow progress.

- Increases participation and involvement of other cultural groups.
- Increases trust and cooperation.
- Helps overcome fear of mistakes, competition, or conflict.
- Helps defy myths.
- Promotes inclusion and equality.

The need for a camp's quality has been accepted as a mantra, but the imperative for diversity is often marginalized rather than accepted as central to the quality equation in ACA camps.

The data on our camp's diversity is a call to action. It is urgent to our relevance to infuse the issues of camper-staff diversity and cultural competence into our conversations, at both the local and national levels, with the same vigor and frequency as we talk about standards.

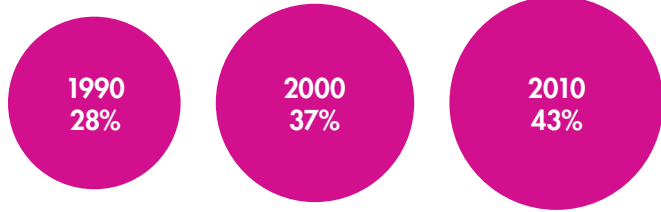
*If not us, then who? If not now, then when?*  
— John Lewis

*Photo courtesy of Camp Aranzazu, Rockport, Texas.*

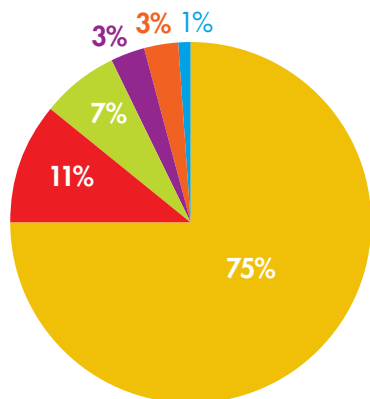
### Reference

University of Kansas. (2012). Building culturally competent organizations. *The community tool box*. Retrieved from [http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub\\_section\\_main\\_1176.aspx](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub_section_main_1176.aspx)

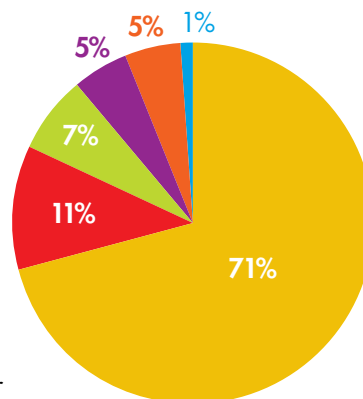
### Minority Children in United States



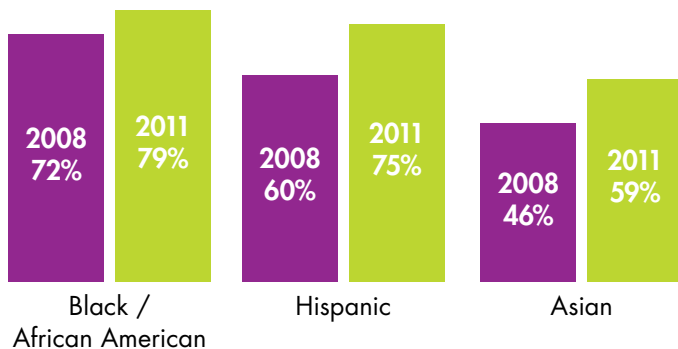
**% Children in Resident Camp by Race/Ethnicity, 2010**



**% Children in Day Camp by Race/Ethnicity, 2010**



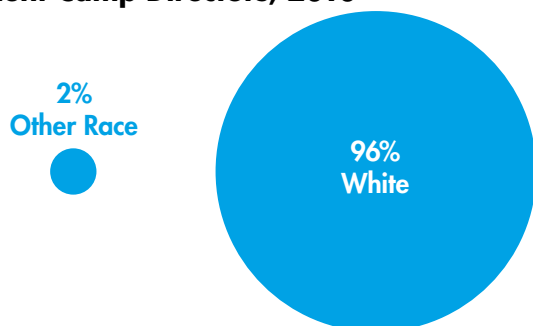
**ACA Camps with Minority Employees**



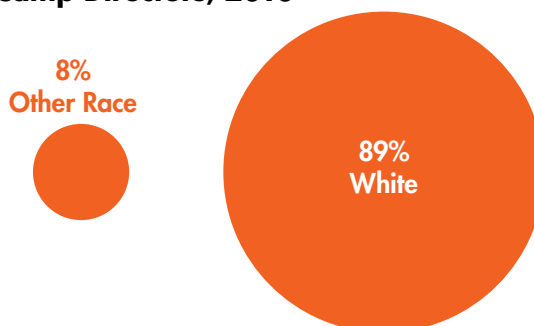
**Camps with More Than 50% Minority Counselors**



**Resident Camp Directors, 2010**



**Day Camp Directors, 2010**



**Distribution of Children in Race and Hispanic Categories, 2010**

CATEGORIES	NUMBER	% OF POPULATION	% CHANGE '00-'10
Under 18 (total)	74,181,467	100%	3%
Non-Hispanic White	39,716,652	54%	-10%
Non-Hispanic Black	10,362,183	14%	-2%
Non-Hispanic Asian	3,176,129	4%	31%
Other	3,795,702	5%	80%
Hispanic	17,130,891	23%	39%

2010 data derived from U. S. Census Bureau, News Release, "U.S. Census Bureau Delivers Final State Census. Population Totals for Legislative Redistricting," CB 11-CN.123, March 24, 2011.