

TIP OF THE ICEBERG



EMBRACING DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT

By Roxanne Petteway

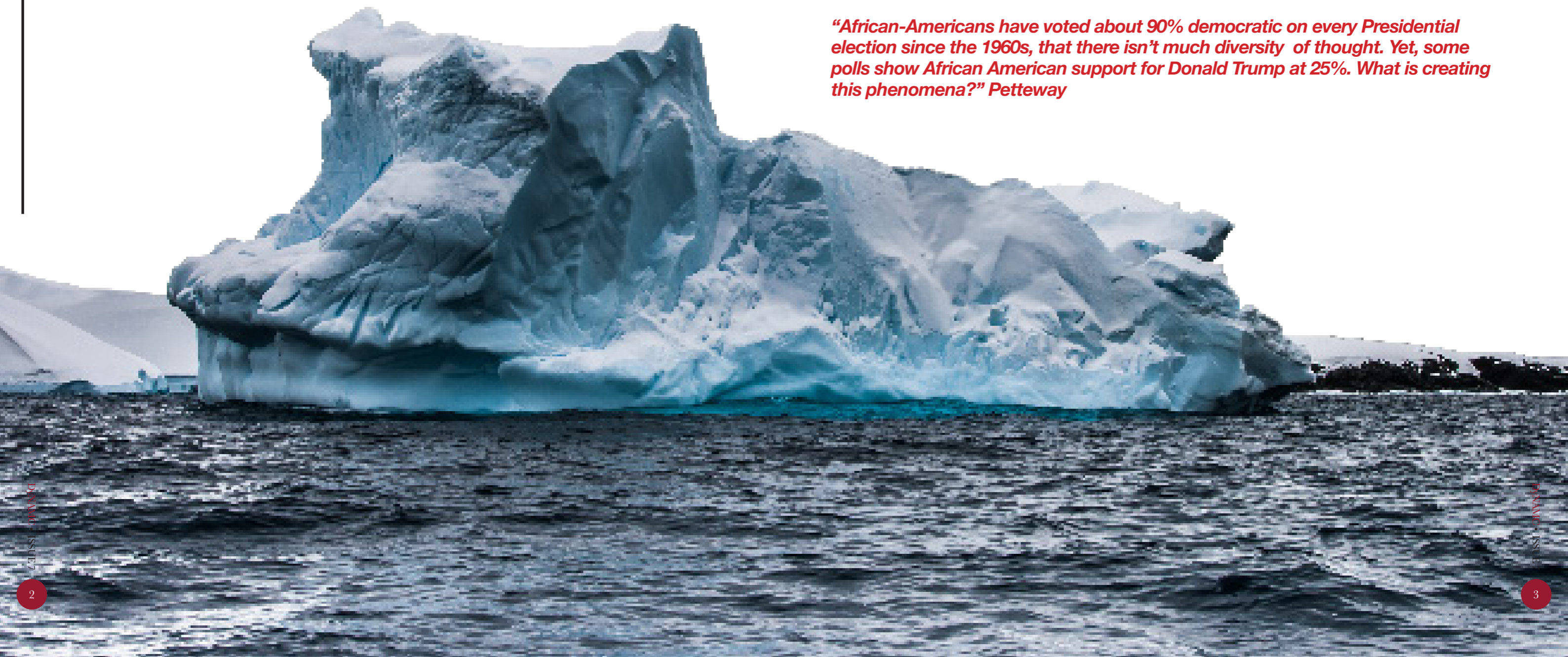
Since the early 1990s, studies and articles have cited the positive implications of cultural diversity for organizational competitiveness. In addition to the organizational benefits of diversity, other benefits widely discussed over the last three decades include the social, moral and legal benefits derived from valuing diversity. However, another type of diversity is organically being birthed in the midst of global terrorism, terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, immigration and border security, and the current U.S. Presidential election cycle. It is diversity of thought.

Diversity of Thought has been defined as the difference in perspective and approach which politically has not been the norm for diverse groups in America. For instance, since the 1960s, African Americans have voted for Democrats and supported the Democratic Party Platform as a monolithic group. For the most part, domestic policies and programs promoted by the Democratic Party provided a unified discussion and stance on issues ranging from affirmative action,

financial assistance to the poor, to the War on Terror. One might say that since African-Americans have voted about 90% democratic on every Presidential election since the 1960s, that there isn't much diversity of thought. Yet, some polls show African American support for Donald Trump at 25%. What is creating this phenomena?

African Americans aren't the only traditional Democrats that are expressing a need to have a different perspective and approach on the pressing issues of the day. High profile Democrats have expressed their concern and discomfort about the safety of Americans causing them to receive criticism from pro-immigrant groups. Earlier this month, Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez, a Democrat, was criticized for not upholding the values of diversity and inclusion by a pro-immigrant policy organization as a result of the Congresswoman's statement that "between 5 and 20%, of people ... [whose religion is] Islam ... have a desire for a caliphate..." A caliphate is a form of Islamic government led by a person considered a political and religious successor to the Islamic prophet, Muhammad.

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These are unusual and to some uncomfortable statements but are healthy signs of diversity of thought.

Respect, acceptance, freedom ... these are concepts that are critical to a free society. Respect for a different point of view, acceptance of a different approach and the freedom to express oneself without being shamed into conforming to “group think” will only provide an environment for discourse and the creation of innovative, common sense ideas that may help all Americans.

While Donald Trump may not seem to be the ideal Presidential candidate to some Republicans and Democrats alike, his honesty is refreshing to many Americans. His celebrity persona and lack of fear will not allow the typical pro-monolithic types to shame him into changing his thoughts. And, it has spawned courage in others who think like



he does, but may not have ever admitted it out loud, to support him. It has given a freedom to the masses to have a conversation about very sensitive and complex issues. His positions and potential solutions may not be the best solutions, but in a politically correct environment, solutions aren't born. It is only in a free and open environment that solutions are developed.

Immigration Reform has been an unsolved issued for the last forty years and with the growing threat of terrorism it has become

an issue that must be solved or we may find ourselves infiltrated with ISIS terrorists. It has become an economic issue as well. Unemployment for African American youth is at 50% and many Americans have not recovered from the recession. Hence, Trump's Immigration Reform preamble which states that “A nation that does not serve its own citizens is not a nation and any immigration plan must improve jobs, wages and security for all Americans”, resonates with

Democrats and Republicans alike and gives them the freedom to express a contrary view.

Political correctness (PC) has become a tool to silence free thought and free expression.

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Trump's rise in the polls are Americans way of saying they are sick and tired of PC and very hungry for honesty and common sense. As in the case of Rep. Sanchez's comments about a caliphate, the Congresswoman sits on the House Committee on Homeland Security and the House Armed Services Committee. She has a Constitutional obligation to tell us the truth and it would be unethical for her to withhold the truth from the American people for the sake of political correctness. If a statement is true but does not line up with the party line or the PC position, shouldn't the truth trump the party line and shouldn't diversity of thought be appreciated. Moreover, if the statement is never made, the public will not be given the opportunity to ask the right questions. Instead of the discussion just being about Islamophobia, the question should also be “what is a caliphate?” “How do we prevent the 5% or even 1% who believe in a caliphate, from harming Americans and instituting a caliphate?” “How do we educate our citizens and incoming immigrants about the form of government that we have in America that promotes freedom in lieu of a religious dictatorship?”

Some years ago, I had the privilege of meeting an African American trailblazer. He founded an inner city private school. When I toured the school I was amazed to see African American students doing pre-algebra in the first grade and 8th graders mastering calculus



and trigonometry problems long-hand, without calculators. The founder supported school choice because he understood that more African American students would enroll in the school if they had a voucher and yet he was silenced by fear of being ostracized by a local politician and others in the community for publicly supporting school choice. How many African American students' lives might

have been dramatically changed if his diverse perspective on public policy and his diverse approach to teaching would have been expressed, implemented and possibly duplicated?

Respect for each other's diverse perspectives and approaches will create unity in lieu of division which is sorely needed at this time. We live in very complex and

challenging times. It is our diversity of experience, backgrounds, education, culture and thought that will enable us to develop thoughtful, effective solutions to America's and the world's daunting problems. It is in our best interest to shake it up a little and embrace diversity of thought.

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