

Middle Northern Southern European Danish Italian American

By Hap Hansen

Sometimes it is difficult to have open discussions with some folks one may have just met. We have become sensitive to the use of names and labels that we have traditionally used to describe people and their positions. In my conversations with strangers, I try to remain constantly aware to avoid names and terms that may offend some people. As an example, we can't talk about 'the boys in the back room' or 'the girls in the front office' anymore. To some, the connotation of those phrases is that boys can't do front office work and girls can't do back room work! Besides, they shouldn't be called boys and girls either. The real difference though, is that whoever is in the back room usually makes more money than whoever is working at the crowded desks in the front office. Therein lies the real problem, as shown in recent political marches and gatherings around the world. That, however, is the subject of another story!

It is not difficult to understand that some of those we used to refer to as 'blacks' would rather be called African Americans. That term would seem to bring a certain dignity and pride in one's ancestry. However, to be fair, should those Americans whose forefathers (and foremothers too!) emigrated from Europe be called European Americans? Probably. But if we did, I'm certain that some folks of Danish ancestry (like me) would want to be called a Northern European Danish American. Or someone of Italian descent a Southern European Italian American. The question is, should the child of a Danish father and an Italian mother be called a Middle Northern Southern European Danish Italian American? It gets to be a little ridiculous.

Names and labels could become moot as our great melting pot of humanity continues to simmer. Even to boil over on occasion. Generations from now, as all races and people may have melded into one entity, Americans, we should have no further use for names and labels to identify individuals. Why can't we stop using names and labels now? The word, American, has a great ring to it. After all, that's what we are, Americans! What value does it have when we try to specify from what region or country an American's ancestors came? After all, every American has ancestors that came from a variety of countries, a variety of races. They can't be labeled and probably don't want to be. Let's use some common sense and call ourselves what we really are. Americans. Period.