

My view: This lemonade will be bitter even with sugar added

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No one would dispute that we are in an era of great consequence for our state. Since the Great Recession unfolded, Arizonans have experienced the highest loss of jobs in America (proportionate to our population); some of the most dramatic declines in home values; the specter of being homeless because of joblessness; draconian cuts in public services; unavailable credit, even for the most creditworthy; and still only feeble signs that an economic recovery may be on the horizon.

Compounding these major stresses are the controversy over illegal immigration in general, and the enactment of Senate Bill 1070. We now are confronted with an entirely different set of dynamics from those that prevailed when Gov. Evan Mecham rescinded the state's observance of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday in 1987, and voters here later failed to support the 1990 ballot proposition to make this holiday legal.

Arizona recovered quickly from the stigma of intolerance when the [National Football League](#) awarded us Super Bowl XXX, which was played at [Arizona State University's](#) Sun Devil Stadium in 1996. What a grand prize for doing the right thing and admitting we were wrong.

We could not then, nor will we ever be able to now, fully assess the economic impact of losses stemming from private capital investment and job creation that might have considered Arizona but crossed us off the list, or the loss of conventions and meetings that silently eliminated Arizona from consideration. Nor will we know how much more enriched our state would have been from people of different ethnic, cultural and racial backgrounds who might have moved here but did not because of what was perceived as our hostility to people of color.

How do we move forward and make the best possible lemonade from the tart lemons that are coming out of Arizona's Capitol?

Yes, the dynamics are very different today from 20 years ago, because the world is flat. In today's globalized world, one of the most important values for knowledge workers of Generations X and Y (and for the companies that employ them) is diversity — diversity of thought, backgrounds, ethnicity and race. What are we saying to companies that compete on a global basis when we are perceived to be hostile to people of color who make their way here, even legally? And what are we saying to the young people who will comprise our work force of the future?

Moving forward, the single most important thing politicians, activists, community and business leaders and all Arizonans can do is to be civil to one another, and to strangers — in public forums and in private encounters. By exemplifying only the best of their humanity and decency — toward everyone, including those who are boycotting and vilifying our state and those who might be the target of our new law — we can demonstrate that Arizonans are a compassionate, caring and considerate people. Only then can we credibly exhibit to all the world that Arizona and its people embrace and warmly welcome diversity.

Ioanna Morfessis, founding president and CEO of the [Greater Phoenix Economic Council](#), now is president and chief strategist of IO.Inc. She can be reached at ioanna@ioworldwide.com.