

The *Reductio ad Absurdum* of Diversity

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“Diversity and inclusion” is a feature on almost any educational institution’s website. The University of Arizona College of Medicine in Tucson, for example, has a separate home page devoted to this: diversity.medicine.arizona.edu. Articles about students in an incoming class will be sure to mention the percentage of women or persons of “diverse” ethnicity.

In 2015–2016, American colleges and universities have hired “chief diversity officers.” In March 2016, the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education held its 10th annual conference in San Francisco. Attendance set a new record: 370.¹

In a Dec 19, 2019, *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, Abigail Thompson, chairman of the Department of Mathematics at the University of California Davis, writes that candidates for faculty positions must profess their commitments to “Diversity, Equality and Inclusion.” The statements they must sign are the equivalent of a new Loyalty Oath, she opines. The University of California system now has a scoring system, called a “rubric,” that assigns points for a candidate’s commitment to diversity. “To score well, candidates must subscribe to a particular political ideology, one based on treating people not as unique individuals but as representatives of their gender and ethnic identities.”²

The chancellor of U.C. Davis and the vice-chancellor for diversity, equity and inclusion responded,³ revealing what they believe is the mission of a university and what their real agenda is regarding diversity. No doubt, such thinking is shared throughout the California system and across academia. In my opinion, their letter displays the mindless parroting of clichés, banalities, and platitudes about diversity and inclusion that pervade not only academia but also media and industry.

Their letter states that “contributions to diversity are as important...as research and teaching.” They object to the term “Loyalty Oath” as “inaccurate, at once illogical and rhetorically inflammatory, and reminiscent of historical attempts to blunt substantive actions aimed at desegregation and broadening participation.” A person’s natural ability to respect and understand colleagues and students from different backgrounds is not enough: “But engaging colleagues and having the ability to recognize and correct inequities is a skill. Actively using inclusionary practices to engage students from different backgrounds is part of the skill set we expect from faculty.”

I find the corruption of diversity manifested here to be particularly disgusting, because I had been at the leading edges of the equal opportunity and affirmative action movements long before Harvard Assistant Professor R. Roosevelt Thomas, Jr., began the diversity movement in 1990 with his landmark article in the *Harvard Business Review*.⁴ Since then, I have watched his basically good idea degenerate into

ignorance, groupthink, phoniness, litmus tests, and racial divisiveness and discrimination—all administered by highly paid apparatchiks and their cadres, who, like all bureaucrats, have to keep inventing problems instead of solving problems, in order to grow their power and pay.

The chancellors’ letter reveals the priorities of not only U.C. Davis but also of most universities. The writers believe that “contributions to diversity” (whatever that means) are just as important as research and teaching. In other words, ideology is just as important as the traditional missions of universities. Thank goodness that farmers are not required to pursue nebulous social goals in addition to farming. When Stalin demanded ideological purity of kulak farmers and imposed social goals on them, mass starvation was the result.

The letter writers think that prospective faculty should have the ability to “recognize and correct inequities.” Translation: They should recognize and correct societal unfairness and injustice. Who knew that college professors have the miraculous ability to heal the sick, help the poor, and turn water into wine?

U.C. Davis has a strange notion of correcting inequities. A state school supported by state taxes, including taxes paid by poor families with no family members in college, it accepts 60 percent of foreign students who apply at the school but only 36 percent of California residents. Money explains most of this disparity. Foreign students are charged higher tuition than in-state residents.

At last count, 2,000 of the foreign students are from communist China. No doubt, many of them can afford the high costs at U.C. Davis, because they are the offspring of Chinese mercantilists who are loyal party members and benefit from rigged state enterprises. One wonders whether U.C. Davis professors are expected to recognize and correct the inequities of communism, or whether they are even allowed to mention the horrors of Maoism in front of these high-paying students.

At the same time, under the guise of fairness and social justice, there is a growing movement across academia to increase the college enrollment of people deemed disadvantaged by race, by doing away with the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores in college admissions, doing away with math tests and even grades in college courses, and pressuring faculty to give a pass to students who are unprepared for college. Is this what is meant by recognizing and correcting inequities?

Novelist Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., was prophetic in 1961, when he wrote “Harrison Bergeron,” the fictional history about constitutional amendments being passed to outlaw Americans from being above average and to establish an office of Handicapper General to enforce the law. This officeholder was one Diana Moon Glampers, whose mission

it was to ensure that everyone wore their assigned handicaps, such as heavy weights, or glasses that made the wearer half blind. The magnificent Harrison Bergeron kept outgrowing his handicaps, thus becoming a societal problem whom government had to eliminate.

In a similar vein, quantifiable measures of academic preparedness and performance are seen as unfair and unjust by today's handicappers-general, for two reasons:

First, as the thinking goes, quantifiable standards unfairly punish students who grew up in broken families, lived in poor communities, attended inferior public schools, and are of a race that has suffered since the birth of the nation at the hands of privileged whites.

Whether or not this thinking has merit, it's of course rather late to wait for college to correct such disadvantages. After all, public K-12 schools and scores of state and federal agencies supposedly exist for the purpose of helping the disadvantaged overcome their disadvantages. If these institutions, along with families and local communities, have failed children for the first 17 years of their lives, it is wishful thinking to believe that a vice-chancellor of diversity, equity and inclusion can succeed where they have failed.

Second, mathematics is seen as a white male system, or construct, designed to maintain white male privilege. Left unanswered is what should replace math as the language of engineering, physics, and other disciplines. Also left unanswered is why certain Asian ethnic groups excel in math.

The diversity and social justice movements have been corrupted in many ways,⁵ but here I will focus on diversity.

What Does "Diversity" Mean?

As used by the industry, "diversity" means the opposite of diversity. It means reducing the thousands of unique ethnicities into several racial categories established by the government a half-century ago, such as white, black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific-Islander, and Native American.

These categories were established in spite of a lack of agreement on what constitutes a race, other than skin color and a few other physical characteristics; but even then, the distinctions are not clear-cut, as many people in a given official government category are multiracial and don't have similar physical characteristics, especially in the Hispanic category.

Of course, there are not inherent, or genetic, differences in intelligence, drive, determination, or morals between the races, although some racists of all races think otherwise. But there are marked differences in values, beliefs, customs, and social norms between ethnic groups, nationalities, and economic classes—cultural differences that transcend race.

It's also true that some cultural norms are counterproductive and responsible for subpar economic and educational outcomes. Accordingly, the first step in improving the outcomes for the better is to acknowledge the norms.

Acknowledgment of counterproductive cultural norms is dangerous, however, because of the diversity movement's obsession with race and the forced-fitting of thousands of different ethnicities into the handful of racial categories. When the world's diversity is reduced to several racial categories, and when society is seen through these racial lenses, a suggestion

that a social problem might have cultural roots becomes proof of racism, because many people have been led to believe that culture and race are synonymous.

It is seen as racist in some quarters, for example, to hypothesize that a cultural norm of fatherless families among certain groups is a principal cause of poverty, crime, and school dropouts, even if the hypothesis goes on to explain that the cultural norm is the result of socioeconomic factors and misguided welfare programs, not the result of a genetic predisposition for promiscuity. And if the hypothesis is made by a middle-class white person, the charge of racism comes with an accusation that the person is blinded by bourgeois values.

Because of this obsession with race, diversity has become an exercise in *reductio ad absurdum*. The reduction is not only absurd but also insensitive and insulting.

For example, it is insensitive and insulting to tell Koreans that they are the same race as Japanese—that there is no difference between their respective histories, ancestries, customs, values, and beliefs, because they are classified as Asians. It is equally insensitive and insulting to tell Chinese, Malaysians, Vietnamese, Laotians, East Indians, Filipinos, and other unique peoples from Asia and the sub-continent that they are nothing more than a nondescript, homogenous clump of Asians, because the arrogant U.S. government has deemed it so, and because insensitive deans of diversity and inclusion have perpetuated the insulting absurdity.

The *reductio ad absurdum* leads to other absurdities, including one endorsed by the U.S. Supreme Court—namely, the notion that learning is enhanced in college if there are students from the official government categories in the classroom. This means, operationally, if there are non-white students in the classroom.

The underlying premise is that someone from a category can speak for everyone else in the category. Someone in the Asian category, for example, can speak for all the other peoples in the Asian category, because all Asians are the same. Accordingly, a Chinese student can speak for the feelings and experiences of Indonesians, and vice versa.

Likewise, a former Harvard law school professor like Elizabeth Warren can supposedly speak for the feelings and experiences of this olive-skinned grandson of poor Italian immigrants who settled in the Midwest. After all, the government and diversity deans have deemed that everyone in the white category is the same, although, in fact, there are more than 100 different ethnicities in the category, as well as all social classes, all education levels, all income levels, and all ideologies.

There is less variation, or diversity, among the population of China. That's because the ethnic Han makes up 90 percent of the Chinese population, having all the political power, privileges, and groupthink that accrue to such a large majority. This percentage no doubt holds for the Chinese nationals at U.C. Davis. If true, that leaves the Han majority to speak in college classrooms for the ethnic minorities in China, including the Achang, Bai, Bonan, Bouyei, Blang, Dai, Daur, Deang, Dong, Dongxiang, Dulong, Ewenki, Gaoshan, Gelao, Hani, Hezhe, Hui, Jing, Jingpo, Jinuo, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Korean, Lahu, Li, Lisu, Luoba, Manchu, Maonan, Menba, Miao,

Mongolian, Mulao, Naxi, Nu, Oroqen, Ozbek, Pumi, Qiang, Russian, Salar, She, Shui, Tajik, Tatar, Tibetan, Tu, Tujia, Uigur, Wa, Xibe, Yao, Yi, Yugur, and Zhuang.

Or maybe the vice-chancellor for diversity, equity and inclusion makes sure that each of these ethnic minorities is represented in the student body of U.C. Davis, so that students can learn about China without relying on the perspective of the Han majority. And maybe she does the same for the thousands of other ethnic groups across the globe, making sure that each one is represented in the student body; or alternatively, that at least each one's unique history, culture, and viewpoints are covered in the classroom, including in math class.

It is impractical for even a highly paid diversity official and her staff to cover all groups equally. Thus, it's highly probable that the vice chancellor picks and chooses which ethnicities to admit to the university and to cover in classes. If so, what are her criteria for including some and excluding others? Does her political ideology come into play, does she have a hidden agenda, and who provides oversight to make sure that she isn't biased?

My perspective on race and ethnicity reflects what I learned when I lived in the barrio and attended a university with a large percentage of Latinos, primarily Mexican-Americans and Mexican nationals, many of whom were close friends and fellow ROTC cadets—and highly enthusiastic ones at that. We spent most of our time talking about women, sports, cars, the draft, where we could buy beer, and what Army branch we hoped to get into after graduation to fulfill our active duty obligation.

We didn't have highbrow conversations about our respective "gringo" and Latino views of race, poverty, social justice, the Alamo, Sam Houston, the war with Mexico, or the Gadsden Treaty. Maybe such highbrow discussions take place in the Ivy League, where all the Supreme Court justices went to college, but they didn't take place in my alma mater. My understanding of those topics came after college, from years of reading history, including, most recently, *El Norte*, the scholarly book on the history of Hispanics in the Americas, going back to the Spanish Empire, which brought slaves to America decades before the British Empire did.

So, what did I learn in college from my Hispanic classmates? I learned that Hispanics come in different shades, come from different social classes, are predominately Catholic, and are family oriented—just like Italians.

One friend who took me to visit his family in Monterrey, Mexico, had skin whiter than mine, an aristocratic Spanish father who was a wealthy industrialist, and a boyhood home that was way beyond the reach of my working-class parents. Another friend had brown skin, was the grandson of immigrants, had a boyhood home in the barrio of Laredo, Texas, and drove a souped-up 1956 Chevy, which he and I drove 900 miles to visit my family in St. Louis. There, given his working-class roots, he fit in nicely. Other Latino friends and classmates were at both ends of this spectrum or somewhere in between. Not one of them was representative of all Hispanics.

I learned similar things when I worked as a teenager as the only white on an otherwise all-black janitorial, maintenance, and kitchen crew at an exclusive country club in St. Louis. Not

one of my black coworkers was representative of all blacks.

On my first day on the job, my boss Jewell told me to clean the employee restroom in the basement, a restroom that hadn't been cleaned in years. Understanding even at my young age what this was really about, I cheerfully set out to make the place gleaming. As I was finishing the job, the dishwasher, who was a former prize-fighter with a long scar on his face and a nervous twitch, came into the restroom drunk, proceeded to pee on the floor, and said, "Clean this up, whitey." Another co-worker, a lean but muscular 20-something black, walked by at that moment, and quick as a cheetah, sprang on the dishwasher, shoved him against the wall, and said, "You clean it, you black mother*****." Not wanting to make an enemy out of a punch-drunk dishwasher, I thanked the younger guy and said I'd clean it.

Near the top of the staff hierarchy were the dining room waiters, all of whom were former waiters on Pullman dining cars. Their dress, grooming, and manners were impeccable.

At the top of the hierarchy was clubhouse manager Bill Williams, the classiest, best-dressed, most well-spoken man I'd ever met. He even wore French cuffs and cufflinks. I would wash and wax his big blue Pontiac Bonneville for extra money.

The foregoing experiences taught me a lesson that has been reinforced throughout my life: that all races and ethnicities have good people and bad people, open-minded people and close-minded people, and racist people and non-racist people. They also have both victims and victimizers in their ranks and in their history. And they have both productive and nonproductive cultural mores.

That's why I believe that it's an intellectual fraud to reduce the great diversity of the nation and world to several racial categories and then to treat each category as homogenous.

That's not a profound observation, but it's apparently over the heads of the chancellor and vice-chancellor of the University of California at Davis.

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