

Diversity Adulation

by Walter E. Williams

Posted Nov 01, 2006

There are some ideas so ludicrous and mischievous that only an academic would take them seriously. One of them is diversity. Think about it. Are you for or against diversity? When's the last time you said to yourself, "I'd better have a little more diversity in my life"? What would you think if you heard a Microsoft director tell his fellow board members that the company should have more diversity and manufacture kitchenware, children's clothing and shoes? You'd probably think the director was smoking something illegal.

Our institutions of higher learning take diversity seriously and make it a multimillion-dollar operation. Juilliard School has a director of diversity and inclusion; Massachusetts Institute of Technology has a manager of diversity recruitment; Toledo University, an associate dean for diversity; the universities of Harvard, Texas A&M, California at Berkeley, Virginia and many others boast of officers, deans, vice-presidents and perhaps ministers of diversity.

George Leef, director of the John W. Pope Center for Higher Education Policy in Raleigh, N.C., writes about this in an article titled "Some Questions about Diversity" in the Oct. 5 issue of "Clarion Call." Mr. Leef suggests that only in academia is diversity pursued for its own sake, but there's a problem: Everyone, even if they are the same ethnicity, nationality or religion, is different. Suppose two people are from the same town in Italy. They might differ in many important respects: views on morality, religious and political beliefs, recreation preferences and other characteristics.

Mr. Leef says that some academics see diversity as a requirement for social justice -- to right historical wrongs. The problem here is that if you go back far enough, all groups have suffered some kind of historical wrong. The Irish can point to injustices at the hands of the British, Jews at the hands of Nazis, Chinese at the hands of Indonesians, and Armenians at the hands of the Turks. Of course, black Americans were enslaved, but slavery is a condition that has been with mankind throughout most of history. In fact, long before blacks were enslaved, Europeans were enslaved. The word slavery comes from Slavs, referring to the Slavic people, who were early slaves. White Americans, captured by the Barbary pirates, were enslaved at one time or another. Whites were indentured servants in colonial America. So what should the diversity managers do about these injustices?

When academics call for diversity, they're really talking about racial preferences for particular groups of people, mainly blacks. The last thing they're talking about is intellectual diversity.

According to a recent national survey, reported by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni in "Intellectual Diversity," 72 percent of college professors describe themselves as liberal and 15 percent conservative. Liberal professors think their classrooms should be used to promote a political agenda. The University of California recently abandoned a provision on academic freedom that cautioned against using the classroom for propaganda. The president said the regulation was "outdated."

Americans, as taxpayers and benefactors, have been exceedingly generous to our institutions of higher learning. That generosity has been betrayed. Rich Americans, who acquired their wealth through our capitalist system, give billions to universities. Unbeknownst to them, much of that money often goes to faculty members and programs that are openly hostile to donor values. Universities have also failed in their function of the pursuit of academic excellence by having dumbed down classes and granting degrees to students who are just barely literate and computationally incompetent.

What's part of Williams' solution? Benefactors should stop giving money to universities that engage in racist diversity policy. Simply go to the university's website, and if you find offices of diversity, close your pocketbook. There's nothing like the sound of pocketbooks snapping shut to open the closed minds of administrators.

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