

Here's Why Obama Created DEI

But Victor Davis Hanson

I want to talk today about the controversy over [diversity, equity, and inclusion](#), but in a little different strain. I want to compare it with affirmative action.

Affirmative action was created during the civil rights era, 1964 and '65, and then, now, it has been with us almost 60 years. But remember what it was originally designed for—to address the historic racism and oppression of black Americans through slavery and Jim Crow, de facto segregation in some of the Northern states, but de jure segregation in the South.

And it said that because of that African Americans had not been given equality of opportunity. Statute never said anything about quotas or equality result. That's something that came in later. But the point I'm making, [affirmative action](#) was envisioned for this historic minority that made about 12% of the population.

It was challenged in the courts for years. And it was often challenged by not just so-called whites but Asians as well because their SAT scores—to take the example of college admissions—or their GPAs were often 200 or 300 points, in the case of the SAT, and GPA, 4 versus 3.2, in the case of GPAs.



By that I mean, African Americans were being admitted with less impressive statistics than whites, but especially, Asians. And then something happened to this paradigm. When the Obama administration came in, they saw that that constituency was not big enough for the type of woke agenda that they were envisioning.

So they recreated it. They used a word, "diversity." And diversity then would morph in, during the Obama years, to "diversity, equity, and inclusion." They added the "equity and inclusion" so you didn't obsess on race, which was the obsession. But they didn't want you to think about that. So then, all of a sudden, anybody was diverse on one qualification: They were not white.

That posed millions of problems because who is white in a multiracial society? Everybody has different heritages. Is it one-quarter, one-sixteenth? Should we use the one-drop rule of the old Confederacy? How do we stop fakers like Sen. Elizabeth Warren, etc.?

But all that aside, you can see what [Barack Obama](#) was trying to do. He was trying to say that the number of people who had been victimized was no longer 12%. It was 30%. And it was based on the idea of systemic racism. If you could not find overt racism in the 21st century, then you had to put adjectives in it. It was systemic. It was institutional. It was insidious. It was like air.

You can't see air, but you know it's there. So you had to have air detectors, like DEI detectors, and they would tell us you have to have trigger warnings or safe spaces or microaggressions. This was all an effort to build a victimized class. And what happened was, in the old days, there was an economic element to affirmative action.

It was clear that African Americans' income was not comparable to non-African Americans. But under DEI, you could be an

immigrant from the Punjab, you could come in from Argentina, you could come in from Taiwan, you could come in from almost any area and there were actually 16 different ethnic groups with higher incomes than whites.

So what happened? People began to say two things: "This person who we are hiring because we want to be diverse actually has more money than the people who are being excluded and has more opportunity," No. 1. And No. 2, "They have no history of systemic exclusion."

How does somebody who comes across the border from Oaxaca on the first day claim that he's been a victim of insidious American racism? How does somebody who comes from Taiwan make the argument that he has been a victim of systemic racism in the here and now?

So, you had all of these [immigrants coming in](#), and remember, DEI was, by intent, to coincide with a record number of immigrants—55 million, 16% of the population.

So what did we do? We created a new group and the result of it was—for a while, eight years—we got record numbers of Democrat voters among Asians, who had been traditionally conservative, under Hispanics, blacks, Native Americans. And then it blew up. And [Donald Trump](#) blew that up because he exposed the ridiculousness of it.

These people are trying to divide us into a Marxist binary between victimizers and victims. But the people in East Palestine were victims. The people in North Carolina were victims. And some of the victimizers are not white. And so, it's so convoluted now. And it makes no sense in terms of economic advantage or historic racism or bias, or who is what.

Let's just get rid of it and start to treat people as people and make identity politics incidental and not essential to who we are.

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