

Rolling Back DEI: Resisting Forced Equality

By Theodore Dalrymple

Equality of opportunity is to modern political thought what deliciousness is to food: everyone is for it, no one is against it. And yet, if everyone took it seriously, it would lead to the most totalitarian of all totalitarianisms, for of course its accomplishment would necessitate the ironing out all differences of genetic endowment and environmental influences. It would require cloning from a single embryo and battery farms for infants.



Study shows DEI is psychologically harmful, increases hostility.

The dismantling and prohibition of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) departments in federal institutions is a welcome step in the reduction of

the bureaucratic dictatorship under which people in most countries, including the USA, now live. Some bureaucracy, of course, is necessary and inevitable, and even laudable, but this should not give carte blanche to bureaucratic opportunists endlessly to extend their reach and power over society.

What, at heart, does the whole DEI movement—for movement it

is—signify? In the first place, it supplies job opportunities for people who have spent a long time in education, often a quarter at least of their lifespan, and yet at the end of it are without any definite skills or even body of knowledge, though plentifully endowed with ideological opinions. Such men, as Caesar said of Cassius, are dangerous: they have a lean and hungry look if not employed in positions that flatter their high opinion of themselves as educated men and women.

There is more to it than this, however. DEI is profoundly mistrustful of ordinary people. It assumes that, left to themselves, they will invariably behave badly, in the most nastily prejudiced way, even where legal obstacles to social advancement have been removed—as in the United States they were, at least two generations ago.

DEI overlooks the evident fact that whole groups of people can prosper without any assistance from government, provided only that they live in a relatively open society: that is to say, a society that is not under complete government control. In such societies, even groups against which there is social prejudice can prosper, though it has to be admitted that their prosperity can either increase or decrease prejudice against them. People do not always rejoice at the success of others.

In the United States (but also in other Western countries), people of Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and Jewish origin have achieved, in very short order, a level of prosperity greater than that of the rest of the population: and their prosperity is not only economic, but they have prospered culturally too. This is not to say that there was never any prejudice against them—indeed at times it was very fierce—but once all official obstacles were removed, they did very well. It might even be that a certain degree of prejudice against them was a spur to their determination to succeed, though this would not in any way excuse such prejudice. At any rate, no one decreed their success, they achieved it for themselves, as they were allowed to do.

But if there is one thing that politicians and bureaucrats fear and detest in society, it is spontaneity, for it threatens them with redundancy. The controlling, almost Leninist, impulse is very strong among politicians and bureaucrats. They believe that nothing good can happen to or in society without their wise direction or planning: and since their intentions are good, at least ostensibly, good must result from their ministrations.

The supposition that all differences in outcome between groups in an open society must be attributable to how they are treated and not in any degree whatever in how they think or behave is grist to the mill, or mills, of politicians and bureaucrats. To correct the way in which people are treated gives endless work to the latter, because differences will always persist.

There are, besides, an infinite number of ways in which people may be divided or categorized into groups—short and tall, for example, or fat and thin—and therefore the work of ensuring equality of outcome will never be done. The [English novelist L.P. Hartley](#) (whose most famous novel is “The Go-Between”), recognized, and satirized, the attempt to eliminate prejudice in the name of equality in his novel “Facial Justice.” Since people are naturally better or more warmly disposed to the handsome than the ugly, the ministry of facial justice attempts, by means of compulsory plastic surgery, to reduce all faces to a mean, neither too handsome nor too ugly. This was in 1960, when no one would have used the term racial justice for fear of evoking Nazi connotations.

It is true, of course, that in the absence of any government measures other than the removal of formal or legal obstacles, prejudiced treatment of people will continue, for perfection is not of this world. But the attempt to produce perfectly unprejudiced minds by mandatory means is not only bound to fail but is likely always to result in the moral squalor of resentment and focus people’s minds on what they can’t do rather than on what they can. This is supposedly designed to advance their cause but will in practice retard it, though

such retardation is not without its psychological rewards.

If you focus your mind on what you can't do because of supposed injustice, you will at least be relieved of the thought that your failure is in any degree your own fault. You will therefore be relieved of personal responsibility, which for many is a great burden rather than a blessing. Not everyone wants to be free, at least not in the sense that he must bear the consequences of his own conduct.

The problem with the political Shangri-la promised by DEI is that it is never reached because it is unreachable. The hopeless search for it induces a noxious fatalism. Not all fatalism is noxious: an acceptance that life is imperfectible will reduce the anguish caused by the existence of imperfection. Where the fatalist accepts his fate, his suffering will be reduced or even disappears, but where fatalists resent their fate, their minds will become a stew of dishonest anger and self-destruction.

So the rolling back of DEI, while it will be resented by some in the short term, will conduce to the well-being of the population in the long term: provided, of course, that it does not return in spades when the whirligig of time brings in his revenges.

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