

The Transformative Magic of Wokeness

by Bruce Bawer



Last Wednesday, on BBC's TV debate program *Newsnight*, host Emily Maitlis [interviewed](#) two American guests about the allegedly racist new Georgia voting law that led Major League Baseball to move the All-Star Game, scheduled for July 13, from that state to Colorado.

Now, anyone who's taken the trouble to learn the truth about the law, which was passed in the wake of widespread ballot fraud in the 2020 election, knows that it's thoroughly unremarkable. Voters – *all* voters – are required to show ID before they can cast their ballots, just as baseball fans are required to show ID when picking up their tickets to an MLB game. But the Biden Administration and its allies have obscured this fact, painting the law as an effort to suppress the black vote. The premise of their argument is that an ID requirement is particularly hard on blacks – apparently

because, unlike whites and Asians, they can't be expected to get their act together well enough to secure proper ID.

They claim the law is racist. No: their argument is racist. But the CEOs of Coca-Cola, Delta, Dow, Hewlett Packard, ViacomCBS, and dozens of other major corporations have publicly gone along with it.

On Wednesday's *Newsnight*, Eric Bolling, formerly of Fox News, defended the law. He argued that moving the All-Star game out, supposedly for anti-racist reasons, robbed many black-owned businesses of desperately needed income. He noted that Colorado's black population is relatively low, and that Georgia's two senators – both Democrats, one of them African-American – have opposed the MLB's pullout.

Taking the other side was a black woman named Aisha Moodie-Mills. Instead of even trying to make a rational argument, she followed the current woke playbook from the git-go – which is to say that she accused Bolling of racism. “I think it's really rich for any Republican, especially a white man, to run around and claim that they care about the economic condition of black communities and black businesses when that's all a lie,” she said. Bolling called her comments “disgusting”; she doubled down.

As it happens, the clash on *Newsnight* came one month to the day after the airing of another dramatic three-hander – namely, Oprah Winfrey's March 7 sit-down with Prince Harry and his wife, Meghan Markle, at their \$15.5 million mansion in exclusive Montecito, California (which also happens to be the site of one of Oprah's seven residences). Meghan charged that while in Britain among her royal in-laws and palace servants, she'd been subjected to racism. Oprah was empathic. After all, Oprah (#1174 on the Forbes billionaires list, with \$2.6 billion in assets) knows what it is to be a victim. And Meghan (who, with Harry, recently inked a nine-figure deal with Netflix) is nothing if not a victim.

Needless to say, it was not ever thus. During the Great Depression, everybody from the top rung of American society to the bottom understood that people like, say, the Joad family, those hard-scrabble, dirt-poor Okies in John Steinbeck's 1939 novel (and John Ford's 1940 film) *The Grapes of Wrath*, were victims and hence deserving of sympathy. Nowadays, however, such people are viewed by our woke cultural establishment as contemptible flyover hayseeds who deserve their privation. If the Joads lived today, they'd probably have voted for Trump. They'd be painted as racists.

By any sane reckoning, such people – let's just call them Joads – wield absolutely no social or cultural power. By contrast, Oprah and Meghan are dripping with it. But if, in accordance with woke ideology, you switch out pecuniary assets, cultural advantages, and social cachet with identity-group markers, day instantly becomes night and night day. The Joads are *white*; Oprah and Meghan are black. So the Joads become oppressors, and Oprah and Meghan become the oppressed.

Such is the transformative magic of wokeness, whose appeal to privileged types (like the CEOs of Coke and Delta) is obvious. If you're really well off – with multiple homes, a yacht, a jet, etc. – you don't want to think about victimization in economic terms, because then you'll never see yourself as anything but an oppressor. But if you pull the woke switcheroo, the whole picture changes. Even if you're a straight white man with a net worth in the billions, you can be on the side of the angels as long as you wear sackcloth and ashes (figuratively speaking), parrot woke rhetoric, declare your alliance with the likes of Oprah and Meghan, and make clear at every opportunity your utter contempt for their despicable oppressors, those gun-toting, pickup-driving latter-day Joads.

For a prominent white person to challenge this reigning illogic is, of course, to court instant cancellation. When *Good Morning Britain* host Piers Morgan reacted to the

Montecito powwow by expressing skepticism toward Meghan's racism charges, and walked off when his colleagues essentially called *him* a racist, his woke bosses at ITV quickly accepted his resignation. On last Wednesday's BBC debate, Bolling, disgusted by Moodie-Mills's racism charges, also walked off. Good for both Morgan and Bolling: when faced with woke accusations of racism, there's nothing you can do *except* walk off – because under the rules of woke discourse, such exchanges are intrinsically unequal. If a black person accuses a white person of racism, the game's over; there's no room for discussion; the judgment has been handed down. Race, after all, is everything. And racism is everywhere.

I've long known who Eric Bolling is. But I wasn't familiar with Aisha Moodie-Mills, so I looked her up. It turns out that she's been a Senior Fellow at John Podesta's Center for American Progress, Executive Director of the Congressional Black Caucus PAC, and Regional Finance Director of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. *Black Enterprise* magazine profiled her and her lesbian partner as a D.C. "power couple." She calls herself a "political strategist and social impact advisor" – in short, a Democratic Party swamp creature who gets paid to teach hack pols to navigate the woke terrain. And she plainly gets paid very well. Both Bolling and Moodie-Mills appeared on BBC via Skype. Bolling sat in front of a nondescript TV-studio background. Moodie-Mills was apparently in her living room. It looked like something out of *Architectural Digest*. If somebody had told you it was one of Oprah's living rooms, you wouldn't have doubted it.

As for Moodie-Mills herself, she was the very picture of poise and privilege. Seeing a black woman in such a setting, you might think she was about to deliver an ardent speech in tribute to 21st-century America, where a descendant of slaves can achieve a degree of personal comfort and luxury beyond the imagining of a medieval emperor. But no, just like Meghan,

there she was, playing the victim card and pretending that race relations are no better than they were a century ago, and that her own purported oppression is comparable to that of a Jim Crow-era Mississippi sharecropper. Insisting that the Georgia voting law was all about “racial discrimination,” she asserted the apparently invincible authority of her identity as “a black person in America,” and declared that since Bolling was white, it was categorically absurd for him to pose as “a proponent of black people and businesses.”

That was when Bolling had had enough. “Because I’m white, you think I’m racist,” he sputtered. Well, yes, that’s Woke 101. Because he’s white, he *is* racist – unless he bows to the woke gods. And because Moodie-Mills is black, she is, by definition, a victim of his racism. How, you ask, does one manage to be half of a “power couple” and still be a victim? Don’t ask: the question is racist. Never mind that sumptuous room that she’s sitting in. Never mind those struggling black people in Georgia whose businesses have suffered during the lockdown and who hoped to get a boost thanks to the All-Star Game.

No, in woke world, hard-working black people in dire financial peril – far from being bigger victims than a well-off woman with a cushy career, like Moodie-Mills – are effectively erased, except when they can prove useful. Woke world doesn’t really care, for example, about the countless inner-city blacks, including innocent bystanders, who perish every year as a result of gang violence. It cares about the ease of black Georgians’ access to the franchise only because it assumes that most of them will vote Democrat. (When blacks speak openly about doing otherwise – ask Shelby Steele or Candace Owens – the woke knives come out.) George Floyd became an immortal martyr only because his death came at a time when the woke narrative about white cops murdering harmless blacks called for a poster boy. Prior to that, when Floyd was just one more drug-culture victim – a victim not of white

oppression, mind you, but of cynical, destructive Democratic social policies – somebody like him would never have shown up on the woke crowd's radar.

Think about it: which blacks insist most vociferously on their own victimhood? The single mom in South Central with three kids and two jobs? No. It's always the ones who've gotten free rides to the Ivy League despite low SAT scores, who've been snapped up for jobs at prestigious firms despite middling college grades, who've gotten full-time faculty positions despite semiliterate dissertations, or who've been hired as journalists by major news media even though they know zilch about – well, just about anything. The blacks complaining most loudly about white privilege, in short, are precisely the ones who have *black* privilege.

On Friday, two days after the BBC gave us a glimpse of Moodie-Mills's home, the Dirt website offered [pictures](#) of the Topanga Canyon compound, costing more than \$1.4 million, that had just been purchased by Patrisse Khan-Cullors, the proudly Marxist co-founder and leader of Black Lives Matter. According to Dirt, there were rumblings about where the money had come from: BLM has been notoriously secretive about the generous contributions it's received from corporations and celebrities. On Saturday, the *New York Post* [reported](#) that Khan-Cullors actually owns two other homes in L.A., plus a Georgia ranch with swimming pool and airplane hangar, and has also house-hunted in the Bahamas.

But rest assured that the well-heeled donors won't kick up a fuss about any of this. If they can live that way, why can't she? Besides, however luxuriously she lives, she'll still be black – and thus still oppressed.

Yes, it's a cozy crew, the woke brigade: the blacks with Lamborghinis who cry victim, plus the whites with Gulfstreams who nod along while apologizing profusely. Together they're like a twisted take on Martin Luther King's vision, in his "I

Have a Dream” speech, of a future America in which little black and white children join hands in brotherhood. Only in this case the solidarity is built on lies, guilt, and fear – and fortified by a repulsive shared contempt for the decent middle-American whites whom Hillary Clinton famously called deplorables.

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