

The Cultivation of Racism

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At many universities and colleges across this nation there is an annual commemoration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his vision of “a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”¹ At these ceremonies, it is common for various campus leaders and administrators to vow renewed commitment to Dr. King’s vision; however, these claims increasingly ring hollow as more universities and colleges become places that define, stereotype, and treat people according to their skin pigment or the origins of their ancestors.

In one eloquent phrase, Dr. King defined both the essence of racism and its cure. Judging someone by race or skin color is racism, and moving toward judging someone only by their demonstrated character is the cure for racism. Michael S. Berliner and Gary Hull explain it well when they write that “[a]dvocates of ‘diversity’ are true racists in the basic meaning of that term: they see the world through colored lenses, colored by race and gender. To the multiculturalist, race is what counts—for values, for thinking, for human identity in general.”² Berliner and Hull’s definition closely correlates with

¹Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream,” speech, Lincoln Memorial, Washington, DC, August 23, 1968, text available at Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library, The Avalon Project, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/mlk01.asp.

²Michael S. Berliner and Gary Hull, “Diversity and Multiculturalism: The New Racism,” 1999, Center for the Advancement of Objectivism, Ayn Rand Institute, http://www.aynrand.org/site/PageServer?pagename=objectivism_diversity.

popular dictionary definitions of racism; for example, “a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities.”³ Even the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination bolsters this definition when it stated that “the term ‘racial discrimination’ shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin.”⁴ By any and all of these definitions, we see that many of our universities are becoming purveyors of racism.

In the California State University System (CSU) the process of categorization by race and ethnicity is embedded in the application process, specifically the current CSU undergraduate application.⁵ Applicants to any of the twenty-six CSU campuses are required to define themselves by the race, ethnicity, and national origin of their family to a degree of specificity far beyond any federal requirement or any conceivable legitimate need. These US citizens must chose from 112 racial and ethnic categories: twenty-three for Hispanics and Latinos, twenty-five for Asians, twenty-four for Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, thirty-three for American Indians and Alaska Natives, four for blacks and African Americans, and three for whites, because according to multiculturalists and “diversity” advocates, there are no cultural differences between Europeans. One can in theory decline to complete this part of the application, but what do you think is likely to happen to such an application within a bureaucracy obsessed with racial diversity and a specific multicultural outcome?

Racial and ethnic separatism and prejudice are encouraged at CSU through a regime of indoctrination and segregation. For this discussion I rely primarily on examples from a particularly egregious provocateur of racism and ethnic xenophobia, California State University Chico (CSU Chico), where I formerly taught. At CSU Chico, newly arrived “minority” students, classified according to skin color or supposed ethnicity, are introduced to campus organizations that are oriented toward their race or ethnicity and counselors and advisers who look like them. This reinforces the belief that it

³*Merriam-Webster Online*, s.v., “racism,” accessed May, 25, 2012, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/racism>.

⁴Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, “International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Adopted and opened for signature and ratification by General Assembly Resolution 2106 (XX) of 21 December 1965, entry into force 4 January 1969, in accordance with Article 19,” <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/cerd.htm>.

⁵California State University, “The California State University Undergraduate Application, 2011–2012,” available at http://em.csuchico.edu/admissions/application/PDFs/AdmissionUndergradApp_Fall2011.pdf.

is not their individual minds and experiences that lend value to the collective university, but their skin pigment and/or ethnicity.

And if in their daily university activities they should feel uncomfortable around people different from themselves, these students are encouraged to indulge their feelings by associating with any of the approved university organizations designed for people who look like them so they may “talk about your experience and how uncomfortable you are.”⁶ There are also well-advertised sessions—often called “conversations on diversity”—where feelings of victimhood, anger, and even hatred are encouraged. These “conversations” have such titles as “Is There Such a Thing as White Culture,” “White Privilege and the Politics of Identity,” “Stereotypes Exist for a Reason: Racial Stereotypes,” and “It’s Because I’m Black.”⁷ All of these are what John L. Jackson, Jr., has described as “distrustful conjecture about purposeful race-based maliciousness and the ‘benign neglect’ of racial indifference.”⁸ This very active encouragement of separatism continues from separate welcoming receptions for Asians, Latinos, blacks, and Native American students through separate graduation ceremonies CSU Chico holds for racial and ethnic groupings.⁹

At CSU Chico, even resources and recreation activities are divided by race and ethnicity. The Office of Diversity’s *Diversity Resource Guide* provides separate listings for “Asian/Pacific-American Resources,” “Black/African-American Resources,” “Latino/Latina-American Resources,” and “Native Americans Resources.”¹⁰ There are approved campus fraternities and sororities for specific races and ethnicities. There is a listing dividing faculty

⁶California State University Chico, “Have You Heard? Sponsored by Black Leaders On Campus (BLOC) and the Cross-Cultural Leadership Center (CCLC),” Campus Announcements, October 27, 2011.

⁷California State University Chico, “Diversity 411, Is There Such Thing as White Culture? White Culture and Its Impact,” Cross-Cultural Leadership Center, Campus Announcements, November 1, 2011; “Conversation on Diversity: White Privilege and the Politics of Identity,” Office of Diversity, Campus Announcements, April 15, 2009, http://www.csuchico.edu/diversity/documents/codFlyer_20090415.pdf; “Stereotypes Exist for a Reason: Racial Stereotypes,” Cross-Cultural Leadership Center, Campus Announcements, November 29, 2011; and “Conversations on Diversity: It’s Because I’m Black,” Office of Diversity, Campus Announcements, February 22, 2010, <http://www.csuchico.edu/announcements-campus/announcements/current/cod-black.shtml>.

⁸John L. Jackson, Jr., *Racial Paranoia: The Unintended Consequences of Political Correctness* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2008), 3.

⁹See, “Black Welcome Reception,” “Native American Welcome Reception,” “Asian Welcome Reception,” Bienvenida (Latino) Reception,” among others, California State University Chico, Wildcat Welcome, Student Calendar, <http://em.csuchico.edu/aap/GettingConnected/scalendar.asp> and “50 Diverse Things to Do in Chico, Multicultural Graduation Celebrations,” California State University Chico, Office of Diversity, www.csuchico.edu/diversity/documents/50-diverse-things.ppt.

¹⁰California State University Chico, Office of Diversity, *Chico State Diversity Resource Guide, 2010–2011*, <http://www.csuchico.edu/diversity/documents/diversity-resource-guide.pdf>.

by race and ethnicity, and course recommendations divided by race and ethnicity. The guide even directs students of different races and ethnicities to specific businesses in the surrounding community to discourage association with people who don't look like them. There is, however, no separate listing of resources, fraternities, sororities, faculty, courses, and specific businesses in the surrounding community for white students.

Is this the vision articulated by Dr. King? Is what is described above really a step toward creating a nation where people are judged "by the content of their character"? These so-called diversity initiatives are, rather, manifestations and vehicles of racism and prejudice. More generally, the current diversity paradigm, as represented by what I have just described, encourages racism, separatism, racial paranoia, and ethnic xenophobia.¹¹ Berliner and Hull point to the fixation that so-called diversity advocates have concerning race and ethnicity, and observe: "No wonder racism is increasing: color-blindness is now considered evil, if not impossible. No wonder people don't treat each other as individuals; to the multiculturalist, they aren't."¹²

Among the faculty and administrators who facilitate this racist regime, there is a good deal of self-deception and disingenuousness. Perhaps the most evident example of self-deception is the pitiful attempt by some minority faculty and administrators to redefine racism so that they can exclude themselves from guilt. This takes the form of the claim that only white people can be racist because racism requires power, and only white people have real power in a white-dominated society. Still other faculty and administrators justify their participation in the diversity regime with the disingenuous claim that it is not really harmful. For example, when I offered my observations to two white CSU Chico administrators, one reacted with a nervous laugh, followed by this comment: "We are only teaching them [minorities] some pride. We aren't doing any real harm. The white kids can take care of themselves." The other administrator stated that providing segregated activities and organizations was "the only way of keeping minority students enrolled here." When I asked if this wasn't instead "facilitating their prejudices and fears," that administrator shrugged and said, "That is just the way they [minorities] are." We also see in these answers an obvious lack of respect for and faith in the ability of people of certain races and ethnicities to think for themselves.

¹¹Jackson, *Racial Paranoia*.

¹²Berliner and Hull, "Diversity and Multiculturalism."

The truth is that harm *is* being done. In private conversations, many students, faculty, staff, and a good deal of the general public will not hesitate to use the words *racist* and *racism* to describe the diversity regime on CSU campuses. One CSU Chico student told me, “I know that I am a white male, and I know that no one is going to give me a job or handout just because of the color of my skin. I have to work harder, be better to get what I want.” He admitted that at times it was difficult not to resent the access and resources provided only to the minority students and not to him. He said, “I didn’t feel this way when I came to this place [the university], but this place has changed me.”

It is at a minimum short-sighted and at worse disingenuous to claim that it is beneficial to condition students of any race or ethnicity to believe that only people who look like them value the same things they value—or that judging people according to their race or ethnicity is intellectually justifiable. It is not beneficial to teach students that they are at least partially obligated or fully justified in choosing retailers, employees, and even friends based on race and ethnicity. Nor is it beneficial to cultivate a sense of entitlement based on race and ethnicity. Propagating such beliefs only serves to ensure the continuation of racial and ethnic tensions.

The harmful outcomes of the diversity regimes described here outweigh the rationalizations offered in their defense.