

Consequences Have Ideas

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Not long ago, I heard two upsetting things in one week. While many U.S. cities were being racked by rioting, looting, and arson, sparked by the death of a black man, George Floyd, at the hands, and the knee, of a Minneapolis police officer, an Israeli commenting on these occurrences on television professed his bleak view that America would never solve its race problem. A few days later, my attention was drawn to articles detailing how immigrants became eligible for affirmative action and have been receiving preferences in large numbers through the past half century or so of mass Third World immigration to our country. I knew that of course—it's been more than obvious in the university setting—but I hadn't quite seen it in the fuller context of the violence taking place in the summer of 2020.

Maybe that's why America never "solves its race problem," I thought; she is trying to solve every problem in the world, and is therefore solving none of them. Through the years since affirmative action began to be implemented in the form of quotas, something Senator Hubert Humphrey swore would never happen because they would violate the intentions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, immigrant and second generation blacks have comprised more than 40 percent of black admissions to the Ivy League and other selective schools.¹ At a Harvard reunion of black alumni in the early 2000s, Harvard professors Lani Guinier and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. pointed out that of the 530 or so members of Harvard's black undergraduate population at that time, perhaps as many as two-thirds were West Indian and African immigrants or their children (and to a lesser extent, the offspring of biracial couples).

¹According to a 2006 article in the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, "A 2004 survey of black students at 28 selective colleges and universities conducted by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University found that 41 percent of all black students at these 28 campuses identified themselves as immigrants or children of immigrants."

(I must confess here that in the summer 2020 introduction to *AQ*, I mistakenly stated that Senator Humphrey, later Vice-President Humphrey, vowed to eat his hat should the Civil Rights Act of 1964 be read to mandate quotas; in reality he vowed to eat the *bill*, page by page, no doubt equally unpalatable, but perhaps he should have been made to eat it nevertheless. Although the Civil Rights Act does not *mandate* quotas, as he stipulated, neither, evidently, did it serve to forbid them.)

What with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, along with the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which some rather over-enthusiastically saw as an extension of the American civil rights movement to the whole world, the extent of the immigrant component of the proportion of blacks at selective schools began to come under scrutiny. So few of the blacks at Harvard were plain, old African Americans, according to a *New York Times* article in 2004, that those few began calling themselves “the descendants.” Perhaps we can’t know for sure if every immigrant or immigrant offspring has gained admission to the Ivies through affirmative action, but it is reasonable to assume that many if not most are. Heather Mac Donald reports that, based on academic qualifications alone, Harvard would be only 0.7 percent black, according to a 2013 study by Harvard’s Office of Institutional Research, whereas the actual percentage in that year was 10.5 percent.

Leaving aside the possibility that immigrants and their offspring may be somewhat better prepared academically than American blacks, and thus more suitable as potential students, what happened to the unique American problem of racial injustice that President Johnson described in his Howard University Commencement Address of 1965 as “a feeling whose dark intensity is matched by no other prejudice in our society,” stained with a “devastating heritage of long years of slavery; and a century of oppression, hatred, and injustice,” and marked as well by “long years of degradation and discrimination,” and “endless years of hatred and hopelessness”?

For that matter, how did women, the other biologically necessary half of the human race, become a “group” entitled to preferences, as well as the “group” now known as “Hispanic,” a huge and varied category contrived by radical activists, as Mike Gonzalez explains in *The Plot to Change America* (2020). And then there are the “Asians,” another impossibly large “group,” who may on the whole as the category is presently defined be more losers than winners in admissions to selective colleges, not receiving their full share according to their credentials. Asians benefit from affirmative action in other areas, however, and a

majority of Asians do support preferences, according to an article at the website of the left-liberal Center for American Progress.²

Furthermore, upon further inspection we find that not all “Asian” sub-groups necessarily contain large numbers of potential contenders for the Ivies. In the same article, we learn, for example, that “[w]hile Asian Indian Americans, Mongolian Americans, and Taiwanese Americans attend college at a rate of approximately 85 percent each, Bhutanese Americans and Burmese Americans attend college at the lowest rates—15 percent and 34 percent, respectively.” Moreover, once we start breaking out specific nationalities from the larger “Asian” group, we will find such complexities as, for example, “that at UCLA, Hmong and Bangladeshi student applicants were admitted at a rate of 13 percentage points and 10 percentage points, respectively, less than the overall average rate for all Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, while Taiwanese applicants were admitted at a rate of 8 percentage points higher than the combined average rate for Asian American and Pacific Islanders.”

Through some twisted logic, on the way to ensuring civil rights for African Americans, we detoured into group rights. Most of the categories to be protected from discrimination that are named in the Civil Rights Act—race, color, sex, and national origin (religion not so much yet, but they’re working on it)—became the basis for identity politics. Protection from discrimination against qualified individuals in these categories rapidly morphed into the guarantee of affirmative action for the groups as a whole, to the end that all the groups should be equally represented in all walks of life generally in proportion to their share of the population—this is now the definition of “equality,” sometimes called “equity”—with required qualifications lowered sufficiently to attain the desired number. (The special status of African Americans was lost sight of, to be partially retrieved through more PC jargon, for example, “intersectionality.”)

Whatever extent proportionality has not been achieved at present is seen as evidence of continuing discrimination, and to whatever extent it wasn’t achieved in the past is also seen, retroactively, as further evidence of gross injustice to be ameliorated. As Tucker FitzGerald, perhaps more hysterical yet not unrepresentative of the thinking of affirmative action supporters, writes at the website *Medium*, “We’ve had forty-five presidents. It’s going to take forty-five women serving as president before we even have a chance to reach parity.” He continues, “If you want to pretend that the racial and gender horror in the world

²“Gaps in the Debate About Asian Americans and Affirmative Action at Harvard,” by Sylvia Guan, August 29, 2018, citing an AAPI data survey which found that “almost two-thirds of Asian American respondents support affirmative action, and many Asian American organizations have banded together to affirm their support for race-conscious admissions policies in light of the Harvard case.”

has already been righted, was righted in the 1960's, is almost righted now, or can hope to come close to being righted in your lifetime (forty-five female presidents), you're not getting the picture. We have a collective buildup of hundreds (thousands) of years of injustice to metabolize."

True, the totally extra-constitutional concept of "diversity," as devised by Justice Powell in the *Bakke* case (1977-78), became the rationale for this project. But the idea of remediation on a group basis through quotas for past and present discrimination, real or imaginary, local or global, although outlawed by that same case, clearly continues to lumber alongside diversity, spawning ever ballooning accusations, not only of old fashioned racism, bigotry, and discrimination, but of "white privilege," "white supremacy," "systemic racism," and "unconscious bias"—accusations, as Mark Pulliam points out at *Law and Liberty*, that were not long ago "limited to the fever swamps of academia," but have now become "household terms."

Indeed, this may be a backhanded way of admitting that "diversity," in the sense of group equality or equity, purportedly bearing large civic rewards, educational benefits, and expanded capacities for achievement that ecstatically enrich us all and equip us to flourish mightily in an increasingly global marketplace, is subtly recognized to be a fabrication, especially when it's achieved at the price of merit, effort, hard work, fairness, and true excellence, now mostly branded as aspects of "white culture." Something more is needed to justify continuing group preferences, and that something is the claim of injustice that has denied each "group" its proper place of honor and achievement in the history of mankind.

These developments don't play as they lay, however, but rise up to produce other developments and new ideas. The inclusion of immigrants as a protected category can be conveniently rationalized by a generalized demonization of the white race throughout the ages of man, and America's guilt can be expanded to cover the whole non-white world. Villains have to be posited to justify the unfairness of the newly minted definitions of "equality" or "equity," and the particularly villainous villain is the great white male, upon whom is heaped a fury that can remind us of how Ahab regarded Moby Dick.

("All that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in Moby Dick. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it.")

And although progress in the present distorted sense of equality is clearly visible, it is never enough; we always seem to “have a long way to go.” White men must still wear the mark of Cain as blacks and women and other minorities are not only never satisfied, they cannot permit themselves to *be* satisfied, let alone grateful, since their ongoing grievances are the ongoing justification for the unfairness of affirmative action and the undeserved denigration of white men. And America must stand perennially indicted for never being able “to solve its race problem,” and for “failing to live up to its ideals,” which ideals have been exponentially, geometrically expanded to apply to the whole world and all of history.

Another development has been the destruction of the liberal arts curriculum, based on the great works of the West, to be replaced by . . . diversity. Which leads to another idea, demanding that professors and candidates for professorships sign loyalty oaths to . . . diversity, not to mention stipulating that new hires in faculty and administration be made with reference to . . . diversity. And to defacing and toppling statues of white men in the name of . . . diversity.

And now for the good news! As I write, shortly before the presidential election on November 3, there is a lot of it, and it derives not through thinking globally, attempting to solve the problems of the world, undoing the depredations of history, and rectifying the disorders of the universe, but of addressing specific problems in the United States and in the academy, and seeing how they might be ameliorated.

After Princeton president Christopher Eisgruber ritually lamented “systemic racism” at his university, the Department of Education announced an investigation, inasmuch as a school that harbors racism should not be getting federal funding, don’t you know. The Department of Justice is investigating Yale for potential racial discrimination in admissions. Executive Orders are defending free speech and questioning diversity, equity, and inclusion programs on campus, as well as checking belligerent Critical Race Theory training in federal agencies. California governor Gavin Newsom vetoed an outrageous ethnic studies K-12 curriculum. A group of eminent scholars has issued a demand that Nikole Hannah-Jones’s Pulitzer Prize for her fraudulent “1619” essay be revoked. After Lexington Books cancelled his series on anti-colonialism under mob pressure, a petition supporting Bruce Gilley quickly garnered many hundreds of signatures, and an Open Letter against campus censorship by well-known scholars and writers has garnered well over a hundred from all over the world. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has issued new, fairer guidelines for Title IX procedures. The White House has temporarily suspended of several work-related visa categories, so that more jobs become

available to American workers during the present lockdown-induced high rate of unemployment, including for students who could use seasonal work (summer work-travel, nanny positions, etc.). The White House sponsored a conference on American history in support of telling the story fairly and turning back Zinn-inspired America-hating, with Peter Wood, Wilfred McClay, and Mary Grabar, among others, as speakers.

And over in the U.K., actor Laurence Fox (who plays Lord Palmerston in the British television series *Victoria*), having had a bruising run-in with the cancel crowd, is forming a new political party, Reclaim, in support of British tradition, culture, and values.

I'm reminded of *Candide's* hard won insight after battling through the brutalities of his time and reevaluating the overly optimistic pronouncements of his teacher, Dr. Pangloss—"tend your own garden." Simply taking a stand on principle can do a lot of good, not apologizing, not half agreeing with the adversary, as even conservatives have been wont to do, not being frozen in guilt about the past, not conceding that "we have a long way to go" in securing enough justice, equality, equity, to satisfy everybody's escalating demands, including the most unreasonable and unrealistic. Just taking steps with what abilities, capacities, and opportunities are at hand can do much, instead of making ourselves responsible for the needs of all humanity, and thinking we're the Second Coming, the End of History, the Apocalypse, and the Best of All Possible Worlds, all rolled into one.

And so we arrive at the special feature for this issue, Nationalism. What happens when we start with the concerns of our own nation and work out from there, instead of busily fashioning an Archimedean lever to move the planet?

Our authors consider the subject in both its intellectual and practical forms. Two marvelous articles, Glynn Custred, "The Deconstruction of the Nation State," and Darren Staloff, "Beyond Creed: American National Culture," explain nationalism and American nationalism more specifically. Pieces which address immediate, practical issues are "Economic Nationalism, Immigration, and Higher Education," by Pedro Gonzalez; "Nationalism, Culture, and Higher Education," by James R. Stoner, Jr.; and "Creating a Middle School American History Program," by Wight Martindale, Jr. Suzanne Last Stone of Cardozo Law School was one of a group of Princeton graduates who worked to establish Israel's first liberal arts institution of higher education, Shalem College. Her article, "Nation-Building and Curriculum Innovation in Israel," illustrates, among other things, the many ways we can learn from Jewish experience, particularly the need to combine the particular with the universal.

In our straightforwardly titled Articles, Michelle Marder Kamhi discusses “The Lamentable Politicization of Art,” and Mark Mercer explains “Why Scholars Won’t Research Group Differences,” while John Staddon describes “What’s Really Wrong with America,” and Robert Maranto and Martha Bradley-Dorsey ask, “Can Academia and the Media Handle the Truth?” (the truth about race, police, and criminal justice, that is).

More contemplative pieces are “Eva Brann’s Dialogue” by Elizabeth C’de Baca Eastman, and Micah Sadigh’s “Restoration of Academic Identity: On Truth and Responsibility.”

We also have two warm Appreciations from writers recalling figures who were significant in their own intellectual formation. John Leo recently retired from running the website *Minding the Campus* (now under the auspices of NAS), and artist and writer Maureen Mullarkey contributes “John Leo: Principle and Prescience.” Fred Siegel remembers his mentor, Irving Howe, author of many books and editor of the quarterly *Dissent* (with which Howe tried to carve out a middle way between Left and Right—liberal but also firmly anti-Communist), in “Irving Howe: A Leftism of Reason.”

I can remember feeling especially appreciative of Irving Howe myself, when he defended the traditional curriculum at the beginning of the “canon wars” of the 1980s. He observed, for example, how the classics endure through generations, but decades hence, who was going to be reading, say, *Soul on Ice* by Eldridge Cleaver (1968), the Ta-Nehisi Coates and Ibram X. Kendi of his day, who died in 1998. Indeed. Cleaver himself grew disillusioned with the left, with the Black Panthers, and with Communism. He embraced Christianity, ran unsuccessfully for office as a Republican, and demanded that the Pledge of Allegiance be recited at meetings of the Berkeley City Council, whereupon the Berkeley mayor told him to “shut up.” “Shut up, Eldridge,” Mayor Gus Newport said, according to Cleaver’s *New York Times* obituary, “Shut up or we’ll have you removed.” So it goes when you cross the left, you are so much refuse.

James V. Shuls enjoys listening to the score of *Hamilton*, but has a few words of caution about substituting a hit play for history in the Short Take, “Entertaining is Easy, Educating is Harder.”

AQ adviser Dan aka Daniel Asia reviews George Will’s *The Conservative Sensibility*, and Karen Prior Swallow makes her second appearance in our pages with a review of Vivian Gornick’s *Unfinished Business: Notes of a Chronic Re-Reader*. And we finish the issue with some fine poetry by renowned poet and writer Catherine Brosman.