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Is 'White Male Privilege' a Thing?

Must society neutralize the advantages of whiteness before it can heal?

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Nearly two dozen Democrats are vying to replace Donald Trump as the next president of the United States. And as they jockey for the highest office in the land, they are promoting and pushing into mainstream discourse some ideas that, until recently, would have been considered astonishingly radical.

One came from presidential candidate Beto O'Rourke in the midst of a public apology for a harmless joke that his wife was raising their three children "sometimes with my help." "I'll be much more thoughtful going forward in the way that I talk about our marriage," he said, "and also the way in which I acknowledge the truth of the criticism that I have enjoyed white privilege. Absolutely. Undeniable."

Ah yes, "white privilege." *Whiteness* automatically confers unjust advantages on a person, we are now told. Not only that, *maleness* gives a person *more* unjust advantages. *Heterosexuality* gives *even more*. And being content with your biological sex—being "*cisgendered*." And *wealth*. We are informed that society is a competition, and people who have these advantages are starting the 100-yard dash with a 50-yard head start.

People with such privileges must recognize this and apologize, we are informed. Society must award preferential treatment to minorities, women, homosexuals and transgenders. It must punish the wealthy and support the poor. Then we will have a truly fair world.

Democratic presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren believes true fairness requires giving reparations to black Americans. At a televised town hall interview, she answered a black woman who asked for "a public apology for 400 years of free labor" by saying, "*I believe it's time to start the national full-blown conversation about reparations in this country.*" And that means I support the bill in the House to appoint a congressional panel of experts, of people who are studying this, who talk about different ways we may be able to do it and to make a report back to Congress, so that we can as a nation do what's right and begin to heal" (emphasis added throughout).

According to this view, the problems afflicting the black community today are the residual effects of a practice that was abolished more than 150 years ago. The solution is to place our faith in a "congressional panel of experts" to decide on reparations. Then we can all just accept what the experts say, unanimously comply, at last put our slave-owning past behind us, and enjoy racial harmony. Who could possibly envision such a marvelous plan not working out?

O'Rourke and Warren are two prominent white people who have tried to downplay their whiteness. Warren infamously labeled herself an American Indian; in 1996, she was billed as Harvard Law School's "first woman of color." Beto O'Rourke is using a Spanish nickname, but his real name is Robert Francis O'Rourke. Why do these things if whiteness automatically affords such vaunted privileges?

The truth is that America is full of white people who work hard, who struggle, who face setbacks, who miss opportunities, who get overlooked, who get pushed aside, who are mired in debt, who must toil away at mundane jobs, who are effectively stuck in their circumstances, the same as black people, Hispanic people and others. Yet they are being lectured by

politicians, media commentators, wealthy academics, celebrities and professional athletes about their “white privilege.” They are being told that society lacks equality, they are at fault, and that politicians and bureaucrats need to artificially normalize for any factors that give one person an advantage over another.

This thinking is *insidiously wrong*. The more we indulge it, the more individual lives will be destroyed, and the more we will tear our country apart.

It is wrong—because it is the opposite of the way God thinks.

A Fancy New Word

Among those falling prey to this error, a new theory of social justice has arisen. An impressive new term has entered the public lexicon: “intersectionality.” This is essentially a matrix for measuring the scale of your deprivation, and the benefits the rest of society owes you.

What is *intersectionality*? Black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term in 1989. It’s an attempt to categorize and formalize people according to their race, gender, age, wealth, class, religion, disability and sexual orientation in terms of how disadvantaged they are in society. This concept enabled black feminists to argue that the feminist movement was ignoring racial grievances. White women were at a disadvantage, they said, but *black* women were at a *double* disadvantage.

What does this mean in 2019 America? It is playing out in Democratic politics in a specific way. The party is attacking itself. Leftist politicians who are bona fide progressives, even cutting-edge revolutionaries, are being criticized as not leftist enough. Why? They lack appropriate intersectionality.

Sen. Bernie Sanders led the socialist groundswell in the 2016 presidential election. He excited flocks of youths to engage in politics and to embrace big-government, spendy socialist thinking. He is running again in 2020, but many on the left are less excited this time. Why? As Rich Lowry explained in *Politico*, “In the language of the modern left, the straight, cisgendered Sanders is burdened by his utter lack of intersectionality” (February 20).

Senator Sanders was asked on Vermont public radio how he, being old, rich, white and male, can lead a diverse Democratic Party. He said: “We have got to look at candidates, you know, not by the color of their skin, not by their sexual orientation or their gender and not by their age. I mean, I think we have got to try to move us toward a nondiscriminatory society, which looks at people based on their abilities, based on what they stand for.”

Sanders wants to move America “toward a nondiscriminatory society” based on merit and values. Most Americans would say we *already are* the most nondiscriminatory society on Earth and in history. The trouble for Sanders is, his political party is crowded with crusaders moving America toward a *far more discriminatory* society.

Predictably, these people attacked Sanders for his statement. Neera Tanden, from the Center for American Progress, posted this: “At a time where folks feel under attack because of who they are, saying race or gender or sexual orientation or identity doesn’t matter is not off, it’s simply wrong.” Former Clinton aide Jess McIntosh wrote: “This is usually an argument made by people who don’t enjoy outsized respect and credibility because of their race, gender, age and sexual orientation.”

People who are to the left of even *Bernie Sanders* are broadcasting that they do *not* want a society where you are judged by your abilities and what you stand for. They want a society where you are judged by *race, gender and sexual orientation*. They want to level the playing field, which means *discriminating* in these areas, bestowing advantages on those *not* white, *not* male, *not* straight, *not* “cisgendered.”

The less white you are—the less of *all* those privileged things you are—the more deserving you are of reparatory privileges. The more the government should use its power to take from others and give to you. They want to solve discrimination—by discriminating.

‘A Sad Descent Into Tribalism’

The *truly liberal* American ideal is that race should not matter. Martin Luther King Jr., an icon among liberals, dreamed of a nation where people would “not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.” Yet those who claim to be his successors proclaim that people should be judged not by their character, but by their color, as well as their sex. But these are actually the *most primitive* aspects of a person’s identity. Human societies have been discriminating and judging each other based on these attributes for thousands of years!

More than any other nation ever, America has been a place where people of *any* race and *any* background can make a success of themselves, educationally, vocationally, financially, culturally, morally.

Leftists are dismantling this ideal. They are convincing people that this nation is actually the most *unfair and discriminatory*. And somehow, they are persuading people that the *solution* is to exalt race, sex and class as the DEFINING ASPECTS of their identity.

They want more diversity. Not intellectual diversity, not ideological diversity, not diversity of ability. No—they just want diversity of *skin color*, sex and “gender identity.”

This revolutionary effort to characterize our land of unprecedented opportunity as a country that victimizes a literal majority of its people (nonwhites, women and many others) has been shockingly successful. But it is also creating some problems of its own.

“Now the revolution cannot figure out its own hierarchy of authentic grievance groups,” Victor Davis Hanson wrote. “So it has agreed on a loose ‘intersectionality,’ in which over a dozen and often overlapping victim cadres agree that each degree of nonwhite-maleness adds authenticity and becomes a force multiplier of left-wing radicalism.

“Among leftists, Kamala Harris, as black and female, trumps Cory Booker who is just black, who trumps Elizabeth Warren who is exposed as just female, who trumps Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders who are reverse threeifers as white, male and heterosexual” (*American Greatness*, March 3).

Hanson correctly described this development as a “sad descent into tribalism.” That is exactly what it is. It is not enlightened. It is not sophisticated. It is not just and fair. *It is tribal*. It is *primitive*. It is absurd.

And it is terribly destructive, individually and nationally.

A Dangerous Lie

There are *countless* factors that determine success or failure in life. That is why there are people who manage to overcome tremendous setbacks—family dysfunction, extreme poverty, lack of opportunity, bodily limitations—and become spectacular successes. That is also why there are those who have tremendous advantages yet become spectacular failures.

Success comes from *hard work*. It comes from diligence and discipline, from driving oneself in pursuit of worthy goals, making good choices, living the right way, having the right mindset. It comes from surmounting obstacles, again and again, and sometimes chance. But *character* determines what happens when someone catches the occasional good break, or when God opens a door.

The people decrying “white privilege” are believing a lie: that you reach success not by climbing up to it, but by bringing everyone else down.

Their message is: *Focus on what the world ISN'T doing for you. Don't count your blessings—complain about your burdens. Don't dream about possibilities. Don't seize opportunities. Open your eyes to all the OBSTACLES people are putting in your path! Your failures are someone else's fault. Find people to blame! Resent those with success. They're just unfairly privileged.*

This thinking draws people's energy away from responsibility, self-motivation, resiliency, improvement, achievement, contentment and happiness—and redirects it toward dissatisfaction, envy, hypersensitivity, offense, blaming others, protest and destruction. It traps them in their failures.

Radical leftists don't want people to become diligent, disciplined, driven, resourceful, persevering people who take responsibility for their own lives. After all, if more people judge themselves and others not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character—what would they need the Democratic Party for?

Leftist leaders have the temerity to contend that they know—based on a short list of superficial identity markers—exactly who in society is privileged and who is marginalized. Somehow they can measure how much of each individual's success or failure was earned, and how much was unfairly obtained because of bigotry against others. And with their unerring wisdom, they and their panels of experts will settle scores, resolve injustices of generations long buried, negate the effects of all prejudice and bias. They can do all this without being biased toward whatever decision will give them the most votes and the most power.

If we will just surrender more of the power we have over our own lives and give it to them *finally* America can be a land of justice for everyone.

This is hubris on an epic scale. Beyond that, carrying out these utopian fantasies would take an unimaginable level of *authoritarian power*. It is beyond delusional to believe that congressional and bureaucratic panels and experts—and ultimately their armed agents—picking winners and losers based on identity will actually make the world a better place.

The Real Author

Here is a fact: Virtually *everyone* could focus on how unfair life is, if they wanted to. Human nature is adept at finding ways that life should be giving us a better shake. That is because human nature is under the sway of the prince of the power of the air, Satan the devil (Ephesians 2:2). That thinking comes straight from the devil.

Satan likes to provide people excuses for their failures. He wants them to shuck the responsibility that would enable them to

learn from mistakes and summon determination to surmount difficulties and challenges. He wants people to think the world is unfair, always denying them the benefits that would otherwise fall into their laps.

Well, the world *is* unfair. This is Satan's world! Truly equal opportunity has never existed in any society in human history!

Ironically, America has gotten closer to offering equal opportunity than any society ever has—yet people are being deceived into viewing it as the most unequal, unfair society in history. This is a remarkable propaganda triumph by Satan—aimed at fracturing our society and turning us against each other so we will rip ourselves apart.

Sadly, this is exactly what we are doing. And the more we believe this terrible error—the more we try to “heal” ourselves by demanding apologies for privilege and reparations for past wrongs—the more destructive this trend will become. Just watch. Look at the fruits.

Consider how this illustrates the colossal contrast between Satan's thinking and God's. Satan fixates on all the ways we are irredeemably disadvantaged. God—who made all people, of all races, male and female, *IN HIS IMAGE*—wants us all to *overcome* whatever disadvantages we may have and *SUCCEED*. And He has a long-term plan for helping us do so.

God is the one who can judge what advantages and disadvantages we have had in our lives. God is the one who created male and female, beautiful races, resources and wealth we can work with. He is the one who judges each person with perfect justice. Notice the story of the talents in Matthew 25 and the story of the pounds in Luke 19. What matters to Him is not the education, career opportunities and money we receive, but the *content of our character*. We are all different in race, sex, parentage, mental abilities, health, physique, location and so on. Yet we are all equal in terms of developing godly virtue. We all ultimately have the same opportunity to live lives of godly character.

God gives each person a measure of resources to see what we will do with it. He wants us to take responsibility for ourselves, to make the very most of whatever opportunities we have, to take full advantage of whatever blessings and privileges He provides, to conquer whatever obstacles stand in our way. He wants the content of our character to grow and grow and grow! Because in the future, He intends to give *ALL PEOPLE* a great deal *more* responsibility and blessings and privileges—and He is preparing, for that exciting future, all those who accept the challenge today! ■

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