**How to Uphold White Supremacy by Focusing on Diversity and Inclusion**

**Liberalism’s inherent racism.**

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Since the civil rights movement, white people have exploited every opportunity to conceal their colonialist legacy and longstanding (ab)use of white supremacist power. They’ve proven time and again that they have no interest in rectifying that history, only in dealing with the fact that they could no longer deny the reality of those injustices. One effective tactic has been to separate white supremacy and colonialism from the way racism is understood and taught through schools, history textbooks, news media, and through any white-controlled institutions. These lessons, of anti-racism as-told-by-white-people, will be familiar to you: that racism is only explicit racial prejudice; that separatism is the essence of Jim Crow (and therefore inclusion is the antithesis to *de jure* segregation); and that the remedy for a racist society is a colorblind one.

All of these assumptions are grounded in liberalism: the egalitarian principle which works to ignore and erase difference rather than to undo oppression. It strives for a post-feminist, post-queer, post-racial or racially colorblind world. Liberalism as an ideology deems equal rights and equal treatment as a higher priority than  material justice, or as an effective means towards  it. Its presumptions of equality are false, as individualist equality may be written into law and policy while material inequality thrives. It effectively abstracts and obscures power dynamics along lines of race, class, and gender. The difference between material justice and liberalism is the difference between actually [making reparations](http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/05/the-case-for-reparations/361631/) for a long history of racism and countries like Austria, Finland, Hungary, France, and now Sweden [removing all mentions of “race” from their legislation](http://mic.com/articles/95872/sweden-just-found-the-worst-way-imaginable-to-get-rid-of-racism).

Liberalism is not the opposite of conservatism on a left-right political spectrum, but a set of values that informs various other political ideologies including conservatism and libertarianism. Even the most popular manifestations of feminism and radical political thought (anarchism, communism, and socialism) are their most liberal forms. You can recognize the influence of liberalism in any political philosophy or practice that , consciously or not ,  focuses on individual equality before social power. What is it that says that ending racism means setting aside our differences and finding commonality? Liberalism. What is it that says that we need love to bring us together and to end the hate that drives us apart? Liberalism. What is it that says to choose unity over disunion? Liberalism. What is it that says racism/sexism/sizeism hurts *everyone*? Liberalism.

All of these ideas value a certain perception of equality at the expense of those who suffer due to social inequality. That’s why you’ll notice this rhetoric so frequently employed to dismiss oppressed people who direct their anger…at their oppressors. Through a white-writing of history (and history textbooks) that erases and minimizes all of the revolts that were necessary for change, liberals are able to demand that protesters remain totally peaceful, pacifist, and nonviolent (by which they mean non-destructive of property) in the face of dehumanization, degradation, and absolute repressive violence (the actual destruction of human life). White liberals and their sympathizers take ideas and quotes from Martin Luther King out of context and use them to shame disruptive protesters as rioters and looters, dismiss more militant activists as spiteful and vengeful, blaming them all for their own conditions.

The toxic effects of liberalism are clear in diversity advocacy and its language. Take the reframing of affirmative action as an initiative to promote diversity. Affirmative action was created in recognition of a centuries-long legacy of racism and historically discriminatory hiring/admissions practices. It is remedial in nature, and requires the recognition of past and ongoing wrongs that need to be righted. In stark contrast to this, diversity emphasizes the pragmatic benefits to morale, productivity, and profits. Diversity is the practice of mixing together different bodies within a common organization, and is a prime resource to be capitalized upon by businesses and organizations that are white owned and/or operated. Diversity still benefits those in power by taking advantage of the various experiences and vantage points of different racial/gender/sexual backgrounds. Rather than respecting difference and redistributing power based on it, diversity only “celebrates” difference in order to exploit multiculturalism for its economic value.

There is a reason that diversity is consistently promoted as being beneficial to everyone, disregarding who benefits most from various arrangements of diversity. As a dominant mode of thought, we must challenge liberalism if we hope to challenge the structures of domination that it both masks and reinforces, through diversity or otherwise.

“Inclusivity” and “exclusivity” are politically meaningless without context and divert attention away from specific power dynamics. In common use, they are assigned inherently positive and negative values without specifying who is being included or excluded. This is why you might see a group proudly promote itself as being more “open” and “inclusive” than a group which is intentionally exclusive to create a safer space for a specific marginalized group. This is because de jure segregation is so strongly associated with racism. Still, segregation is not racist in and of itself. It is racist depending on a history of white supremacy, depending on who is enforcing segregation, and depending on the material impact of said segregation.

While after a history of slavery and Jim Crow segregation, fighting for desegregation was obviously necessary, but that progress is not inherent to diversity and inclusion. They are only valuable insofar as they reduce a white stronghold on power. How would racial diversity or the inclusion of men benefit the organizational team behind [Black Girl Dangerous](http://www.blackgirldangerous.org/)? What about organizations like the [Trans Women of Color Collective](http://www.twocc.us/) or [INCITE!](http://www.incite-national.org/) which could only be opened to more racial diversity through the inclusion of whites? Diversity and inclusion whitewash and undermine the very basis of their value for racial justice and feminism: providing access to resources, representation, and power to identity groups that lack them. Not only is “inclusivity” politically meaningless, but to frame the benefits of stronger representation of marginalized races, genders, etc. within “diversity” gravely strips the progress it provides of its power and political significance. There is then danger in uncritically advocating for—or even just discussing power dynamics in terms of—diversity or inclusivity.

Closed spaces for marginalized identities are essential, especially ones for multiply marginalized identities, as we know from intersectionality (not to be confused with the idea that all oppression is interconnected, as many white women who have [appropriated](http://www.gradientlair.com/post/64435736292/black-women-womanist-black-feminist-epistemology) the term as self-proclaimed “intersectional feminists” seem to understand it). Any group, whether organized around a shared marginalized identity or not, will by-default be centered around the most powerful within that group. For example, cisgender white women will dominate women’s groups that aren’t run by or consciously centering trans women and women of color. A requirement for all groups to be fully open and inclusive [invites the derailment and silencing of marginalized voices](http://geekfeminism.org/2013/07/05/when-your-code-of-conduct-has-unintended-consequences/) already pervasive in public spaces, preventing alternative spaces of relative safety from that to form. Hegemony trickles down through layers of identity, but liberation surges upwards from those who experience the most compounded layers of oppression.

So why do so many people seeking racial justice, female empowerment, and queer liberation still choose to advocate for “diversity” and “inclusion”? They appeal to liberalism. They prevent oppression from being named. They prevent us from speaking truth to power. They make progress sound friendly to those in power. Companies can tokenize women and people of color throughout their advertising. They can get way more credit than they deserve for being not 100% white men. They can profit from the increases in efficiency and productivity associated with more diversity. All of the above ignore the fact that companies needed to have diversity initiatives to make them less overwhelmingly white in the first place; that white people are the ones in the position of being able to grant access in the first place. When we work for justice and liberation, we can’t accept progress that is conditional on being economically beneficial.

The only way to prevent that is to name oppression for what it is; to speak truth to power. If a group is dominated by whites, men, and other privileged classes, don’t let that be reduced to a diversity issue.

You may have seen the phrase before and possibly even used it yourself, but if you still focus on inclusion and diversity, you don’t truly understand: assimilation ≠ liberation. When we talk about diversity and inclusion, we necessarily position marginalized groups as naturally needing to assimilate into dominant ones, rather than to undermine said structures of domination. Yes, we need jobs; we need education; we need to access various resources. What we don’t need is to relegate ourselves to the position of depending on someone else to offer us inclusion and access to those resources. Inclusion is something they must give, but our liberation is something we will take. The cost of assimilation is always in the well-being and lives of those who are not close enough to power to be able to assimilate. Another less popular expression of our expression more sharply calls attention to these dangers of uncritical integrationism: assimilation = death.

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