

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette | Sunday, November 6, 2022

OPINION

Live free or DEI hard



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Issue 3—the election ballot initiative written by state Sen. Jason Rapert that greatly

enhances protections against government burdens on religious freedom—is a critical response to leftist antagonism towards religion.

For some time, the news has been replete with bureaucrats attempting to force devout Christians to participate in religious ceremonies they find objectionable, fund contraception, and engage in unwanted medical procedures. Issue 3 will protect their piety.

This hostility towards deeply held religious beliefs is worse in academia, the goldilocks growth medium for the Dunning-Kruger effect. Academics have an even more inflated view of the breadth of their knowledge, and the grandiosity of their position, than government officials. And that's saying something. It's a small leap to start at "let me teach you this" and wind up with "I know what's better for you than you do." While illustrations abound, I think you'll find this recent one informative.

I received an email from an out-of-state academic wishing me a happy Indigenous People's Day. That was all well and fine. But the emailer failed to acknowledge the simultaneous Jewish Feast of the Tabernacles, Sukkot, celebrating the gathering of the harvest and God's protection of the Jews on leaving Egypt.

You might conclude—notwithstanding that the author taught in the Holy Land—that he was simply unaware of Sukkot. That's entirely possible. It's a lesser known holiday to the secular.

Or maybe the emailer didn't know that this New-York-accented, east-coast-educated academic named Steinbuch is Jewish. That's slightly less plausible.

I'm content believing that the emailer was simply unaware of either or both. I take no offense, regardless.

It's the contrast between the treatment of the two holidays I find notable. Put aside the emailer's intimate knowledge of the freshly minted Indigenous People's Day—bless his heart—what does he know about my observance thereof? Nothing, obviously.

And that's the key. To the left, there's no doubt that everyone kneels during the virtue-signaling irreligious liturgy of the government-deified soon-to-be department-store 50-percent-off sale day officially sanctioned this past year. After all, a secular God can have no atheists. So everyone is a believer. Or is it nonbeliever?

Religion, in contrast, has no place in public discourse for progressives. Everyone gets a "Happy

Indigenous People's Day" salutation, but don't dare say "Merry Christmas," no less greetings for the admittedly more obscure Feast of the Tabernacles, because religion itself is verboten. And even in those circumstances where its existence is begrudgingly recognized, the risk of wrongly assuming a follower is crippling to a leftist.

I've never been insulted when offered a Merry Christmas. I can enjoy the good wishes irrespective of my religious beliefs.

This example, though, is a cap of a far deeper berg.

Academic institutions throughout this state have created highly paid so-called Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) positions with your hard-earned tax dollars. And these publicly funded high-salaried DEI administrators are undertaking rampant DEI re-education efforts assertively in response to "institutional racism" hiding in plain sight in the most liberal entities in America.

What solutions are these so-called DEI bureaucrats offering? None, because institutional racism in academia does not exist. Public schools are leftist hotbeds of self-styled anti-racism.

These bureaucrats are the political commissars of entrenched-progressive government overlords who use unrestricted public funds for leftist indoctrination and non-merit hiring and admissions. DEI dogma relegates religion to the basement by inculcating an exclusive list of preferred minorities for special privilege while eschewing religious minorities.

A recent opinion column in The Wall Street Journal soundly observed that "DEI divisions are the driving force of cancel culture on campus, which limits the free inquiry that is essential to a university's mission. While campus radicals long ago achieved this stranglehold on the humanities and social sciences, STEM fields were more resistant. The rise of DEI is how they are being brought under political control." It's no surprise therefore that so-called diversity and equity efforts rarely include (irony intended) mainstream religious minorities such as Jews, unless there's an intersection with some progressive-privileged minority status. Mere Jews: no thanks. We've got more than enough of you! Inuit Jews? That's another story.

And evangelical Christians? To the DEI Stasi, conservative Christians make Jews look like the founding comrades of a hemp-collective drum circle entitled to guaranteed set-asides. Evangelicals certainly won't get past the standards-and-practices censors screening the DEI curriculum.

All of this misappropriated-public funding and politicized government behavior occurs seemingly with no oversight from the Legislature. So far.

The Legislature needs to gain control of this runaway train like Richard Harris in the eerily timely "The Cassandra Crossing" movie released during the Bicentennial. Public schools funded through taxpayer dollars shouldn't be able to misdirect critical resources into these non-educational, secular-catechistic so-called DEI positions.

That WSJ piece shares a recommendation on how to prevent this disaster film from becoming a "Clockwork Orange"-inspired looped reel of brainwashing: "Meantime, state legislatures could bar the use of state funds for the support of DEI bureaucracies and all their works. This might not change the character of the radicalized faculty, but it would at least take an important weapon out of their hands."

I can refine that exhortation. Let's send these millions of dollars misspent on DEI to actual K-12 teachers in classrooms. This independently good policy also serves to further rebut the false accusation that Republicans are anti-education and opposed to teacher raises.

If leftists are truly interested in diversity and inclusion—equity is claptrap for ubiquitous participation trophies—they could easily convey valid ideals without the need to expend one additional dollar or hire one more bureaucrat.

Here’s what I do in my classes to promote true diversity and inclusion. I inform students of upcoming Jewish holidays, some even requiring my absence from class for observance.

I don’t do this to convert anyone. Judaism is not a proselytizing religion. And even if it were, which would be fine, I wouldn’t do so for legal and moral reasons. Rather, I mention in class the meaning of the Jewish holy days as part of an education of cultural awareness.

But the left isn’t interested in teaching awareness. It’s laser-focused on foisting its cultural preferences—a very different kind of education—on impressionable minds, dismissing alternatives, particularly conservative ones, and using our tax dollars to make it all happen, the general population’s objections aside.

The true goal of the left’s version of so-called DEI is the surreptitious conscription of an army of Stepford drones spreading their unholy mantra of division and government-sanctioned privilege. This mandated dogma must be stopped before the relatively few of us in academia who haven’t been forcibly converted are compelled to swear our fealty.

This is your right to know.

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