Politically Correct Education

Don Closson considers the impact that affirmative action, multiculturalism, and speech codes have had on education. He also argues that the heart of the issue is the rejection of both the Judeo-Christian worldview and Western Civilization.

The Power of Political Correctness

The media has recently taken notice of a trend in education that has actually been around for some time. This trend has been obvious to anyone well-acquainted with the goings-on in our citadels of higher learning or even on selected high school campuses. The term *Political Correctness*, or *politically correct speech*, covers most of the issues involved. Multiculturalism is often given as the driving ethic that prompts one to be politically correct.

At the foundation of this movement is the belief that all education is political. Nowhere in the curriculum can one find a hiding place from race, class, or gender issues. Added to this assumption is the law of moral and ethical relativism: All systems of thought, all cultures, are equal in value. To assume otherwise is politically incorrect by definition.

Just how important this type of thinking is to those who influence our nation's students is reflected by some of their comments. According to Glenn Maloney, assistant dean of students at the University of Texas at Austin, "Multiculturalism will be the key word for education. I believe that will be the mission of the university in the 90's."(1) Donna Shalala, chancellor of the University of Wisconsin at Madison, adds that this movement amounts to "a basic transformation of American higher education in the name of multiculturalism and diversity."(2)

A recent study of the New York school system found that

“African Americans, Asian Americans, Puerto Rican/Latinos, and Native Americans have all been the victims of an intellectual and educational oppression that has characterized the culture and institutions of the United States and the European American worlds for centuries.”(3)

The report goes on to state, “Unfortunately, stereotyping and misinformation have become part of the dominant culture enveloping everyone. . . . Because of the depth of the problem and the tenacity of its hold on the mind, only the most stringent measures can have significant impact.”(4)

And stringent measures are what have occurred. Curricula, admissions policies, the hiring and promotion of faculty, and the freedom to debate issues have all been modified by those who currently define political correctness. There is a growing body of evidence that quota systems are now in place in many admissions offices across the country. Textbooks are being written and courses changed to promote multiculturalism at the expense of teaching about Western Civilization. Professors are unable to teach their courses or participate in the academic enterprise because their views fail to conform to the new guardians of culture.

What is most appalling is the attempt to remove the freedom of speech from students who fail to conform to the correct position on a broad spectrum of topics. What is ironic is that many of those now attempting to limit the freedom of speech of students in the name of multiculturalism are the very same individuals that began the free speech movement in the sixties, arguing for academic freedom and student input into the curriculum. It seems that the issue was more a matter of gaining power to control the curriculum and inject it with their views rather than truly to promote freedom of academic endeavors.

Ethnic Studies

Let’s look at a few places where political correctness has had a major impact. In 1988 the Stanford faculty voted to change the Western Culture course, one of the most popular on campus, to “Cultures, Ideas and Values.” The fifteen-book requirement was dropped and replaced with the admonition to give substantial attention to issues of race(5) and gender. The reading list now had to include a quota of works by women and minorities. Out goes Shakespeare, in comes Burgos-Debray.

Shakespeare is deemed to be racist, sexist, and classist, a product of the ultimate evil—Western Civilization. French writer Elisabeth Burgos-Debray is, on the other hand, politically correct. One of her works, now part of the Stanford curriculum, describes a Guatemalan woman’s struggle against capitalist oppression. She rejects marriage and motherhood and becomes a feminist, a socialist, and finally a Marxist, arguing politics with fellow revolutionaries in Paris. According to the author, this simple Guatemalan woman speaks for all the Indians of the American continent.(6)

Berkeley, Mount Holyoke, and the University of Wisconsin are just a few of the schools where students must take a course in ethnic studies but are not required to take a single course in Western Civilization. At Berkeley, the ethnic studies course is the only required course on campus, and Wisconsin students can graduate without taking any American history. Ohio State has gone even further, revamping its entire curriculum to reflect issues of gender, race, and ethnicity. The chairman of the English department at Pennsylvania State University has remarked, “I would bet that Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* is taught in more English departments today than all of Shakespeare’s plays combined.”(7)

An ironic twist to this revolution is that when writings of third- world authors are included in the curriculum, they rarely are the classics from that culture. Instead, they tend

to be recent, Marxist, and politically correct works.

Unfortunately, curriculum revisions are not confined to the college campus. The state of New York recently commissioned a committee to review its statewide secondary-school curriculum. The results were a bit startling, to say the least.

According to the report, no topic is culture-free. The Eurocentric, white, American culture currently dominating the curriculum must give way to one which represents all cultures equally. Even math and science were cited as culturally biased because they failed to give credit to contributions from other cultures.(8)

In the social sciences, even more radical demands have been made. One Black Studies professor charges that the current curriculum in New York's high schools reflects "deep-seated pathologies of racial hatred." He argues that time spent studying the U.S. Constitution, which is seriously flawed in his opinion, is grounds for miseducation. He adds that studying the Constitution is egocentric and blatant White Nationalism.(9)

Instruments of Exclusion

In chapter 2 of his book *Illiberal Education*, Dinesh D'Souza takes up the case of high school senior Yat-pang Au. To make a fairly long story short, Yat- pang received a rejection letter from the University of California at Berkeley in 1987 although he had graduated first in his high school class, scored 1340 on the SAT, earned letters in track and cross-country, served on the student council, and won seven scholarships from groups such as the National Society of Professional Engineers. What went wrong?

It wasn't his credentials. In fact, Yat-pang was considerably above the Berkeley average in his qualifications. His only real problem was his race, and what chancellor Ira Michael

Hayman called “a little social engineering.” Under Hayman the university began to devalue the importance of merit and achievement in admissions in order to achieve a racially balanced student body, one that reflects the population at large.

As a result, this family of immigrants from Hong Kong found that their son could not go to Berkeley although ten other students from his high school had been accepted with lower qualifications. The policy of racial balance which seemed so fair to Hayman was anything but fair to the Au family.

If Yat-pang had been Hispanic or Black he would have had no problem attending Berkeley. Asians, many of them immigrants, are now being excluded from Berkeley because they happen to be a too-successful minority that values the family and education.

Unfortunately, Berkeley is not the only place one can find this type of discrimination. Harvard, UCLA, Stanford, Brown, and others have been charged with discrimination towards Asians. As D’Souza writes, “Quotas which were intended as instruments of inclusion now seemed to function as instruments of exclusion.”(10)

Even if we set aside Yat-pang’s individual rights, does this policy make sense for the minorities it is trying to help? Often it does not. D’Souza notes that Blacks and Hispanics admitted under reduced academic requirements do not fare well at Berkeley. In one study, only 18 percent of the Black and 22 percent of the Hispanic affirmative-action students graduated within five years. Almost 30 percent of Black and Hispanic students drop out at the end of their freshman year.(11) Because we have set aside academic preparation as the criterion for admission to our top schools, many students who cannot compete are being admitted. They simply drop out, more frustrated and angry than before.

Another issue that goes hand-in-hand with admissions is the issue of testing itself. Many argue that since some groups do better than others on the SAT, the test is biased. A New York federal judge has ruled that, since women do not do as well as men on the SAT, using the test as a criterion for awarding its Regents and Empire State scholarships violates state law.(12)

What is remarkable about this trend is that testing was installed in the 1920s to fight arbitrary bias in admissions. When one removes testing, which even the critics must agree is still the best way to predict academic success, all other criteria except race and gender are subjective.

In light of this fact, College Board president Donald Stewart, who is black, has argued that the test covers words and ideas necessary for success in college, regardless of cultural background.(13)

Freedom of Speech

Those who consider themselves politically correct have inflicted grave damage on the concept of free speech. It is interesting to note that Christians have endured free-speech restrictions for years, but only recently have others who hold to politically incorrect positions experienced this form of discrimination.

Restrictions on speech come in three different forms on campus. The most widespread form is the conduct code. Another is the refusal to allow conservative speakers to address groups on campus. And last is the censure of faculty members who step outside the sphere of politically correct thought.

The University of Michigan has been a leader in restricting First Amendment rights. Responding to a student radio disc jockey who invited other students to call in their favorite racial jokes, the university began a long crusade to stamp out racism, sexism, and a multitude of other “isms.” Instead of

just punishing the offender, all students were now under suspicion, and all speech would be monitored carefully.

A new policy on discrimination and discriminatory harassment was approved. It defined as punishable “any behavior, verbal or physical, that stigmatizes or victimizes an individual on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, creed, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, handicap, or Vietnam-era veteran status.”(14)

Debate on these topics was to be restricted in fear that someone might be stigmatized by the discussion. The so-called marketplace of ideas that colleges are supposed to represent had been shrunk down to convenience-store size.

Since one cannot be certain that even the most balanced discussion of a topic such as gay rights or religious cults might not stigmatize a fellow student, one must refrain from entering into that territory. The result of this type of policy is to guarantee a monopoly to the radical Marxist and feminist ideas now being promoted by the faculty and administration on many of our campuses.

Fortunately, this policy was successfully challenged by an unnamed psychology professor who realized that most of the subject matter he dealt with in class might stigmatize someone. In a strange twist, the ACLU was on the right side of this issue and represented the professor. Eventually a U.S. District Court struck down even a modified version of the code. But there are still codes in effect at Emory, Middlebury, Brown, Penn State, Tufts, and the Universities of California, Connecticut, North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and others. Many more schools are considering implementing codes.(15)

Some groups on campus have used more blatant tactics to keep conservatives from speaking. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Conner, U.N. ambassador Jeanne Kirkpatrick, and Secretary of

Health and Human Services Louis Sullivan have all been victims of censorship in the form of gay and pro-abortion groups shouting them down. In one case, black students with clubs disrupted a meeting for the National Association of Scholars, a conservative group of professors, charging that they were actually supported by the Ku Klux Klan.(16)

Another form of censorship is the silencing of faculty. Alan Gribben, a professor at the University of Texas, made the mistake of voting against the politization of a writing course in the English Department. As a result he was ostracized by the department and decided to leave after seventeen years on the faculty.(17)

The "Ism" Proliferation

The goal of the political correctness revolutionaries on campus is the removal of any remnant of racism, sexism, class elitism, and even lookism, the practice of treating people differently because of their looks. There are also specific positions on ecology, foreign and domestic policy, homosexuality, and animal rights that are politically correct.

The hope behind all of this is the creation of a society where each culture and social group is appreciated for its contributions. But the fallout has been to encourage people to find some reason to declare oppression, for it seems that only those who are oppressed are in a position to determine what is politically correct. White, middle-class males are the great Satan incarnate—even the most repentant among them must be watched closely.

Politically correct people argue that they are calling for a philosophy of inclusion. They are not thought police, they say; they are only concerned with correcting centuries of unfairness. In reality the effect of this movement has been to silence or remove from campus those who differ from the politically correct position. If a professor opposes racially

based admissions policies, he is racist. If a student holds to religious convictions concerning homosexuality, she is homophobic. The issue really goes beyond mere tolerance; the goal of this movement is to remove opposition to the plans of the radical left.

Since those who are politically correct agree that Western Civilization is the cause of all evil in the world, one might ask what should replace it. Not surprisingly, the writers and heroes of this movement tend to be Marxist, feminist, and gay. It is interesting that Marx, a white male European, is still considered politically correct, although he held quite incorrect views on racial issues (in fact, he spoke positively concerning slavery in America).(18)

If true multiculturalism were the issue, these folks would be calling for the study and implementation of traditional cultures from around the world, which, by the way, are just as racist and far more male-dominated than our own. Whether one looks at Islam or the teachings of oriental traditions, one finds that a dim view is taken of both modern feminist thought and homosexuality.

The tradition of Western thought has been to deal with ideas that transcend race, and it has been anything but homogeneous in its conclusions. The irony of the accusations leveled at Western thought by the politically correct is that the ideas they favor have been most fully developed in America and Europe. Even with all of its faults, Western Civilization has been the most open and tolerant of all societies. It has been eager to find and incorporate ideas that are beneficial from other cultures.

All the important issues considered on our campuses have religious elements. Whether one is considering the uses of technology or the relationships between the sexes, everyone is informed by his or her religious presuppositions. Placing a prior restraint on someone’s freedom to speak because he is

coming from a different position not only violates our historic view of freedom of speech but also can be used to further remove Christian thought from our schools.

What those in authority on our campuses really hope to accomplish is the unquestioned implementation of a worldview that releases man from his moral obligation to a creator God, a God who sees all men and women, regardless of their color, as in need of redemption. As Christian parents and alumni, we need to make certain that colleges remain places where students can seek and find the truth.

Notes

1. “Multiculturalism Seen As Education Key,” *Dallas Morning News*, 9 December 1990, sec. A, p. 56.
2. Dinesh D’Souza, *Illiberal Education* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 13.
3. Helle Bering-Jensen, “Teaching All Things to All People,” *Insight*, 2 April 1990, 49.
4. Ibid.
5. Allan C. Brownfeld, “`Cultural Imperialism’ Is Destroying American Education,” *Human Events*, 29 June 1991, 523.
6. D’Souza, *Illiberal Education*, 71.
7. Brownfeld, “Cultural Imperialism,” 523.
8. Bering-Jensen, “Teaching All Things,” 50.
9. Ibid.
10. D’Souza, ILLIBERAL EDUCATION, 29.
11. Ibid., 39.
12. Ibid., 44.
13. Ibid., 45.
14. Ibid., 142.
15. Ibid., 146.
16. “Race Riot: Minority Students Disrupt NAS Lecture,” *Campus Report from Accuracy in Academia*, May 1991, 1.
17. “P.C. or Not P.C., That Is the Question,” *The Dallas Morning News*, 21 April 1991, sec. J, p. 1.
18. Brownfeld, “Cultural Imperialism,” 11.

©1992 Probe Ministries

Crusader Terrorists? – How Should Christians Respond

In this day of multiculturalism and political correctness, Christians should have been prepared to learn that a New Jersey school district recently chose Christian Crusaders as an imaginary terrorist group for its first live action hostage response drill. To portray the terrorists, the school district organizers made up a right-wing fundamentalist group that denies the separation of church and state. Then, they created a fake hostage situation instigated by the supposedly angry parent of a student expelled for praying.

The stated goal of the event was summarized nicely by the district superintendent. He claimed that "You perform as you practice. We need to practice under conditions as real as possible in order to evaluate our procedures and plans so that they're as effective as possible." While many comments could be made about the phrase as real as possible, the most critical aspect of this issue is a deeper consideration.

Sadly, just as the impact of the aforementioned PC dogma on our schools is predictable, so is the vehement response of the local Christian community to this perceived offense. One Christian demanded that a public apology be given by school officials, along with their resignations. Other critics pointed out the obvious bigotry against Christians and the absurdity of the scenario itself. Christians have the legal right to pray in schools, and they are far more likely to bring their lawyers than their guns.

Still others mentioned that this is not the first time a school district had deliberately steered clear of the obvious terrorist groups, deciding instead to pick on Christians. For example, three years ago a Michigan school district substituted a group of crazed Christian homeschoolers called Wackos Against Schools and Education for their mock terrorism drill to avoid offending any Muslims.

Unfair scenarios such as these have a lot of Christians upset, and in a perfect world, they have a right to be. But is this the best response to events such as these? How should an ambassador for Christ handle them? May I suggest an alternative?

Instead of the immediate declaration of how persecuted and indignant we Christians are, perhaps we should ask ourselves why school officials see the followers of Jesus in this light in the first place. Are we doing anything that prompts this kind of stereotyping? Unfortunately, many school administrators only hear from outraged believers when there is a problem. Rarely are Christians viewed as beneficial to the school and surrounding community.

I know of a small evangelical church in New Zealand that was marginalized as an almost cultish group until they decided to pick a school to bless each spring. Church members take one week each year to clean, paint, and repair at the church's expense whatever needs fixing at the selected school. Their Christ-like service has completely changed the surrounding communitys attitude regarding the church, and school officials have even attended services as a result of their gratitude. A similar scenario played out recently in a small village in China. An underground church went from being persecuted to being appreciated when they decided to restore a bridge vital to that city.

It is relatively easy and natural to respond to negative stereotyping, even persecution, with a demand for political

rights and privileges. It is far more difficult and supernatural to bless those who curse you and pray for those who mistreat you.

© 2007 Probe Ministries

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a politically correct attempt to over-correct cultural bias by elevating all subcultures to equal status.

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

What is Multiculturalism?

A few years ago the campus newspaper of a major university published an essay written by two professors titled *The Statement of the Black Faculty Caucus.*{1} The purpose of the essay was to define how the University might become a truly multicultural institution. It spoke of empowerment, authority, Western culture, and transformation. The objective of the Black Faculty Caucus was to create a critical mass of empowered "minority people" at all levels of the university system. The essay argued that "Euro-Americans teaching the materials of people of color cannot make the University multicultural because multiculturalism demands empowered people of color as well as empowered areas of knowledge."{2} At the end of their essay the authors wrote, "What we are talking about here is no less than transforming the University into a center of multicultural learning: anything less continues a system of education that ultimately reproduces racism and racists."{3}

Racial reconciliation should be a top priority for every Christian, of any race or cultural background. But will this demand for a "multicultural center of learning" produce a less prejudiced society? Multiculturalists insist on greater sensitivity towards, and increased inclusion of, racial minorities and women in society. Christians should endorse both of these goals. But many advocating multiculturalism go beyond these demands for sensitivity and inclusion; here is where Christians must be careful.

One of the difficulties of accommodating multiculturalists is that defining a multicultural society, curriculum, or institution seems to be determined by one's perspective. A commonly held view suggests that being multicultural involves tolerance towards racial and ethnic minorities, mainly in the areas of dress, language, food, religious beliefs, and other cultural manifestations. However, an influential group calling itself NAME, or the National Association for Multicultural Education, includes in its philosophy statement the following: "Xenophobia, discrimination, racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia are societal phenomena that are inconsistent with the principles of a democracy and lead to the counterproductive reasoning that differences are deficiencies."{4} NAME is a powerful organization composed of educators from around the country, and it has considerable influence on how schools approach the issue of diversity on campus. The fundamental question that the folks at NAME need to answer is, "Is it always counterproductive to reason that some differences might be deficiencies?" In other words, isn't it possible that some of the characteristics of specific culture groups are dangerous or morally flawed (for example, the culture of pedophilia)?

It is not uncommon for advocates of multiculturalism like NAME to begin with the assumption that truth is culturally based. It is argued that a group's language dictates what ideas about God, human nature, and morality are permissible. While

Americans may define reality using ideas from its Greek, Roman, and Judeo-Christian heritage, Asian or African cultures see the world differently based on their traditions. Multiculturalists conclude that since multiple descriptions of reality exist, no one view can be true in any ultimate sense. Furthermore, since truth is a function of language, and all language is created by humans, all truth is created by humans. This view of truth and language has a spokesperson in Dr. Richard Rorty, humanities professor at the University of Virginia, who argues that truth that transcends culture is not available because "where there are no sentences there is no truth, and sentences and their respective languages are human creations."{5}

Finally, if all truth is created by humans, it is all equally true. Cultural ideas or institutions, like human sacrifice or welfare systems, are equally valid if they are useful for a given group of people. In other words, we live in a universe that is blind to moral choices. We are the final judges of how we shall live.

As Christians, we believe that ideas do have consequences. While being careful not to promote one set of cultural rules over others simply because we are comfortable with them, we acknowledge that Scripture reveals to us the character and nature of God, humankind, and our need for a savior. These truths can be communicated cross-culturally in a sensitive way, regardless of the people-group involved. If we didn't believe this to be true in a universal sense, then Christianity can't be true in any real way. In other words, in order to be what it claims to be, Christianity must transcend culture in a way that many multiculturalists argue cannot occur.

Language and Sensitivity

In recent years, America has been attracting over one million immigrants annually. This has resulted in a country that is

religiously, racially, and linguistically more diverse. Conflict arises, however, over the question of how our nation's institutions should respond to this diversity. Until recently, it was argued that America was a melting pot society, that regardless of an immigrant's origin, given a generation or two, his family would be assimilated into American culture. Multiculturalists have challenged both the reality and advisability of this view.

Multiculturalists brand our culture as white, Western, male, Christian, middle-class and heterosexual. They declare that our schools have forced on students a curriculum that promotes only that perspective. The books they read, the ideas they consider, the moral and ethical standards they are taught, explicitly or implicitly, tend to be those of dead white European males. The problem, they argue, is that this leaves out the contributions of many people. People of color, women, homosexuals, and various religious traditions are ignored and thus silenced. As a result, they contend, what passes for knowledge on campus is biased. Their goal is to correct this bias.

This charge of bias is not a groundless one. Even though many feel that Western culture has been very open to outside ideas, all majorities—in any society—will tend to seek cultural dominance.

The resulting multiculturalist agenda includes three demands on American society. The first is that the white Americans become more sensitive to minorities. This demand has resulted in what is referred to as "politically correct language." Speech codes enforcing sensitivity on college campuses have attempted to protect oppressed groups from having to endure words and ideas that might ostracize them. At the center of this issue is the individual's feelings or self-esteem. The multiculturalists argue that if a person's self-esteem is damaged, he or she cannot learn in school.

Christians ought to be the most sensitive people in society. If calling people handicapped, Black, or Indian makes them feel diminished in importance or somehow less human, we as Christians need to be empathetic and make changes in our use of language. This sensitivity should grow out of a sense of biblical humility, not for political or economic reasons.

But another question still must be answered. Will the enforced use of certain words really benefit the self-esteem and thus the learning of minority students in schools, as some have suggested? Dr. Paul Vitz, professor of psychology at New York University, argues that this is a far too simplistic view of human nature.{6} Self-esteem itself cannot be tied directly to any behavior, positive or negative.

Some contend that enforcing "politically correct speech" is an attempt to redescribe our society in a manner that changes the way we think about issues. If the concepts of personal and family responsibility become labeled as hate speech towards those on welfare, an entire way of looking at the issue is forced out of the dialogue.

Unfortunately, language can also be used to legitimize behavior that Christians believe to be morally wrong. Homosexuality has progressively been referred to as a sin, then a disease, a lifestyle, and now a preference or sexual orientation. Just by re-describing this activity in new terms, an entirely different connotation is given to what homosexuality is. This has not occurred by accident.

Hebrews 12:14 tells us to make every effort to be at peace with all men. As we articulate truth, our language should lean towards gentleness and respect, for the sake of the Gospel. When we believe that every person deserves to be shown respect because we are all created in the image of God, our attitude will result in language and tone that is sensitive and gentle—not because political correctness demands it, but because out of a heart of love flow words of love.

Inclusion and Truth

A second demand being made on our schools and society is in the area of inclusiveness. Multiculturalists contend that marginalized people need to be brought into the curriculum and the marketplace of ideas on campus. No group should ever have to feel left out. One example is the recent set of standards offered by UCLA's National Center for History in the Schools. As originally offered, the standards greatly increased the voice of both minorities and women in the telling of our nation's history. However, many charge that they denigrated or ignored the contributions of white Americans in order to be inclusive. In fact, some complained that the overall picture of America produced by the standards was of an oppressive, WASPish empire. Even the U.S. Senate denounced the proposed standards by a vote of 99 to 1. One Senator voted against the resolution because it wasn't strong enough.

The standards declared that the U.S. is not a Western-based nation, but the result of three cultures. These cultures—Native American, African-American and European—are not seen as moral equals. In fact, the European contribution was one of oppression, injustice, gender bias and rape of the natural world. Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, responded to the standards by saying that "No other nation in the world teaches a national history that leaves its children feeling negative about their own country—this would be the first."{7}

In fact, U.S. history textbooks have been moving toward inclusion for some time. In order to make up for the neglect of women and people of color in past texts, some historians and publishers have gone a bit overboard in their attempts at finding the right balance. In one text, The American Nation, of the 13 religious leaders mentioned in short biographies, only two are non-Hispanic white males—Brigham Young and Ralph Waldo Emerson.{8} Often women and minorities are injected into

the text in odd ways. In this book, Senator Margaret Chase Smith is cited for challenging Senator Joseph McCarthy. While she was an early critic of McCarthy, she had little to do with his eventual political demise. Another example is Native American chief George Crum, noted for making the first potato chips in 1853.

The writing of history is a delicate task, and is probably impossible to accomplish without bias. But as Christians, we would prefer that truth—what really happened—at least be the goal, rather than political or racial propaganda, even if this goal will never be perfectly accomplished. This notion of truth demands that students be taught as much U.S. history as feasible. To leave out the experience of Native Americans, African-Americans or women would be a tremendous failure. But writing our entire history from their perspective is unfair as well. One answer to this problem is to have students read more primary historical documents and depend less on history textbooks. Unfortunately, multiculturalists see all texts as primarily political. They argue that only one view prevails: either the empowered majority's or the oppressed minority's. This belief that all knowledge is political results in turning schools into battlegrounds where representatives from every group, from Hispanics to gay rights activists, go over the curriculum with a magnifying glass, looking for the proper amount of inclusion or any derogatory remarks made about their group.

Tolerance as a Worldview

Many multiculturalists insist that we embrace multiculturalism in our schools not just in the way we teach, but in the way we think. Multiculturalists have specific ideas about the notion of truth; paramount is the belief that no truth transcends culture, that no idea or moral concept might be true for every cultural group or every human being. As a result, multiculturalists demand that we give up our beliefs in moral

absolutes and become moral relativists.

This worldview model has been the litmus test for college professors on many campuses for quite some time, particularly in the humanities. Evidently, in some programs it is now being applied to college students as well. In 1992, St. Cloud (Minn.) State University made it known that if students were to be accepted, those who desired to enter the social work program must relinquish specific notions of moral truth. While acknowledging that many students come from religious backgrounds that do not accept homosexuality as a legitimate lifestyle, these very students were required to go beyond "hating the sin and loving the sinner." Students who had predetermined negative attitudes towards gays and lesbians were told to look elsewhere for a major. In other words, one must, at the level of faith commitment, find no moral aversion to homosexuality in order to be admitted to this program. This removes a majority of our population from consideration right off the bat.

Part of the problem with multiculturalism is that it allows for a broad definition of cultural groups. There is both a gay culture and a feminist culture in America. In fact, any group can identify itself as a marginalized culture group. The homeless become a cultural group, as do single mothers on welfare. Should their perspectives get equal treatment in our schools? Are their moral values as valid as all others? The problem is that to be considered multiculturally sensitive, one must be able to place oneself into the perspective of the oppressed group completely, at the metaphysical level, not just to sympathize or even empathize with them. This means that one must be willing to compromise faith-based beliefs about God, human nature, and reality itself. For instance, if the gay community, being an oppressed minority group, believes that being homosexual is natural and every bit as normal as heterosexual relationships, Christians should ignore what they believe to be revealed truth about homosexuality's sinfulness.

Christians are called to have mercy and compassion on the poor and less fortunate, but not at the expense of recognizing that some lifestyles result in the impoverishment of people regardless of their race or cultural heritage. What is being asked of Christians is that we give up our view of a universe governed by a moral God who has established a moral universe, and replace it with a morally relativistic one. Tolerance becomes the only absolute. To be exclusive about truth, or to argue that some action might be morally wrong for all people all the time, violates this new absolute of tolerance.

Ultimately, this current enforcement of tolerance is really a thinly veiled pursuit of power. The only way certain groups, such as homosexual activists or the more radical feminists, can get recognition and the ability to spread their views, is by establishing tolerance as an absolute. Eventually, they win affirmative action concessions from universities and public schools, which enforces their viewpoint. Recently, the state of Massachusetts passed legislation recognizing the difficulties of gay elementary and secondary students, forcing all public school teachers to be educated and sensitized to their plight. This recognition and re-education of teachers further legitimizes and enhances the power of the gay rights movement.

Without losing sight of our calling to reach out and minister to people caught in lifestyles and cultures that vaunt themselves against the knowledge and standards of God, we cannot become moral relativists in the process.

Justice and Truth

While multiculturalists occasionally refer to justice, it cannot be the foundation of their movement. This is for the simple reason that justice is not possible without truth. In order to claim that someone’s actions or words are unjust, one must assume that a moral order really does exist, a moral order that would be true for all cultures and at all times.

Injustice implies that justice exists, justice implies that moral laws exist, and moral laws imply that a lawgiver exists.

One college professor, explaining his plan for a liberal ironist utopia, says that a liberal is someone who thinks that being cruel is the worst thing that one can do. He argues that this moral standard can be used to create a utopia on earth. But he admits, being a good moral relativist, that he cannot give any non-circular arguments for why being cruel is the worst thing one can do. He is inventing a moral law, but admitting that its foundation lies only in his preference for that law.

Even if we accept his moral standard as useful, it leaves us with many questions. The first is, what does it mean to be cruel? Is it cruel to encourage people in their gay lifestyle given the short life span of male homosexuals, even without AIDS?{9} If pain is part of our definition of cruelty, should all operations be banned because even if successful, pain might result? How can he know that being cruel is the worst thing one can do in a morally neutral universe? Without truth, without knowledge of right and wrong, justice is impossible, as is any notion of a good life. The word “cruel” becomes an empty word.

By declaring tolerance an absolute, multiculturalists are consistent with their view of reality. They see all human cultures as morally equal because of their faith in a naturalistic world view. This view argues for a godless universe, and recognizes chance as the only possible cause for what exists. If this is true, absolute tolerance is the best we can hope for. Christians seek sensitivity and inclusion for a much better reason.

We believe that every human being was created in God’s image and reflects God’s glory and majesty. We were created to have dominion over God’s creation as His stewards. Thus, we are to care for others because they are ultimately worthy of our care

and concern. We are not to be cruel to others because the Creator of the universe made individuals to have fellowship with Him and He cares for them. This does not discount that people are fallen and in rebellion against God. In fact, if we really care about people we will take 2 Corinthians 5:19-20 seriously. First, that God has made reconciliation with Himself possible through His Son Jesus Christ, and as verse 20 says, "..he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us."

True sensitivity and inclusion will not be achieved by making tolerance an absolute. They occur when we take what people believe, and the consequences of those beliefs, seriously. When you think about it, what could be crueler than failing to inform people of the Gospel of redemption through Christ, leaving them to spend eternity separated from the Creator God who loves them?

Notes

1. Berman, Paul. *Debating P.C.: The Controversy Over Political Correctness on College Campuses* (NY: Dell Publishing, 1992), 249.

2. Ibid., 253.

3. Ibid., 257.

4. Francis, Samuel, "The Other Face of Multiculturalism," *Chronicles*, April, 1998, p. 33.

5. Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p 5.

6. Guinness, Os & Seel, John, ed. *No God But God*. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), p. 96.

7. Leo, John “History standards are bunk” *U.S. News & World Report* February 6, 1995, 23.

8. Ibid.

9. Dr. Paul Cameron, *Family Research* (Newsletter of the Family Research Institute, Inc.), April-June 1991.

©1998 Probe Ministries