



## For DEI Supporters, Perpetuation of Racism Is Good Business

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AT a former university where I taught and served as a diversity officer (yes, that happened), I had a meeting with the school's black-student union. Toward the end of the meeting, I asked something to the effect of "Is your goal to be obsolete in the near future?"

Most of the students insisted that they didn't understand the question. One student, who seemed to be the de facto leader of the group, expressed that he did understand and answered that the group would live on even if, ideally, racism went away. I didn't have time for a good follow-up question, such as "Would your mission change and how?" But I did wonder.

Today, this question occupies my mind even more. Seemingly permanent organizations and protocols are being created that strongly suggest racism is here to stay. This seems inconsistent with the traditional discourse about civil rights, which has focused on ending racial discrimination once and for all. The apparent telos (or ultimate goal) of contemporary anti-racism activism — which is not the activism of the civil-rights era — is not to end racism, but to perpetuate it.

Why would I say this? If an activist group has no intention of ever being obsolete — i.e., if it doesn't have a sacrificial telos according to which it conceives of its own end — it is not an activist group. It is, at best, a special-interest group, and a dishonest one at that.

I think it is only fair that I use my own endeavors as an example. As a member of Free Black Thought, an organization that celebrates viewpoint diversity within the black collective, I believe that race essentialism — the tendency from within and without a particular group to think each member experiences and interprets the world in identical ways — is a problem I'd like to see solved.

Currently, mass media present and represent viewpoints from black people, but only those who fit the popular narrative imperative to the politics of pity. Free Black Thought is here to showcase the fact that groups are made of individuals with separate goals, pursuits, interests, values, etc.

However, if we ever succeed in bringing about a world where people are judged individually and not by their membership in a particular racial group, our mission would be outdated. If race essentialism, or the very concept of race, period, were overcome, Free Black Thought would no longer be needed. Free Black Thought wouldn't fold, necessarily; but our mission would have to change. Because our original mission would have been fulfilled, staying with it would be performative and dishonest. If race essentialism were overcome, we would not be needed. We would either fold or adopt a new mission.

Clearly, other organizations dealing with race relations do not understand their missions similarly. Ibram X. Kendi provides two examples.

First, he is the director of the Boston University Center for Antiracist Research, which states that its mission is "to convene researchers and practitioners from various disciplines to figure out novel and practical ways to understand, explain, and solve seemingly intractable problems of racial inequity and injustice." He adds, "We are working toward building an antiracist society that ensures equity and justice for all."

This is a noble endeavor, but what would happen if inequality and injustice were eradicated? There is a fine line between "intractable" and "immutable." The website says the center is still developing, but part of that development is an affiliates program connecting faculty and students into a network that may be difficult to undo.

It may be hasty to assume that ending institutional racism is not the true goal of the Center for Antiracist Research. But another brainchild of Kendi's lends weight to the notion that perpetual racism serves the interests of Kendi and other DEI professionals. Kendi has written that he wants the United States government to pass a constitutional amendment to "establish and permanently fund the Department of Anti-racism (DOA) comprised of formally trained experts on racism and no political appointees." He elaborates:

The DOA would be responsible for preclearing all local, state and federal public policies to ensure they won't yield racial inequity, monitor those policies, investigate private racist policies when racial inequity surfaces, and monitor public officials for expressions of racist ideas. The DOA would be empowered with disciplinary tools to wield over and against policymakers and public officials who do not voluntarily change their racist policy and ideas.

If you look carefully enough, you may see that the statement's precarious nature could easily have the department functioning in perpetuity. A governmental department created as a result of a new constitutional amendment is not something anyone would plan to dismantle in the near future. In order to justify the perpetuation of such an entity, one would need to perpetuate racism.

A nongovernment organization like the Center for Antiracist Research is one thing; an addition to the current federal system is something else entirely.

Of course, Kendi is not the only culprit; other phenomena point to the false telos of racial harmony. Many major universities have created graduate programs in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). That is, advanced if not terminal degrees are being given to people who plan to

make a career out of DEI initiatives. The University of Maryland-Baltimore, the University of Pennsylvania, and Tufts University are just a few. But if one's livelihood consists of fighting racism, wouldn't the end of racism spell trouble? Wouldn't the perpetuation of racism be the very thing putting food on the table? This also goes for the explosion of administrative positions in DEI in colleges, corporations, and other institutions.

Jane Kellogg Murray of Indeed.com — a job site that assists people in finding employment — writes about the rise of DEI (She calls it DI&B: diversity, inclusion, and belonging) in the American job force:

Between September 2019 and September 2020, Indeed job postings in diversity, inclusion and belonging have risen 56.3% — from 140 jobs per million to 219. More significantly, after the U.S. economy declined in Spring 2020, the DI&B industry recovered quickly, with job postings rising by an astonishing 123% between May and September.

That sounds like a large number of people with jobs that literally depend on racism, the very thing the jobs are meant to eliminate. So a dip in racism could have a correlation with a rise in unemployment.

Of course, missions can change. Perhaps at racism's end, these positions would be transformed into something more relevant, or the people occupying those jobs would move into other fields of employment. We cannot know for sure. However, the fact that these employees have skills directly connected to ending a particular thing like racism suggests that fighting racism is their area of expertise. What happens to diversity, equity, and inclusion officers when society actually becomes diverse, equitable, and inclusive?

Maintaining vigilance could be a new mission. That is, when racism is finally defeated, DEI officers can work to make sure it never comes back. However, this is also problematic. Maintaining an anti-racist society would get pretty boring without racism. Might such a mission make frequent use of the concept of microaggressions or the idea that, when it comes to racism, impact always outweighs intention? If bias is considered implicit, then a fine line separates DEI officers from "thought police." To show they are not expendable, it is in their best interest to "find" racism, but what happens when there is no racism to be found?

I stopped wanting to be a diversity officer when I realized how ineffective it was — I came to this insight before contemporary "wokeness" took hold. But DEI work was a secondary job for me; I still intended to remain a professor and scholar of rhetoric. What would have happened to me if DEI were my full-time job? Would I go the way of Kendi, or would my fate be more like that of [Tabia Lee](#), who was fired for not abiding by the current narrative that deems racism a permanent problem?

I don't know, but I do know that all people in such positions should aim toward a sacrificial telos, which would eventually deem those positions unnecessary. If you are a DEI officer and your main goal is not to render your job obsolete as soon as possible, you are enacting the very definition of a gift.

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