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Cult of Resentment

How Identity Politics Fails Everyone



by Paltry Geist

“In my experience as a ‘marginalized voice’ I’ve seen identity politics used by activists as a tool of social control aimed at anyone who fits the identity criteria of ‘oppressor’. The traditional power-struggle for equality has turned into an olympic sport for social leverage, inverting the same social hierarchy that should have been destroyed in the first place...All too often I have seen how identity politics creates a culture where personal experiences are trivialized to the point of passive silence. But this is all old news. Any experienced, self-identifying anarchist has seen or probably experienced some form of being ‘called-out’ or ‘cancelled’. So why do I bring it up? Because I still see this shit happening and I still see so many people lacking the courage to openly confront it.” -*Flower Bomb*, “*An Obituary for Identity Politics*”

change.

Identity isn't limited to one aspect of one's existence. They are nearly infinitely fractionalized. Is one defined by their race alone? What about gender, sexual orientation, profession, income level, birth place, birth order, sibling/parent/spouse status, etc...Not to mention how each individual chooses to prioritize those varying aspects of their identity. Individuals are nearly as unique as their fingerprints might suggest. Attempts to lump large swathes of people together is often based on ones own limited ability, or willingness, to know and genuinely understand other unique individuals on an individual level. This mechanism has served as the underpinnings of some of the most brutal ideological manifestations in all of history.

Although the illusion of gain, as well as minimal actual gain may come in the short run, identity politicking isn't doing any demographic any good in the long run. It leads down a path that most often does not end well. We are individuals, with our own individual drives, convictions, and principles, not just some virtually indistinguishable unit of a group, not just a series of superficial identity categorizations to be pitted against one another.

There is no winning in this game for either side. Neither the privileged, nor oppressed are able to get outside of this never ending cycle of tit for tat resentment. The latter category becomes bitter, inflexible, and dependent on the specter for their justification while the former become docile, submissive, and virtually incapable of original thought and action.

This particularly pernicious version of tribalism is but a mental prison in which you'll languish destitute, hopelessly clinging to your oppressor to provide you with your sense of identity.

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Identity politics, when used as a force for political maneuver, aims at subsumption into the predominant classes, rather than providing a revolutionary force that acts for the destruction or diminution of a stratified society. This does not mean identity ought to be dismissed entirely, nor organization based on it. However, the institutions that currently create and enforce the stratified system rely on those very identities in an attempt to gain control and ascend to dominance. Not only by way of attacking some identities but perhaps even more importantly, refraining from attacking others. Also, by setting various identities at odds with one another, it effectively pushes those identities to compete for access to the privilege that is associated with acceptance from the dominant forces in society. In their use of this identity-based repression, those who hold significant power can easily create an affinity amongst those dominated. The goal of equal opportunity has moral capital, although can perhaps find easy transition into a demand for the recognition of superiority.

These methods have often been wielded as political tools and the model has been iterated in various forms of organization that seek to reform the status quo. Thrusting identity politics center stage in the political theater gives illusions of successes in political reform, as well as the reformation of other organizations, and has become so embedded that it now virtually dominates the public discourse. In this, one of the main problems of identity politics can be elucidated. Groups who profess to aim at challenging various identity-based oppressions have in reality formed a partnership with the very classes who benefit from that oppression. The partnership exists because the ability to define a given political agenda for a certain identity is

employed. This can be seen in the various organizations within the LGBT community, specifically by entities like the HRC, in the form of hate crime legislation, marriage law, military service and others. These values demonstrate that organizations like this have tacitly accepted the identity based line of reasoning and have formed partnerships with the state and the private forces that are based on it. Through the methods they employ and outcomes they aim at, seek an assimilation into, rather than the dismantling of, the very system that generates and perpetuates the oppressions they are struggling against.

When operating in the political sphere, identity-minded politicians engage only within the accepted notions of a given narrative of a particular identity or set of identities. Those identity categories and the people that comprise them, in effect, become just another lobby, another special interest group that some politicians are beholden to, while others posture against them. The actual individuals that constitute these identities are pushed to the wayside, becoming nothing more than a voting bloc to be pandered to rather than genuine independent individuals, who surely share many similarities, but also many differences.

To engage in this identity politicking often entices one to confuse the individual with a specter it has been deemed to represent. A specter which undoubtedly is defined as viewed through an often incomplete and always biased lens. Instead of seeking to empower individuals within a given identity category, it acts to lump people into vast groups so it's easier to paint with a broad brush than wade through complexity. These heuristic schemas allow us to uphold the delusion that we can somehow tacitly solve many problems in society, by the mere adoption of a prepackaged set of ideas, enabling us to successfully avoid rucking through specific issues. In these days of the Drive-Thru Information Age, these broad pre-packaged ideologies are irresistible to the bustling post modern man.

It's rapidly becoming apparent that this political model is an

utter failure. Our lives are not merely based on political pontifications, we do not consist of opposing sides and positions to be adopted, nor a mere voting bloc to be won over. We cannot let ourselves be reduced into mere categories of identity, each putting forth its own set of lobbyists to win over the sanctioned coercive power of the state. The last thing we need is more politics, more public relations machinations, or for lobbyists to throw their money and influence around; we need an end to the political mechanism altogether.

It has been demonstrated time and time again that actually achieving equality by the political process, nearly always falls short of the intended mark. The practical thing to do, is to eliminate the political process, and with it the apparatus that props up many of the injustices we see in society. Not apolitical apathy, but rather anti-political action. Identity should not be treated as some political conceptualization, but instead an unremitting facet, of our everyday lives in the social sphere. I stand for the LGBT community's right to be treated the same as everyone else, but I would refuse to vote for gay marriage. I understand the plight of racial minorities, but would refuse to vote for hate crime laws. These measures merely perpetuate the very system that is largely responsible for creating the ills in the first place.

The ignorance here is in group-think. It is unconsciously presumed that all individuals in an identity category are relatively the same instead of understanding that individuals, in any group, are in fact very diverse. Whatever ones "own team" holds is usually deemed to be positive qualities, likely due at least in part to confirmation and selection biases. While likely through these same biases, 'the other' team holds predominantly negative or antagonistic characteristics. This may or may not be the case in reality for any given group's interactions, but irrespective of that fact, one tends to operate under these assumptions regardless of the efficacy of the perception. The unthinking us versus them mentality often results in either blind obedience to tyranny, or revolting against positive forces for