

The Essential Value of Inclusive Diversity: Achieving it Through Culture Rather Than Race

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1. The Essential Value of Inclusive Diversity

Inclusive Diversity with reasonable equality is an essential element for a strong and well-functioning society. Politicians often attempt to gain for themselves and their cronies by playing off one group against another or the rest of society with a divide and conquer strategy. They may gain, but by doing so they weaken the nation reducing its economy and the quality of life. American Indian nations traditionally recognized the necessity of inclusive equalitarian diversity.¹ They understood that the harmony and strength of the community required including and supporting all its members, while the community gained from the synergy of including the unique voices and contributions of every member in making decisions and providing their skills in the economy and social life. The correctness of this view can be seen in contemporary times in the fact that organizations that operate heterarchically with inclusive participatory decision-making and, if for profit, sharing the financial results of work broadly and substantially function better by every measure than traditional hierarchical organizations with differential rewards unconnected to organizational performance.²

Divisive internal politics tends to weaken a nation internally and externally as Machiavelli pointed out in *The Prince*. Voltaire, in *L'ingenu; or, the Sincere Huron: A True History*, used the character of a Huron Indian, Ingenu – who by blood was also half French – to illuminate problems in French society. Ingenu on discovering the actions of the French crown, under Louis XIV, against its Huguenot citizens, on hearing that 50,000 Huguenot families had been forced to flee, some of whose members joined the enemy English army, while 50,000 more were forced to convert to Catholicism under military duress, comments “Whence arises,” said he, “that so great a king whose renown expands itself even to the Hurons, should deprive himself of so many hearts that would have loved him, and so many arms that would have served him.”³

One wonders if Hitler might have won his war with the Soviet Union had he not been racist, including Jews, Slavs and others in the war effort, instead of using valuable resources to round them up and exterminate them, while disallowing Ukrainian Partisans from joining in fighting the Soviets.

Beyond International politics and the terrible injustices, unfairnesses, human rights violations and genocides that may result, failure for a society to be inclusive is often damaging to its economy and everyone's welfare. The United States, despite its history of slavery, segregation, racial, ethnic and religious prejudices, has benefited greatly from including people from around the world in its economy. The divisive policies of President Trump have seriously hurt the U.S. economy, showing just how much immigrants play a major role in the U.S. economy, without considering the other extensive costs of Trump's attacks on diversity, equality and inclusion.⁹ Undocumented immigrants alone contribute many millions of dollars annually to the country's economy as well as in tax revenue, while legal immigrants contribute even more. Overall, those in the U.S. undocumented pay far more in taxes than they receive in benefits (though this is not the case in some localities). The reduction in immigration and mass deportation are causing huge losses in contributions to GDP and taxes, while creating huge labor shortages reducing production and service delivery in such fields as farming, food processing, construction, hospitality, home care and health care. In the last instance, over 1 million immigrants, including doctors, work in the health care sector whose serious reduction in an already understaffed area has been causing serious health problems. Meanwhile, the United States has benefited greatly from immigrants in advances in sciences and technical fields, among others. The great reduction in the numbers of these key people from coming to the country, while others leave, threatens the ability of the U.S. to continue to be a leader in many fields and to

compete in international trade.

2. Achieving Diversity Through Culture Rather Than Race

The influx of large numbers of people, whether coming from abroad or migrating internally from cultures different from those of the population receiving them does cause difficulties. This can be seen in the worldwide resistance to immigration in many countries.¹⁰ As shown below, just bringing people with different outlooks together does not create good interrelations and the synergy that can result from it. Indeed, without integrating diversity into unity many problems can develop from the resulting divisiveness. The question is how to achieve integration. Under the Trump Administration, with its anti-diversity-equality-inclusion (DEI) policy, progress is difficult. Temporarily most advances must be made quietly using terms other than "diversity," such as working with "a range of perspectives" or "a variety" of views or experiences. After Trump a new opening for DEI becomes possible. How then to achieve it in the new conditions in fields such as education and employment?

Now that the U.S. Supreme Court has struck down any use of race as a factor in achieving diversity in education or for other purposes in *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*,¹¹ it is time to focus on culture as the best means of achieving diversity. Differences in culture involve differences in experience, and different ways of seeing. That is precisely what diversity involves. It is necessary for providing well-rounded education, achieving a just society, and for realizing *E Pluribus Unum*: unity in diversity.

Culture should not be confused with race. Where race simply involves identifying people by skin color or an extremely broad general background, culture is particular to experience and way of seeing. People who are Black - of a general and often distant African origin - encompass persons of many distinct cultures. The child of parents from Nigeria, who are upper middle-class dwellers of New York City, are of a different culture than the African American of a poor family living on the South side of Chicago, and one of a low-income farm family in rural Mississippi, though there may be some experiences that they may all share to different degrees.

The same is the case with Native Americans. Each Indian nation has a different culture, and after the experience of colonial genocide. even on reservation there often are numerous cultural groups within each nation. Now, with the vast majority of Indians living off reservation with many of their children raised there, a wide range of cultural experience now exists across Indigenous America.

This point about culture was made before the Supreme Court in the oral argument in *Brackeen v. Haaland*,⁷ in which a strong majority of justices upheld the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), in June 2023. Justice Kavanaugh had expressed concern that the act was racist in providing that if a family to take a removed Indian Child on its reservation could not be found, then the next choice was to find a foster parent or adopting family on

another Indian reservation. Kavanaugh said, "Congress couldn't give a preference for white families for white children, for black families for black children, for Latino families for Latino children, for Asian families for Asian children."³ Council defending ICWA pointed out that the provision was not racial, but cultural, as there were numerous Indian reservations of what had been a single or closely related people. It allowed, for example, if a foster parent could not be found on one Lakota reservation, one could be found on one of the other Lakota reservations. To correct Kavanaugh, if one were dealing with a child who happened to be White, one would not attempt to place them with a White family as such, but rather with one of their own culture. An example is trying to place a Ukrainian child now in the U.S. who had no relative available. One would first look for a good Ukrainian family. If one were not available, then it would be proper to look for a family of a similar culture, perhaps Belorussian.

Culture involves many factors. Some of these involve ethnic background or religion, but within these there are subcultures, family and individual variations. Socio-economic status and geography, among many others, are also factors to be considered. Ultimately, culture varies with the person - their experience and reaction to it - which can often be taken into account in a complex process of making diversity decisions. An important point in decision making about diversity is in reading the individual essays of applicants. This is the one place the Supreme Court majority allowed consideration of race in overturing its general use in admissions in *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc.* Reading those essays will usually indicate specifics of culture, especially if admissions and hiring personnel make known that cultural difference is a factor being considered. Other information concerning culture can be discerned in other parts of the admissions and hiring process, including in interviews, if decision makers clearly make culture a concern in the process,

The first purpose in making admissions and other decisions to achieve diversity is to broaden the understanding and thinking of each person involved, leading to better decision making, individually and collectively. The ultimate purpose is to achieve people understanding and respecting each other - despite differences of views - making effective democracy and a peaceful, harmonious, society a reality. This is something that we very much need in the current era.

This approach to diversity is central to Indigenous cultures.⁴ Moreover, the current concern in the mainstream with achieving diversity has arisen partly from American Indian influence throughout the entire history of European-Indian interaction.⁵ The traditional Indigenous approach to diversity is based on mutual respect following from the realization that all beings, indeed all that is, are related. To actualize diversity a number of crucial skills are necessary that are often lacking in current mainstream attempts to achieve it.⁶ These begin with respectful, careful, empathetic, supportive listening to each person to understand their concerns and reinforce their participation in the dialogue. Too often today, people do not listen to and understand each other and engage in attacking each other on the points they agree on, instead of finding

common ground while illuminating the points on which they disagree. This is necessary to include everyone's concerns, so far as possible, in any decision, making it a better course of action. Further, it is important to speak supportively to one another to build and maintain trust in each other and in the process. Also, too often people jump directly from identifying an issue to asserting a solution without analyzing what is actually involved. It is necessary for participants to take a problem-solving approach to issues, carefully examining the nature of problems, comparing alternative courses of action, enroute to finding a good solution. Finally, good facilitating is necessary to guide the discussion, keeping it focused and participants acting respectfully and supportively. This usually means having a fine facilitator, but once participants are skilled in the process anyone can assist in facilitating if discussion becomes bogged down or off track.

It is also helpful to see life as education and mistakes as opportunities to learn from ongoing experience, including from interactions with others. Moreover, it is important to realize that as knowledge is limited, situations are often complex, and circumstances are always changing, even the best decisions regularly need to be reviewed and modified with new information and shift in conditions.

Where good process has been used in public meetings and on workplace teams with diverse participants meaningful discussion and very good decisions have almost always emerged. By contrast, recent clashes on U.S. college campuses over the Israeli-Hamas conflict and relating to other issues over which there are major splits indicate¹² it is not enough to achieve the ends of diversity just by bringing together people of differing views and experiences. That often leads to conflict, at least in the short to medium run.

To achieve the full potential of diversity, we have to educate people to understand its purposes, to have mutual respect and to learn and apply the skills necessary for good dialogue. When this is the case, interaction produces a most positive synergy. The full potential of diversity includes achieving equality. While some efforts at the inclusiveness that underly diversity have been genuine, there are complaints that too many others have been limited to tokenism.¹³ That is insufficient. However, tokenism can be a step toward inclusiveness and equality if those finding themselves tokens use their position strategically and do not become coopted. Vine Deloria indicated this in saying in a general session at a meeting of the Western Social Science Association that it was not a bad thing being a 'token Indian,' if one remembered who one was. As the sole Native on the board of what later became the National Museum of the American Indian, Deloria saw that a leverage moment existed in a board meeting just before a press conference launching an important exhibit opening. This enabled him to force the appointment of more Indians to the board, under threat of his embarrassing the board with a statement at the Press conference, with other Native leaders prepared to publicly support his statement. That began the turnover of board members that soon brought Native people into the majority, setting the stage for the eventual development of the National Museum.¹⁴ The effort to achieve the unity of diversity will require the efforts

of many with different interests and concerns. It needs to bring together those seeking: no longer to be left out, better functioning organizations, more harmonious classrooms and campuses, better education, better public policy decision-making, and a more collaborative politics and society, in order to realize *E Pluribus Unum* [1-22].

Acknowledgement

This is an expanded version of my paper, "Maintaining the Circle: Culture in Place of Race Is the Key to Achieving Diversity," presented at the 2024 Southwest Popular/American Culture Meeting. Thanks to Professor Victor Wallis for helpful comments relating to the writing of that paper.

Notes

¹For example, see LaDonna Harris, Stephen M. Sachs, Barbara Morris, et al, *Recreating the Circle: The Renewal of American Indian Self-Determination* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011), Ch. 1 and Stephen M. Sachs, et al, *Honoring the Circle: Ongoing Learning from American Indians on Politics and Society, Vol. I* (Cardiff by the Sea: Waterside Productions, 2021), Ch. 1.

²John Simmons and William J. Mares *Working Together* (New York: Knopf, 1983); David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit Is Transforming the Public Sector, from Schoolhouse to Statehouse, City Hall to the Pentagon* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1992); and Sachs, et al, *Honoring the Circle Vol. III*, Ch. 5 and 6.

³M. de Voltaire, *L'ingenu; or, the Sincere Huron: A True History* (London: S. Bladon, 1768 repr., Farmington Hills, MI: Gale ECCO, 2018), pp. 61-62. Voltaire's uses of American Indian societies to illuminate the problems in French Society are discussed in Sachs, et al, *Honoring the Circle Vol. I*, Ch. 3 along with similar use of inclusive participatory American Indigenous societies in criticizing European societies by Sir Thomas Moore, in *Utopia*, and Michael de Montaigne, in *Essays*, among others.

⁴Council on Foreign Relations, Diana Roy, "How Does Immigration Affect the U.S. Economy?" Council on Foreign Relations, December 4, 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/how-does-immigration-affect-us-economy>; Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, "Trump's Immigration Actions Are Taking a Toll on Local Economies – Here's What the Data Says So Far," American Immigration Council, August 27, 2025, <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/blog/immigration-toll-on-local-economies-what-the-data-says/>; "The Trump Administration's Hostility to Legal Immigration Harms America's Global Leadership in Innovation," Center for American Progress, November 16, 2025, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-trump-administrations-hostility-to-legal-immigration-harms-americas-global-leadership-in-innovation/>; Edmund De Rothschild, "The consequences of Trump's migration policies," Paris School of Economics, February 2025, <https://www.parisschoolofeconomics.eu/app/uploads/2025/02/The-consequences-of-Trumps-migration-policies>.

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⁵The difficulties of large scale movement of peoples into places of a different culture can be seen in the worldwide resistance to immigration in many countries. For example, see "It's not just the U.S.: Europe's growing anti-immigration backlash," Foster, August 24, 2025, <https://www.fosterglobal.com/blog/its-not-just-the-u-s-europes-growing-anti-immigration-backlash/>; Ethan S, "In the U.S. and Western Europe, similar immigration backlash is a symptom of two different problems," December 9, 2024, Democratic Erosion Consortium, <https://democratic-erosion.org/2024/12/09/in-the-u-s-and-western-europe-similar-immigration-backlash-is-a-symptom-of-two-different-problems/>; David Leonhart, "The Global Immigration Backlash: Left-leaning parties in both Europe and the U.S. are often out of step with public opinion on immigration," *The New York Times*, July 11, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/07/11/briefing/global-migration.html>; and "Opposition to immigration," *Wikipedia*, December 12, 2025, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opposition_to_immigration.

⁶*Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*, October 2022 term No. 20-1199.

⁷*in Bracken v. Haaland*, U.S. Supreme Court No. 21-376 (2022).

⁸Both an audio recording and a transcript of the oral argument are available at: https://www.supremecourt.gov/oral_arguments/argument_transcripts/2022/21-376_k536.pdf, with the cited discussion on p. 32.

⁹Stephen M. Sachs, et al, *Honoring the Circle: Ongoing Learning from American Indians on Politics and Society* (Cardiff by the Sea: Waterside Productions, 2021), Vol I, Ch. 1; and LaDonna Harris, Stephen M. Sachs, Barbara Morris, et al, *Recreating the Circle: The Renewal of American Indian Self-Determination* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011), Ch. 1 and 4.

¹⁰Sachs, et al, *Honoring the Circle*, Vol. I and II.

¹¹Stephen M. Sachs, "Building Trust in in Democratic Organizations," *Psychology*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 1994; Sachs, et al, *Honoring the Circle*, Vol. II, Ch. 5, and Harris, Sachs and Morris, *Recreating the Circle*, Chapter 4, Section 1 concerning the process used by the Comanche Nation to return to inclusive participatory governance.

¹²For example see, Rachel Treisman and Elissa Nadworny, "U.S. students are clashing over the Israel-Hamas war. What can colleges do?" *Weekend Edition Sunday*, NPR, October 14, 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/10/14/1205809697/israel-gaza-college-campus-protests-statements>; and Johanna Alonso, Ryan Quinn, Katherine Knott and Susan H. Greenberg, "A Day of

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¹³For example see, Walter Benn Michaels, *The Trouble with Diversity: How We Learned to Love Identity and Ignore Inequality* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006).

¹⁴The author attended the session, likely in 2006, in which Deloria made the statement. It was in answer to an Indian academic's complaint that he found himself limited by being a token. Deloria's response was recorded by this author in, "Power and Sovereignty: The Changing Realities of American Indian Nations," paper presented at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 30th-September 3, 2006. An up dated version of that paper was given at the 2008 Western Social Science Meeting and included in *Proceedings of 2008 Western Social Science Association Meeting American Indian Studies Section, Indigenous Policy*, Vol. XIX, No. 2, summer 2008.

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