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The Dangers of Woke Culture: How It's Harming Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) and ways to move towards true EDI

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As I look back on my childhood, I realize how fortunate I was to have been raised in an environment that encouraged awareness and participation in social issues. From an early age, my parents made sure that I was exposed to a diverse range of people and perspectives, and they instilled in me a deep sense of empathy and a desire to create positive change in the world.

Growing up, I became more aware of the many challenges facing our society, from poverty and inequality to environmental degradation and political corruption. But instead of feeling overwhelmed or helpless, I was taught to view these issues as opportunities for growth and transformation. I was encouraged to ask questions, to seek out knowledge and information, and to take real action to make a difference.

The more I got involved in non-profit organizations and social responsibility projects, the more I realized that just like anything else in life, there can be wrong approaches with good intentions, which cause more harm to the cause than good. The incredibly fast paced and attention seeking presence of social media in our lives caused a spotlight on awareness, volunteering and altruistic behavior. Although spreading such content can bring more attention

to issues and help solve them faster with a massive reach, it also created bumper-sticker activists, keyboard warriors, woke culture and shallow, pretentious content to gain attraction for personal profit with no real influence or applicable solutions. This might sound like a harmless trend on a personal level, however on a larger scale, it is diluting the real deal.

The term "woke" has been used for decades in African American Vernacular English (AAVE) to describe being aware of and actively fighting against racial injustice and oppression. However, in recent years, the term "woke culture" has emerged as a broader phenomenon that encompasses a range of social and political issues beyond just race.

The exact origins of the term are difficult to pin down, but it has become more prominent in mainstream discourse in the past few years thanks to the rise of social media and the ability to quickly disseminate information and mobilize groups of people around shared causes. This resulted in heightened awareness of social issues, such as racism, sexism, and inequality, and a commitment to addressing these issues through individual and collective action. What could go wrong with an approach like that? Woke culture has become overly focused on identity politics and cancel culture, and it stifled free speech and open dialogue. Some may argue in contrast that the increasing polarization of political views in many parts of the world has fueled a greater awareness and activism around issues of social justice, which is also a possible effect to consider.

While the intentions of woke culture may be admirable, its approach and tactics can often be harmful to the very concepts it seeks to promote such as equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Harmful Effects of Woke Culture

Woke culture often relies on a "us vs. them" mentality, which can create division and animosity among people of different backgrounds. This approach can hinder the progress towards equality, diversity, and inclusion by creating tension and mistrust. Rather than promoting unity and cooperation, the "us vs. them" mentality reinforces an idea that people are fundamentally different from each other and that their differences are irreconcilable. This kind of divisiveness creates a hostile environment that can make it difficult to build bridges and work together towards common goals. To move beyond the divisiveness, polarity and misunderstandings, we need to find ways to promote unity and cooperation. This involves emphasizing commonalities to create a more inclusive society, encouraging dialogue across different perspectives to find common ground, acknowledging complexity of social issues and recognizing that people are multifaceted and have different experiences and finally focusing on solutions instead of dwelling into the drama of it all.

Another concern of woke culture is that it is often associated with cancel culture, which involves shaming, boycotting, or otherwise punishing individuals or organizations for perceived wrongdoings. This approach can create a culture of fear and silence, as people become afraid to express their opinions or ideas. How many times were you left in awe in a positive or negative sense about a content you saw online that was pushed by more and more people by the minute, maybe even took action about it verbally or physically, to find out that it was false information, propaganda or production for entertainment purposes in the end? I personally have done my share of content spread on the spur of the moment without researching its validity. We feel such linger for a sense of belonging in the society

that we are so ready to jump on a wagon of seemingly good deed. When it turns out to be empty however, we realize that it actually causes people to think that the necessary action is already being done by others, therefore creating a halt to actual, beneficial projects. This halt is created in the form of perception; however, the cost can be the lack of funds to support causes because there is an oversaturation of the seemingly solved subject at hand.

Woke culture also likes to overemphasize identity categories such as race, gender, and sexual orientation, often at the expense of other aspects of individual identity such as personality, values, and beliefs. People are being reduced to their identity categories, which causes lack on nuance rather than being viewed as complex individuals. Emphasizing intersectionality, which recognizes the complex and interconnected nature of different identities and experiences is critical to understanding and addressing multiple forms of oppression.

Moving Towards True Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

I learned firsthand the power of collective action and the importance of working together towards a common goal as a social entrepreneur and a volunteer. Nothing mentioned in this article should discourage you from implementing your own course of action to make a difference; if anything, it should help you take more efficient and accurate steps along the way.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) have become buzzwords in the modern society, but how do we move beyond the buzzwords and harms of woke culture to achieve true EDI?

EDI initiatives often fail because they are little more than lip service, with companies and organizations making grand statements but failing to follow through with meaningful action. For true progress to

be made, we need to move beyond the platitudes and focus on concrete steps that will make a real difference. What does that look like?

- ### *Understanding the Complexity of the Issue*

Achieving true EDI is not a simple or straightforward process. It requires a deep understanding of the complex and multifaceted issues that underlie discrimination and inequality. By recognizing and addressing the underlying causes of these issues, we can create a more inclusive and equitable society.

- ### *Breaking Down Barriers*

One of the biggest barriers to true EDI is a lack of representation. This can include barriers to entry for marginalized groups, as well as a lack of diversity in leadership positions. By breaking down these barriers, we can create a more diverse and inclusive workforce, one that better reflects the society we live in.

- ### *Addressing Unconscious Bias*

Another barrier to true EDI is unconscious bias. This can manifest in many ways, from hiring decisions to everyday interactions in the workplace. By addressing and acknowledging these biases, we can create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

- ### *Challenging the Status Quo*

Finally, achieving true EDI requires challenging the status quo. It requires us to be willing to question the way things have always been done, be brave and also embrace change. This may be

uncomfortable, but it is necessary if we want to create a more equitable and inclusive society.

Moving towards true EDI requires purposeful action, not just words. It takes willingness to examine our own biases, avoiding the pitfalls of oversimplification and taking concrete steps to address the issues that stand in the way of progress. The impact and significance of woke culture on this path will continue to be debated and contested for years to come, as people grapple with the complex and evolving issues it seeks to address.

We are all trying to figure life out, striving to be useful and helpful to each other, while enjoying the experiences of feeling connected to the big picture. Yet, we should always keep in mind the importance of meaningful action and the significance of seemingly innocent but harmful effects we may cause with our approaches to issues in life. By doing so, we can then create a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable society for all.