

Republican Perspective
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Bullied into Silence

A recent article by Alexander Zubalov on “political correctness” caught my interest. The thesis was that the appearance of widespread agreement with political correctness is false---that actual polling belies the appearance of agreement. And Zubalov thinks he knows why: “...political correctness is succeeding in its objective...shutting people up. (It) bullies, shames, and silences those who have dissenting views...even if those dissenting views represent a majority.”

In addition to anecdotal evidence, the article provides polling results. Here are some.

With all the effort in our society to sanitize our language so as not to offend, one would think most folks buy into the need to be more sensitive. But Pew found just the opposite: “59 percent of Americans believe too many people are easily offended these days over the language that others use, while 39 percent think people need to be more careful about the language they use to avoid offending people with different backgrounds.”

With the Supreme Court (Fisher v. University of Texas) agreeing to permit race-based admissions, one might assume most people (and especially most minorities) would agree. Wrong. Gallup found that “...70 percent of Americans believe college admissions should be based solely on merit.” Furthermore, the use of merit-only criteria was shared by 76 percent of whites, 50 percent of blacks, and 61 percent of Hispanics.

Well, surely most people think “we ought to accentuate our vibrant racial and ethnic identities, focusing on what makes us unique.” Wrong again. Pew reported: “Among whites, more than twice as many say that in order to improve race relations, it’s more important to focus on what different racial and ethnic groups have in common (57 percent) as say the focus should be on what makes each group unique (26 percent).” And among blacks, a plurality agrees it is better to stress commonalities rather than differences.

So if Pew and Gallup are to be believed, Americans in general---regardless of race or ethnicity---do not buy into the politically correct positions on the need to use inoffensive language, or on the consideration of race in college admissions, or that America should be a salad bowl rather than a melting pot. But few Americans publicly admit to disagreeing with the politically correct orthodoxy.

Small wonder. As Zubalov said, political correctness shuts people up.

Consider for example: the Silicon Valley executive who lost his job for supporting the now-overturned gay marriage ban in California; or the attempted boycott of Chick-fil-a because its chief operating officer had donated to organizations disapproved by the LGBT movement; or the smack-down of a candidate for the Democrat presidential nomination when he dared to say “all lives matter.” Consider also the stifling of diversity of opinion on campus, including “speech codes” and “safe spaces,” and the disinvitation or disruption of speakers with non-conforming viewpoints. Consider the ridicule of those who dispute the “settled science” of global warming. And consider the labeling as “Islamophobic” those who dare to suggest that Islamic terrorism is Islamic terrorism. There are plenty more examples, but you get the idea.

All in all, a hostile environment in which to express a politically incorrect view---even if, as Pew and Gallup tell us---the dissenting and politically incorrect view is held by the majority.