

Is D.E.I. Going to D-I-E?

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Since the Floyd riots of 2020, the Left has promoted Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs as must-have credentials for woke corporations eager to show concern for “marginalized” minorities.

DEI is marketed as a way to address racial discrimination in the corporate world with affirmative-action hiring practices. The programs also include LGBTQ+ identifiers, feminists, and any others claiming victimhood.

Thus, DEI has been all the rage for the last few years as major companies scrambled to hire DEI officers for their workforce and boards of directors.

Abandoning Ship

The rage is now over. DEI is still around, but it has lost its luster. When liberal programs lose their luster, it usually means it's time to move on to the next great acronym.

Even the wokest corporations are abandoning the DEI ship in the face of growing disenchantment and backlash. Doves of DEI executives, once prized as oracles, find themselves unemployed and deplatformed.

Everyone is playing the blame game. Corporate executives are expressing concern about the worth of agenda-driven programs with little to show for billions of dollars invested. On their part, ungrateful DEI directors are questioning corporate America's commitment to the cause in the first place.

The Honeymoon Is Over

No one doubts the honeymoon is over. The recent high-profile exits of several star diversity executives at Disney, Netflix, and Warner Brothers Discovery highlighted the DEI crisis. They either resigned or were let go.

Since mid-2022, high-tech and larger corporate firms have laid off many DEI officers. Government agencies have likewise jumped on the anti-DEI bandwagon as they pivot to more color-blind alternatives that reward merit, not identity.

Martin Brown, chief diversity officer for the Commonwealth of Virginia, opined, “DEI is dead.” The inclusion officer for Gov. Glenn Youngkin made this statement in a recent speech to the Virginia Military Institute (VMI).

An Imposed Agenda

There are three reasons why DEI might die. The first is that Americans are reevaluating the programs.

As more challenging times hit corporate America, its leaders are taking a second look at inclusion initiatives. They are not finding the expected results. Thus, the process of reorganizing, rethinking, and restructuring has led to more DEI layoffs than in other fields.

Both leaders and employees are also taking a harder look at the agenda behind the programs that go beyond the workings and needs of the average American corporation. It is easy to see how DEI melds well with Critical Race Theory (CRT), gender ideology, pronoun tyranny, and all things woke.

Many Americans generally resent the intense pressure used to force these programs on the population, schools, and business communities. The corrosive ideas tend to create and increase Marxist-style class struggle between imagined oppressors and oppressed. Others complain that DEI standards are subjective and arbitrary and do not translate into what is needed in their businesses and the nation.

Welcome to the Culture War

The second reason is a powerful backlash to the woke agenda everywhere that spills into the corporate world. Thus, DEI has entered into the thick of the culture war. The catchy little acronym makes a perfect target.

Indeed, conservatives have denounced its ploy of creating conflict. They point out that CRT has nothing to do with ROI (Return on Investment). They have protested these issues, and their protests have worked.

This discontent has translated into government actions against DEI in many states. DEI faces opposition in higher education as Florida governor Ron DeSantis signed legislation prohibiting public colleges and universities from funding DEI initiatives.

Several other states have anti-DEI legislation working its way to approval, including Texas, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, and Oklahoma.

The End of Affirmative Action

Finally, the Supreme Court's decision to end affirmative action in college admissions has made DEI a target inside business. Executives, seeing the handwriting on the wall, perceive the flaws of DEI as similar to those of affirmative action. It is only a matter of time before someone challenges arbitrary hiring practices. Commonsense executives want out of the business of social engineering to concentrate on ideology-free goods and services.

Conservatives claim affirmative action has elevated victimhood over achievement. It sets into motion equality of outcome and not opportunity. Liberal insistence on quotas favors identity over merit. The court's decision allows America to return to merit as a key to increasing national prosperity.

Indeed, a group of 13 state attorneys general issued a letter to Fortune 100 firms warning them against race-based prejudice in hiring, promotion, and contracting in light of the Supreme Court decision.

Such controversy will have a major effect on the future of DEI.

Graduates Without Employment

The DEI crisis signals a major failure of the Left. It comes at a time when American universities are sending out a massive new crop of graduates with degrees catering to DEI employment. Unfortunately for them, many will find the field crowded by ex-diversity officers writing bitter op-eds about why "corporate execs are pulling the plug on DEI."

Thus, DEI might die, but also resurrect. A disgruntled Left will have to find another way to repackage the same rejected ideology. Some DEI executives are already calling for dropping the toxic acronym but not the agenda. Meanwhile, its unemployed executives might spend their time testing new names.