

“The Millennial Narrative”

A Discussion of Intersectionality and Exclusion

Culture has been redefined-- the irrational have succeeded in dismantling modernism. It seems only a few years ago LGBTQ members gained the right to marry. While it was not the end of their hardships, it was the “civil rights movement” of the community. The passing of same-sex marriage was the normalization and formal acceptance of the LGBTQ community, and it was perhaps this instance that created enough inspiration to spawn the #MeToo movement. A generation had found its voice, people were learning to stand up for themselves, and a significant amount of justice was dished out. Yet, because everyone was beginning to be included, identity politics surfaced in abominative ways. It is hard to cherry pick which groups deserve rights and which do not. The notion is, by nature, unfair. Yet when it becomes impossible to speak without accidentally insulting someone, intersectionality loses credibility. The current drive among social justice activists to take account of intersectionality is a mixed bag of justifications that does some good and some harm for acceptance and politics. While it allows historically oppressed groups like LGTBQ to have a voice and gain the rights they deserve, it unintentionally demands the acceptance of repressive groups and spawns an egregious amount of sensitivity. Cancel culture ties directly into this. It has created a surmount of good in the world, like the case of Harvey Weinstein, but also a significant amount of negativity, like the false accusations against Johnny Depp. The power of social justice activists is imbalanced; these leaders individually have the power to obliterate people, and the accountability of intersectionality is a significant influence of this. Through post-colonialism, cancel culture, and minority groups, the grand narrative of a singular nation has been deconstructed and reformed into a dangerous grouping of sub-narratives, which unfairly apply intersectionality to identity politics.

Western generalization is now racist. Studying a culture as a first world country is racist. Because of the dissonance of these societies, a person living in a first world culture cannot begin to comprehend what it is like to live in a less-developed country. This is the rhetoric of post-colonialism. While it is positively significant in allowing other countries to gain rights, it also plays into unfairness of intersectionality. Eagleton puts post-colonialism in an excellent perspective in the following passage:

In retrieving what orthodox culture has pushed to the margins, cultural studies has done vital work. Margins can be unspeakably painful places to be, and there are few more honourable tasks for students of culture than to help create a space in which the dumped and disregarded can find a tongue... Feminism has not only transformed the cultural landscape but, has become the very model of morality for our time. Meanwhile, those white males who, unfortunately for themselves, are not quite dead have been metaphorically strung upside down from the lamp-posts, while the ill-gotten coins cascading from their pockets have been used to finance community arts projects. What is under assault here is the *normative*. (Eagleton, 13)

The grand issue is incrimination. Post-colonialism is a great movement, but not one without blaming others, and this is the fatal flaw in the progress toward greater inclusion, and thus, intersectionality. By blaming others, i.e. what is deemed the normative, it is not creating more inclusion, but shuffling who is included and who is not. This discontinuity is discrediting intersectionality, a narrative that demands inclusion of everyone. It is easy to take the assumption that because a person is orthodox in appearance, they are already included. Yet they are being berated for simply existing. First-world westerners are in danger, while it is hard to sympathize

with the generic “straight, white male” it is also hard to argue that these persons are not being unjustifiably blamed.

When false accusations are taken for granted, the system is flawed. Cancel culture, also known as call-out culture, is a popular form of boycotting developed in the mid 2010’s which aims to hold people, often celebrities, accountable for their opinions and actions. When cancel culture is lead astray, people who do not deserve reprehension are falsely accused. The most current case, as previously mentioned, is of Johnny Depp. His former wife, Amber Heard, “accused Depp of hitting her in the face with a cellphone and pulling her hair” (Rao) this is one of many tabloid accusations covered by many websites. Heard’s aim has been arguably to discredit Depp’s career, and although her claims have lost their merit, it appears she attempted to jump onto the call-out culture bandwagon. This particular instance, to public knowledge, may not have lost Johnny Depp his job, but it threatened to. There is substantial danger in deception of grand accusations in cancel culture, and, though the political climate wishes to reprimand those who are truly guilty like Harvey Weinstein, it risks damaging those undeserving. The #MeToo movement allowed despicable people like Larry Nassar to finally face judgement after he had been reported for decades, (North) yet it is also responsible for defamation and false allegations. The new-age free speech is not the same as the 1960’s, instead of defacing the government, Americans are defacing each other.

Intersectionality is a positive movement. It is not something created with malicious intent, but it can be interpreted in a negative sense that instead of generating more positive inclusion, actually generates negative inclusion. Kimberlé Crenshaw, an intersectionality activist, sheds some positive light on the matter when discussing intersectionality in schools:

The convergence of race stereotypes and gender stereotypes might

actually play out in the classroom... [in allowing] students to commit themselves in understanding [convergence] as a way of intervening and providing equal educational opportunity for all students regardless of their identities. (“Kimberlé Crenshaw: What Is Intersectionality?”)

The ultimate goal of intersectionality is positive inclusion and progression toward a greater humanity, and Crenshaw is arguably the most popular advocate of intersectionality. She is a powerful and impactful influence on today’s youth, and is spreading intersectionality in a positive light. But it is the over-sensitive, repressive groups that contaminate the goodness of activists like Crenshaw. When a comedian like Dave Chappelle releases content deemed as “tone-deaf and hurtful, particularly those which used various groups of people as punchlines, such as women, sexual assault victims, Asians and members of the LGBTQ community — transgender people in particular” (Bukspan) they receive potential termination of their job when the intention is good-natured and made to only poke fun at specific groups. The man even jokes about his own race and claims to be very frustrated with how oversensitive people are.

Minorities have collectively, in their niches, become the majority. Grand narratives are dead, and they have given way to sub-narratives. With so many different groups of people, organizing them has become impossible. Each group has their own beliefs, their own ideals, principles, and ways of life. Polyamorous people, for example, believe in having multiple significant others. While this is not considered normative, that is how this minority operates. It is easy to think that this group could be easily accepted by passing a law allowing group marriages, but that is not considering the greater whole. This is a single group. One law may not seem like a big deal, but when there are countless other minorities who are each asking for their recognition and rights, and who contradict one another, a true problem forms. Saul Bellow puts it quite

literally in his piece titled “There is Simply Too Much to Think About,” where he exclaims “the public is endlessly polled, the politicians and their advisors are guided in their strategies by poll statistics. This is where masses of Americans find substance, importance and definition” (Bellow) and it is impossible to appease every single person. There is not enough time in the world to create laws that will satisfy everyone, yet if intersectionality is to achieve what it is meant to, every voice would have to be heard and considered.

It must be made clear that intersectionality is a just cause, but like any other, it has its flaws. It fails to acknowledge that an individual cannot learn how to not offend every single minority. Just as well, it is unfairly applied to the loudest groups. Unlike most ways of thinking however, people seem to be ignoring the negative aspects of intersectionality. While it was created to appease everyone, to do so would be to oppress others. Activists of intersectionality are doing great work, but do not consider the whole picture. With post-colonialism came the abandonment of grand narratives, and birth of the sub-narrative. Now, culture is more diverse than ever, and in turn, even more difficult to manage. There have been great leaps since the founding of intersectionality, still there are those who are belittled for being born normal because of it. If inclusion is to have a place in a modern society, it must work toward including everyone, even the former oppressors.

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