

Confronting the
Cultural Revolution from the
Classroom to Your Community

the progressive miseducation of america



corey miller

Foreword by Everett Piper

“Many years ago, Charles Malik asserted that two great tasks must be undertaken: the saving of the soul and the saving of the mind. For every Christian this is not only a matter of personal discipleship but is also a matter for public discourse. The university is the seedbed for such a discourse directed at shaping the culture. In this well-timed work, Corey Miller does a masterful job of calling Christians to be salt and light on the university campus with the intention of redeeming the souls and minds of those sitting in darkness. This is a clarion call for all Christians to make the universities our next great mission field.”

Matt Endris, DMin, pastor, Fairview Baptist Church, Coushatta, LA;
trustee, Gateway Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention

“What is happening in America? How did we get here, and how can we turn the tides? These are the questions Dr. Corey Miller addresses in his new provocative book, *The Progressive Miseducation of America*. He wisely diagnoses the heart of the cultural revolution in America as education, or more accurately, *miseducation*. His book is part of what has motivated me to think about engaging the college campus more. Miller does not merely approach this as an academic, but as someone who has been on the front lines engaging students, professors, and the wider culture for decades. This book will open your eyes and hopefully stir you to action.”

Sean McDowell, PhD, author or editor of more than 20 books;
associate professor of Apologetics, Biola University

“*The Progressive Miseducation of America* is a timely and essential work that exposes the troubling devolution of American values under the influence of Marxist ideology, particularly in our academic institutions. Corey Miller not only diagnoses the problem with precision and clarity, but also offers a bold and hopeful solution: equipping Christian professors with a missional mindset to reclaim the ideological battleground of our campuses. With profound insight and unwavering conviction, Miller casts a vision for a new generation of educators who can effectively challenge false beliefs, inspire critical thinking, and cultivate a renewed commitment to truth in the hearts and minds of their students. This book is a call to action for anyone who cares about the future of our culture, reminding us that the road to lasting change begins with courage, conviction, and faith.”

Lucas Miles, pastor and senior director of TPUSA Faith;
author of *Woke Jesus: The False Messiah Destroying Christianity*

“Corey Miller’s book is a must-read for parents, grandparents, and anyone else who cares about what the future will look like for the next generation. Recognizing the pervasive and strategic influence within the university system, as well as the downstream impact of upstream ideologies, he sounds a clarion call for needed thoughtful Christian leadership in academia. If you want to change the culture, change the universities. Providing a thorough historical analysis, he not only answers the common lament, ‘How did we get here?,’ but also offers a hopeful way forward. All is not lost. *The Progressive Miseducation of America* provides a roadmap to help future generations of leaders confidently find their way through the cultural wilderness.”

John B. Crane, former Indiana state senator,
Indiana Senate Education Committee; board member, Colson Center

“Corey Miller offers unique and powerful insights into how Christians can positively influence campus culture for the better—the vital first step in securing the hearts, minds, and souls of young Americans. He keenly understands the insidious war in academia and explains how if the problem isn’t fixed in schools and universities, pastors and parents will continue to face a very treacherous battle.”

Jennifer Kabbany, editor-in-chief, *The College Fix*

“It’s been said that there are three kinds of people in the world: (1) those who make things happen, (2) those who watch things happen, and (3) those who wonder what happened. *The Progressive Miseducation of America* is a call for us to move from the shadows of those watching and wondering into the ranks of those who make things happen—for the good of others and the glory of God. Corey Miller’s remarkable book comes from the mind and heart of one who has spent a career on the front lines in the academy. His call for revitalizing campus and culture could not be greater, his timing could not be better, and his prescription could not be clearer. Read this book and let the revolution begin.”

Dondi E. Costin, PhD, president, Liberty University;
Major General, US Air Force (Retired)

“In *The Progressive Miseducation of America*, Corey Miller makes a compelling case that universities are a primary source of what’s wrong in our society. Most will agree. He also argues that a Christian renewal of the universities is possible. Though more will be skeptical of that aspect of the book, Miller offers a compelling case for it, based on his experience engaging the university, both faculty and students, with the gospel. And, of course, there’s the Christian history behind the idea of the university and the active working of the Holy Spirit among intellectuals and college students. Perhaps Dr. Miller is on to something after all.”

John Stonestreet, president, Colson Center;
coauthor of *A Practical Guide to Culture*

“University students, parents and grandparents of university students, donors, and pastors, you need to read this book. Corey Miller explains the philosophical system that has captured the American university. Many parents know that something is not right at the university, but, as Miller shows us, it is worse than they think. Giving essential details from the leading thinkers in this movement, Miller lays bare the incoherence of this philosophical system that is destroying lives, the university, and our country. He examines the epistemological, metaphysical, and ethical presuppositions supporting this philosophy and then equips his readers with sound arguments against these false beliefs. Miller reminds us of the importance of the university in shaping culture and that we cannot stand on the sidelines while it rots. Perhaps most importantly, Miller reminds us of the role of natural theology in demonstrating the falsehood of this social philosophy and in pointing us to the redemptive truths of Christianity that alone can restore us to communion with God. This is a must-read.”

Owen Anderson, PhD, professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies,
Arizona State University; author and editor of
The Cambridge Companion to the First Amendment and Religious Liberty

“Discernment is not merely the ability to distinguish between true and false, but between true and almost true. Dr. Corey Miller reveals how we’ve been miseducated by the ‘almost true’ ideas preached from American universities and that we are left with a toxic culture that denies undeniable truths about reality. He not only brilliantly shows us how this problem arose—a real college education in itself—but more importantly how to fix it. An insightful read with practical solutions!”

Frank Turek, DMin, author and speaker

“As the president of a large college campus ministry, Corey Miller is uniquely positioned to provide insight on how the cultural revolution has driven the miseducation of America through control of the university. This book offers an excellent, poignant analysis of the cultural forces leading to this point, why the university is a pivotal tool in the hands of revolutionaries, and what Christians should do going forward. I highly recommend this much-needed resource for helping more believers understand the university’s central role in driving culture’s strident secularism.”

Natasha Crain, podcaster; speaker;
author of five books, including *When Culture Hates You*

the progressive miseducation of america

corey miller



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To my family.

May you forever pursue the knowledge of God (John 17:3).

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*For the world is changing: I feel it in the water,
I feel it in the earth, and I smell it in the air.*

J.R.R. TOLKIEN,

The Return of the King, The Lord of the Rings Series

FOREWORD

Everett Piper



Have you ever wondered about how our country got into this mess? Ever wonder about how we became the “Divided States” rather than the United States? Has it ever crossed your mind how a nation that so proudly boasted of “coexistence” seemingly only five minutes ago became so fractured, so angry, and so morally lost?

If you want to understand who and what is responsible for this cultural chaos, you need to look no further than our nation’s educational institutions and how far they’ve fallen from their original missions.

As the parable of the prodigal son teaches us, when you squander your birthright, you’re going to end up wallowing in the slop with the pigs. And what is America’s educational “birthright”? Put succinctly, it is a biblical worldview.

The history of American education is clear. The guiding philosophy for nearly all of our schools up until that last handful of years, historically speaking, was to promote moral development and civic responsibility and to raise upright, honest, and trustworthy leaders. Simply stated, the primary purpose of education in America for the first couple hundred years of our country’s existence was to maintain the nation’s moral order. Schools were founded to galvanize future leaders in a common faith—faith in Christ. And leaders relied on their faith when stewarding America.

Harvard’s founding motto, for example, was “Truth for Christ and the Church.” Princeton’s was “Under God’s power she flourishes.” Yale’s is “Light

and truth.” These three, among America’s most seminal institutions, were unquestionably charted as Christian schools.

But it doesn’t end there. Seven of the eight Ivy League institutions were founded in like manner to train up future generations in a biblical ethic. Dartmouth’s motto is “The voice of one crying in the wilderness.” The University of Pennsylvania’s is “Laws without morals are useless.” After Rhode Island College became Brown University, their motto became “In God we hope.” Columbia University’s motto comes directly from Psalm 36:9: “In Thy light shall we see light.”

The list goes on and on and literally covers coast to coast. Amherst College: “Let them enlighten the lands.” Wellesley College: “Not to be ministered unto [served], but to minister [serve].” Northwestern University: “Whatsoever things are true.” Kenyon College: “Valiantly bear the cross!” Ohio University: “Religion, Learning, Civility; Virtue before all things.” Indiana University: “Light and Truth.” Emory University: “The wise heart seeks knowledge.” Valparaiso University: “In Thy light we see light.” And the University of California: *Fiat Lux*, “Let there be light.”

These institutions are only a few of the hundreds that explicitly cited a Christian ethic as their guiding ethos and the very reason for their existence. America’s educational “inheritance” is, indeed, rich with the assumption that the highest goal of the academy should be to teach and model personal integrity within the context of those self-evident truths that are endowed to us by our Creator—truths such as respect for the law, a desire for virtue, a heart for sacrifice, and the value of sobriety, religion, morality, and biblical wisdom.

If you want to know why we are where we are today, look no further than your local schools and how far they have strayed. Corey Miller’s arduous research and brilliant writing makes the case that maybe it’s time for American education to follow the prodigal son’s example and return home.

Everett Piper
President Emeritus,
Oklahoma Wesleyan University

INTRODUCTION

THE DREAM TURNED NIGHTMARE



Recently, maybe you awoke one morning startled by your observations of American culture only to keenly grasp a now commonly held sentiment: This is not Grandma's America! With strident trepidation, you resonate with Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, who quipped, "Toto, I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."

An archway into Yale University continues to read "For God, for Country, and for Yale." Yet twenty-first-century America has changed, and much that was once commonplace is now in the past; few are living now who remember it. Astonishingly, 38 percent of Americans say that patriotism is "very important," down from 70 percent in 1998. Only 39 percent say religion is "very important," down from 62 percent over the same period. Those who say raising children is "very important" fell to 30 percent from 59 percent. And what was deemed the last living virtue in America often associated with liberals, a belief in tolerance, is at 58 percent, down from 80 percent in 2019.¹

If that is 25 years in the making, what will America look like in the next 25 years? We have a choice to make, and it must be soon.

WHAT IS HAPPENING TO AMERICA?

It's complicated. But the short answer can be simplified in one word: *revolution*. We are undergoing a cultural revolution in America and in the West. No,

it isn't with tanks and guns. But not all revolutions materialize in that way—not immediately, anyway. Edmund Burke was an Irish philosopher, father of modern conservatism, statesman, and signer of the document that effectively abolished the slave trade in Great Britain. He wrote *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. It was an enormously enchanting revolution for Marx and Lenin to dream about. Famously quoting Burke about good and evil, John F. Kennedy said in a speech, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”²

We are in a revolution.

I've studied the primary literature on all the major revolutions, from the Russian and Chinese Revolutions in the East to the American, English, and French Revolutions in the West, to help understand our current crisis. In addition to being a philosopher and theologian, I take great interest in culture. As a student of culture, a student of the inception of the universities and their role in shaping culture, and someone published in Marxist thought who gave much reflection about this during graduate school, I'm confident that we are in a revolution in America—a soft revolution, to be sure, but a revolution nonetheless, one deeply wedded to a westernized form of Marxism. One doesn't need to know the term much less the origins to see its ideology and fruit.

Culture is broadly defined by norms, values, practices, customs, beliefs, language, laws, and shared meanings. Our culture is undergoing radical change. For many, personal anxiety is very high. We see evidence of this cultural revolution all around us; the symptoms downstream come from an ideological poison upstream. It can largely be explained in a word: *universities*. Before you cry “Conspiracy!,” read on and you will understand. You cannot beware unless you are first aware of that which you ought to beware. Many liberals know that the ground underneath them has begun to tremble and do not like the way it feels. Some grasp the fact that their own foundations are being upended. Some prominent New Atheists have even converted to Christ. Yet many conservatives still fail to grasp the gravity of this threat, thinking a political election might solve the problem, or alternatively dismissing it as simply cliché talk of “political correctness,” “wokeness,” or “liberalism,” most of whose college students will, they say, outgrow it when they get jobs.

But college students and graduates did get jobs. Then something happened. They brought the campus to the culture, to the corporations, to medicine, to elementary schools, and yes, even to churches. As the journalist Andrew Sullivan wrote, “We all live on campus now.”³ Some have rightly observed a genuine pushback against some of the apparent new norms of our culture in terms of corporate cutbacks of transgender marketing failures by companies like Bud Light or even state governments like Florida eradicating harmful university administrator positions at its public universities functioning as thought police.

But my contention is that many of these instances are only short lived. That is, billionaires pulling money from Ivy League universities due to emotive disdain for apparent radical antisemitism fostered by the universities seems brief and reactionary without any sense of permanency or resolve at the ideological level. But that is the level from where all the contention sprang. The structural core, if unchanged, will force us right back in the same direction shortly after symptoms are treated. The revolutionaries have got hold of not merely the economic means of production per se but the cultural means of production—and for good strategic reasons. The American sociologist James Davison Hunter reminds us that although a revolutionary idea might emerge from the masses, “it does not gain traction until it is embraced and propagated by elites” working through their “well-developed networks and powerful institutions.”⁴ This is why focusing on the locus of ideas in a culture is vital. The key locus is the college campus.

WHAT HAPPENS IN VEGAS STAYS IN VEGAS

I invoke the famous ad campaign “What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas” here because taglines and jingles are notoriously difficult to get out of your head and I want to impress on you a central thesis of the book: What happens in the universities does not stay in the universities.

It was never intended that the goods captured in the ivory tower remain there. Like many things, the universities have been repurposed and yet still carry the highest level of influence. What has changed is the speed with which ideas make their way from the ivory tower to the village. Media and

technology have seen to that, both for good and for evil. Thought precedes action. Ideas form a culture and, even, a civilization.

Typically, when you think of war, you think of blood and soil. But since the start of the twentieth century, wars have been about ideas—bolshevism, communism, fascism, democracy, socialism, and so on. Hitler was alleged to say, “Give me the textbooks and I will control Germany”; China’s Cultural Revolution was a purge of ideas; Che Guevara called revolution the struggle of “masses and ideas”; and the subversive roots of cancel culture and woke ideology can be found in the ideological statement (rightly or wrongly) attributed to Joseph Stalin, “Ideas are more powerful than weapons. We don’t allow our enemies to have weapons. Why should we let them have ideas?”

Ideas are powerful. They can change the world for good or evil, and the university is the cultural gatekeeper of ideas. This brings us to the second major thesis of this book: As goes the university, so goes the culture. Whatever the reasons—technology, social media, campus activism, communal housing, music, globalism, radicalizing professors, or more—the university is the epicenter of culture, and as goes the university in the US, so goes the world.

There is, in America and in the West more generally, an ever-increasing volume of voices favoring an authoritarian (or even totalitarian) spirit over a libertarian one. This extends to our cognitive liberty such that if one is deemed to have a politically incorrect thought and is found out, it can lead to ruined careers, divided families, and destroyed lives. We are in the midst of an ideological revolution that came from the college campus. What we’re seeing today is the pollution downstream of what yesterday was upstream. It is clearly the case that politics is downstream from culture, culture is downstream from education, and the apex of education is the university.

Oddly, most Americans are unaware that there’s a war. Sure, there’s a growing divide between conservatives and progressives, Republicans and Democrats, rich and poor, Red Sox and Yankees...but not a revolution. Yes, a revolution!

It is difficult to see what you don’t understand. Unlike Europe, Asia, and South America, America has no experience or understanding (or fear) of Marxism. If Marxism were a virus—and it is—America has never been inoculated, never had a near run-in with a junta or thrown a Molotov cocktail or whatever else people do in a revolution. That all happens somewhere else in the

world. But it's happening here this time. And to quote the title of the song by Gil Scott-Heron, "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised."

THE CAMPUS—GROUND ZERO

American evangelicalism is unique (believers from every major denomination bound together by a higher cause), and it's a faith that formed not overnight but over centuries. According to church historian Douglas Sweeney, we—American evangelicals—are the product of four spiritual movements, all flowing from the campus.⁵

First, there's the Reformation, which began with Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, at the universities of Wittenberg, Geneva, and Zürich. The lightning rod of the Reformation was not Father Luther or Brother Luther but Doctor Luther, professor of moral theology at the University of Wittenberg. It is from this position and post, and only from it, that the call of reform carried, answered by doctors at other universities.

Second is the Puritan movement, whose ideas about a not-so-separate church and state did not live on in perpetuity but whose universities did. As biographer Sarah Vowell puts it, "Winthrop and his shipmates" read books, wrote books, "and pretty much kept their noses in them up until the day God created the Red Sox."⁶ Harvard, Yale, and Dartmouth were Puritan creations, viewing higher education as the foundation for ministry.

Third are the Pietist and Moravian movements, who gave to Christianity 24/7 prayer and were birthed in the German universities of Leipzig, Württemberg, and Halle through Christian professors like Philipp Spener and August Francke who turned their classrooms into *collegia pietatis* (colleges of piety) and their students into committed disciples.

And fourth are the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century movements of revival and awakenings in the US, many of which began at the university. In fact, of the three broadly recognized revivals of the past 75 years, one began with the students and faculty of Asbury (1970), another with the students and faculty of Wheaton (1995), and a third right back with the students and faculty of Asbury in 2023.

The conspicuous thread, common to all, is the university; nothing has

been more influential or impactful to the spread of the gospel, not to mention to future leaders of culture, and let me back that with a singular example—the Mount Hermon Revival.

In 1886, a first-ever Christian conference for college students was held in Mount Hermon, Massachusetts. On the last day of the conference, 250 students were given a challenge by Princeton senior Robert Wilder to consider taking the gospel to the world as foreign missionaries. One hundred students stepped forward from schools such as Yale, Harvard, Dartmouth, and Cornell.⁷

Wilder spent the next year traveling to more than 150 campuses, giving the same challenge, with an additional 2,100 students committing their lives to foreign missions. By the time the student volunteer movement petered out in the 1940s, it had sent 20,500 students to mission fields: It was the largest missionary endeavor in the history of the church up until 1948. In 1948, student leaders left the student volunteer movement as “its activities moved steadily away from an emphasis on overseas missions and became more involved in political and social matters,” and they went on to start intervarsity chapters on US campuses, which were joined by Campus Crusade for Christ, the Navigators, and others, starting a whole new student movement that would, in time, dwarf the impact of the student volunteers.⁸

Indisputably, the university has been profoundly influential for God’s kingdom purposes. On the other hand, in the wrong hands, nothing has been more destructive. Knowing how we can all respond requires having knowledge about why America is in the downward spiral that it is in. Smart action requires nothing less.

THE FIRST REVOLUTION

If you want to change the world, change the university. Conversely, if you want to screw up the world, screw up the university, and to date this has occurred twice. There have been two massive ideological revolutions fought in and over the university, and the victories won by radical progressives have left the moral landscape of the country as cratered as the moon.

The first revolution took place between the Civil War and World War II (1880–1930). In *The Sacred and the Secular University*, historians Jon Roberts

and James Turner lay out the revolution in meticulous detail, describing its major movements as follows:

1. *Methodological Naturalism*: As science complexified, scientists specialized, focusing exclusively on the mechanisms of cause and effect divorced from a conceptual framework. What mattered was how *A* caused *B* and not the *why* of *A* or the broader implications of *B*. This divorced science from philosophy.
2. *Philological Historicism*: The focus on material “causation” passed to the language and literature departments in the German universities, shifting attention from the language and the text to what gave rise to the language and text. Most significantly, the Bible was scrutinized, turning theology into archaeology, sifting through layers of Hebrew civilization, to find meaning in the text.
3. *Liberal Protestantism*: The highly secularized German universities had a liberalizing influence on Protestantism, and once liberalized, mainstream Protestantism became a powerful advocate for the secularization of universities in the US.
4. *Sociology*: When science is reduced to base causality, then aimed at human beings, what you get is modern sociology: the study of man, society, and culture as the passive determinant of evolutionary causality.
5. *Liberal Arts*: Following the pattern of the German language and literature schools, the humanities arose with the understanding “that the relationship between context and content was essential to establishing historical interpretation.”⁹

The revolution was a reduction of all study, all learning, and all disciplines to the material explanation of cause and effect. Table scraps from the hard sciences’ feasts were left over for social sciences and especially humanities. Politics and psychology became departments of “political science” and “psychological science.” In other words, material cause and effect came to be regarded as a

complete explanation for all that is. The total secularization of the university in scientific terms would set the stage for the second revolution.

THE SECOND REVOLUTION

The second revolution was an ideological amalgam of cultural Marxism and postmodernism whose beginnings were largely seeded in the 1930s and 1960s in Germany, France, and Italy. But it quickly moved to US universities, which have become the largest exporter of the ideology inside and outside of America.

Cultural Marxism's major influencers came from the Frankfurt School of critical theory who were forced to flee when the Nazis rose to power, still embracing fundamental aspects of Marx's conflict theory but extending its economic focus to race, class, gender, and sex (significantly appealing to Freud). Its major Italian thinker, who helped the shift from classical to cultural Marxism, was Antonio Gramsci. He was imprisoned during his final years, but his prison notes were mediated to universities in the US through the late Dr. Joseph Buttigieg, a former professor at Notre Dame and the father of Pete Buttigieg. Indeed, cultural Marxism's major thinkers became virtual faculty advisers during the sexual revolution and student protests on college campuses in the 1960s. It retained notions of dividing people into social binaries (oppressors and oppressed), seeking to enlighten them through liberational conscientiousness (what we now call "woke"), and executing on liberation through revolution. (I will address this further when we explore the subject of diversity, equity, and inclusion [DEI], and we will go down to great depths in part 2 of the book.)

Postmodernism, for its part, began in the 1960s with French philosophers philosophizing. Thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, and Roland Barthes—all French communists or Marxist sympathizers—and extending to their second-generation thinkers. Their philosophy coalesced around the nature of knowledge, power, and language. Truth, they argued, is nothing other than the beliefs and values of the culture in charge (the hegemony). Cultural critics James Lindsay and Helen Pluckrose identify four themes of postmodernism.

1. *The Blurring of Boundaries*: "Radical skepticism toward objective truth...results in a suspicion of the boundaries and categories we

have generally accepted as true.”¹⁰ These include the boundaries between objective and subjective, high and low culture, male and female, man and animals, and the like.

2. *The Power of Language*: In postmodern thought, language is what defines reality. To control the language is to control mass perception of reality. Think, for example, of the way in which personal pronouns (e.g., *they*, *them*) have been weaponized.¹¹
3. *Cultural Relativism*: Because there is no objective truth, truth is relative to the culture, and therefore, it is impermissible to critique the truth of another culture.¹²
4. *Loss of the Individual*: In postmodernism, society is stratified by socio-sexual-ethnic groups, arranged from most oppressed to least. The more oppressed, the greater the social status, with straight, white males being the bottom stratum of society.¹³

The amalgamated postmodern cultural Marxism that came to dominate the humanities has struggled with exhausting itself: If everything is relative, what is there to teach? What is there to learn? It’s a one-way ticket to nihilism. But it didn’t turn to nihilism. The Marxist telos inspires hope in a utopia. It turned instead to activism. Lindsay and Pluckrose wrote,

Think of postmodernism as a kind of fast-evolving virus. Its original and purest form couldn’t spread from the academy to the general population because it was so difficult to grasp and so far removed from social realities. In its mutated form, it was able to spread, leaping the “species” gap from academics to activists to everyday people as it became increasingly graspable and actionable and therefore more contagious.¹⁴

This applied postmodern cultural Marxism is where the third revolution begins. In this book, we will look at the rise of critical social justice (the mutated virus) on full display in part 1; then, a deeper analysis on the ideology and how we lost the universities in part 2; and finally, a broad call to

action for a third revolution (“All hands on deck”) in part 3, from philanthropies to churches and families and from elementary schools and universities to political alliances.

THE THIRD REVOLUTION

With all Europe under Nazi control and Germany massing to invade Great Britain, Winston Churchill took to the airwaves in his greatest speech to appeal to the British citizenry to fight for their lives:

What General Weygand called the Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilization. Upon it depends our own British life, and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this Island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age.¹⁵

The epic picture Churchill paints must have sounded exaggerated, but every word of it was true. The situation *was* that dire, the result of failure, that bleak.

Being an island, many in the UK believed it was best to hunker down, sit and wait, and not stand and fight. And there are similar voices in American Christendom, like Rod Dreher, saying, “The culture war is largely over—and we lost...Now, our mission is to build the underground resistance.” But I do not believe a strategic withdrawal for the purpose of developing “creative, communal solutions to help us hold on to our faith and our values in a world growing ever more hostile to them” is the only or even the best option.¹⁶ Where will we go? To where will we retreat? In the voice of theologian Al Mohler, “We must not exile ourselves, and we certainly must not retreat into silence while we still have a platform, a voice, and an opportunity.”¹⁷

Harvard Magazine recently reminded us that Churchill went on to give the commencement speech at Harvard University, where he said, “The empires of the future are the empires of the mind.”¹⁸ Ironically, the article was published in 2018. In 2015, Harvard reported more atheists and agnostics entered the school as freshmen than Protestants and Catholics.¹⁹

We need to prepare. We need to act. And we need to do so now—together in what might be dubbed an ideological third revolution to return to our Christian roots that once made America good before America became great—that is, before it lost its greatness, having first lost a significant amount of its goodness.

A word about the title is in order. This book is not primarily political even if it has political aspects. The word *progressive* in the title may seem misleading. It is not. It points primarily to an ideological and gradual, or sometimes rapid-yet-constant, movement away from the intellectual and moral roots that formed America, roots we should also wish to conserve. That is, the Christian roots of America are what made it great. That is not to say I believe America was ever an explicitly Christian nation as such that we wish to recapture. No, America’s charter, the US Constitution, as well as its preceding founding document, the Declaration of Independence, both fail to mention the name “Jesus” anywhere. Nonetheless, it was a Christian-*inspired* nation to be sure as most of its founders were Christians rather than Muslims, Hindus, atheists, Jews, Confucianists, Buddhists, or even deists. It would be preposterous to think that their Christian convictions weren’t at least informing or inspiring the founding of America. Manifestly, their social contract included grounding any notion of natural rights in God. Language such as humans being “created equal” with “inalienable rights” that are “endowed by our Creator” make it clear that the founding wasn’t pantheistic (note the separation of created beings from Creator), nor atheistic (note the source of our rights being given by the Creator), and nor was it reasonably theistic in any other form than Christian (note Muslims, Jews, and deists were at best a scarce minority in the colonies and among the founding fathers). As depicted in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights, the founders opposed the conflation of church and state, or state churches, as experienced in Europe. It prompted the notion of separation. In this regard they did not want a sectarian preference (e.g., Baptist,

Presbyterian, Methodist, etc.). But they considered religion and morality to be indispensable and to a degree inseparable. John Adams, second president of the United States, captures the idea behind the founders when, on October 11, 1798, he wrote to the Massachusetts Militia that

Because We have no Government armed with Power capable of contending with human Passions unbridled by...morality and Religion. Avarice, Ambition [and] Revenge or Galantry, would break the strongest Cords of our Constitution as a Whale goes through a Net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.²⁰

PART 1

WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

No Longer Grandma's America

*For, after all, how do we know that two and two make four?
Or that the force of gravity works? Or that the past is unchangeable?
If both the past and the external world exist only in the
mind, and if the mind itself is controllable—what then?*

GEORGE ORWELL, 1984



WOKE 101



In this first chapter, my goal is to explain major ideas that are present in the conflict on campus and in the culture and the ideology that animates them. Woke 101. To make it as intuitive as possible, I'll focus on the "woke" you'll likely be most familiar with. But to start, some historical context will be helpful.

THE STORY OF WOKE

The Copernican revolution changed the fundamental way people understood the world, shifting from an earth-centric universe to a universe centered around the sun. Not a new idea but a new reality. Something like it occurred in the 1960s, and it had nothing to do with "Turn on, tune in, drop out." The newest innovation to how people viewed the world was postmodernism, formulated by French thinkers like Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-François Lyotard.

Innately, as famously observed by Aristotle, man desires to know. We live to know truth, to understand the *how* and *why* of everything, and innately, we believe that truth is there to be discovered. But within modernism, many no longer believed the truth that God exists or the truth of the gospel. Everything was about science. And now, it's become even more dicey. The "gospel" according to postmodernism is "truth does not exist," and to call it a paradigm shift is to put it far too mildly. According to Pluckrose and Lindsay,

Once postmodernism burst onto the intellectual scene in the late 1960s, it became wildly fashionable among leftist and left-leaning academics. As the intellectual fad grew, its recruits set to work producing radically skeptical Theory, in which Western knowledge and ways of obtaining knowledge—including our assumption that objective knowledge is even possible—were criticized and dismantled... This approach had its limits. Endless dismantling and de-construction were doomed to consume them in nihilistic despair, a sense that all is useless and pointless.¹

The final sentence is extremely important: If truth is completely relative, then what's the point of the university? Of learning? What's the point of anything? But if nothing matters, one thing certainly does—power. If there is no truth, only differing perspectives and opinions (one no better than the next), then truth is, and only is, the enshrined beliefs, practices, and preferences of those in power. History, for example, is merely the telling of events from the perspective of those in power; science is the preferred data of those in power; normal sexual behavior just reflects the preferences and practices of those in power. And on and on it goes.

In a world where nothing is true and everything is relative, the only thing that matters is to be the party in power, so that *your* history, *your* facts, *your* sexual preferences, *your* concept of marriage, *your* idea of normalcy, are what is taught in the classroom.

It is the full and final realization of this fact that turned postmodernism toward activism, protesting, policing language, inciting civil chaos, dismantling power structures, controlling the narrative of the media, and moving to exile the straight, white males who held the power. But how did they do this? What do academics know about reordering society and waging a cultural revolution? It turns out, quite a lot. Pluckrose and Lindsay write,

A new wave of Theorists in the late 1980s and early 1990s created a diverse set of highly politicized and actionable post-modern Theories that included some elements of Critical Theory. We call this more recent development *applied postmodernism*... These applied

postmodernists came from different fields, but their ideas were similar and provided a more user-friendly approach than the old postmodernism. During this turn, Theory mutated into a handful of Theories—postcolonial, queer, and critical race—that were put to work in the world to deconstruct social injustice.²

Critical theories (queer theory, feminist theory, race theory) are the tactics of “applied postmodernism.” Postmodernism “aggressively put into action to change the existing social order, ushering out Western civilization and ushering in, well, anything but that.”³ (Postmodernism “aggressively put into action” is called critical social justice, and critical social justice is what is commonly called “woke.” Moving forward, I’ll be using *critical social justice*, *woke*, or *wokeism* interchangeably when referring to this.)

This is how society arrived to where it is today. To see it in more detail, we’ll explore topics you’ve likely encountered before—cancel culture, which is everywhere; DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion), which is probably at your workplace; and politics, which you can’t avoid.

CROSS WORDS PUZZLE

Who would’ve ever imagined that we’d be at a place where we even need to ask the question, What is a woman? Or worse yet, that we would have a nominee for the US Supreme Court who either intellectually couldn’t or politically wouldn’t answer the question but who would nonetheless go on to be confirmed by the US Senate for a lifetime appointment? Lest we are preoccupied by one person or some small body of politicians, we must reckon with the fact that those officials represent the ideas of nearly half of the American populace.

In 2022, the editors of the *Cambridge Dictionary* supplemented the definition of *woman* as “an adult female human being” with “an adult who lives and identifies as female though they may have been said to have a different sex at birth.”⁴ That revision went beyond updating conventional usage, providing descriptive analysis of the change in language. As theologian Carl Truman points out, it is a prescription, an assertion of power over our very words

to get us to adopt a new philosophical view about reality.⁵ It is here changing the very meaning of the word.

Revolutions are fought by rhetorical strategies as much as battle plans. Words are a means not just of describing reality but of changing it. Hence the focus on transforming words and inventing new ones like *heterosexuality*, *heteronormativity*, *theistic normativity*, and even *love*, *social justice*, or *woman* as adaptations with new meanings. This is a factor in how the new ideology works to transform worldviews and culture. As one radical proponent states succinctly, “Language is not a neutral transmitter of a universal, objective, or fixed reality. Rather, language is the way we construct reality, the framework we use to give meaning to our experiences.”⁶

Language is given a very important role in postmodern theory and in the critical social justice scholarship that stems from it. Language is seen as the constructor of reality. Words can be a form of violence. There are trigger words that are deemed hurtful and offensive, and the intent of changing the meanings of words is also often to change our view of the world. Now, universities have long lexicons of words that ought not to be said. Stanford University, for example, had a list of hundreds of words that were off limits, which is insane. *Insane* is one of the words, which should be replaced with *surprising* or *wild*. Embarrassed, Stanford pulled it off the website.⁷ But many universities adopt these ever-growing lexicons.

Besides changing the words or changing the meaning of words we commonly use, there are also new words that have come into use. Below is a glossary of important terms that recur throughout this book.

Critical Theories: Critical theories are conceptual frameworks. Critical feminism, for example, is the theory about feminism. The theory includes the conceptual framework as well as strategies for cultural reeducation and activism. Critical theories are Marxist in that they seek a revolution within the social order, a reordering of the haves and have-nots. The big difference is the change in paradigm—from rich versus poor to oppressor versus oppressed—making the revolution race based instead of economic. There are many critical theories, the major ones being critical social justice (oppressor

versus oppressed), queer theory (queer versus straight), and critical feminism (female versus male).

Antiracism: Critically, *antiracism* does not mean “against racism” but is rather an essential belief of critical race theory, that everyone in the majority culture (white people) is racist, either overtly or covertly. To be an “antiracist” is to believe that every member of white society is racist and every facet of society is racist, such that sweeping cultural and political reforms are the only remedy.

Equity: In critical theory, *equality* contrasts with *equity*. It is not a synonym. Equity is a flattening of society—everyone getting the same, taking from the rich and giving it to others (which, if that sounds like communism, it is). In contrast, capitalism in America aims for equal opportunity.

Virtue Signaling: Virtue signaling is a disingenuous public display of moral sympathy and solidarity with the intent of showcasing one’s own moral virtue according to the values of woke ideology.

Social Justice: Once again, we have a word that in critical theory means the opposite of what you’d think. Past injustices to ethnic minorities are “evened out” according to their social category of oppression (e.g., by inverse racism—that is, marginalizing, shaming, and blaming white people).

White Guilt: The meaning of *white guilt* is straightforward enough: white people assuming guilt, not for being racist, but for racist acts of the past done by others. The idea is, though you may have had nothing to do with those acts, you indirectly benefit from them (as a white person).

Systemic Racism: Differences in outcomes among racial groups can be explained, and only explained, by the “system” being inherently racist. Accusing the entire society of structural racism instead of accusing racist individuals is part of a strategy that seeks to justify radical, destructive political changes. If everything is racist, then everything must be torn down.

Implicit Bias: This is a theory that every person is secretly racist, even if that person doesn't feel racist, act racist, or believe in treating people differently based on race.

Hegemony: The group that maintains cultural and political dominance in a society.

Patriarchy: Racism, patriarchy, and capitalism are central facets of white, Western society, which is oppressive.

Cisgender: Someone whose internal sense of gender corresponds with the sex the person was identified as having at birth.

BIPOC: An acronym that stands for "black, Indigenous, and people of color" and is used to identify those with oppressed status.

Critical Race Theory (CRT): An academic framework examining the intersections of race, power, and systemic racism in society.

Decolonization: The process of challenging and dismantling Western education, values, political control, colonial ideologies, structures, and legacies. Decolonization involves reevaluating historical narratives and empowering Indigenous communities to reclaim their culture.

Intersectionality: The recognition of how various forms of oppression intersect and compound one another and that individuals can face discrimination based on multiple aspects of their identity. The more oppressed groups to which one belongs (for example, gay, female, and black) the more cultural and moral authority one has in society.

White Privilege: Any status, wealth, or opportunity one has by virtue of being white.

Inclusive: To be inclusive is to take pains not to exclude marginalized groups, but it has a more specific meaning in critical social justice. Inclusion typically refers to embracing the gender or sexual orientation that a person has chosen to "identify as."

You would think it impossible to introduce or implement any of these concepts into society at large, and indeed it would be—but for the university. The university is solely responsible for creating, cultivating, and spreading this highly destructive ideology. Actually, that's not quite right; it is the highly educated Marxist professors who are responsible. For example, would there be Palestinian protests on campus apart from the professors? Obviously not.

As the glossary of terms illustrates, to be woke is to see or understand everything through the lens of race, gender, and sexual orientation and to see everyone through the grid of victim/oppressor. Note that many of the words and concepts mean the opposite of their surface meaning. The confusion is intentional, and it's critical, especially for Christians, to understand that the social justice of critical theory is not the social justice of Scripture.

As Christians, we believe primary human identity lies in being made in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27) and this bestows intrinsic dignity that is worthy of Christian compassion and justice. Sin is the ultimate problem, and Christ's redemption is the ultimate solution. Redeemed people should promote genuine social justice within a biblical framework (Colossians 2:8). The social justice of critical theory is corrupted by a focus on power and privilege, and as a result, it misconstrues justice, grace, and compassion. Christians should reject any interpretation of social justice predicated on the social construct of victim/oppressor, which is a Marxist way of looking at the world.

VICTIM/OPPRESSOR NARRATIVES

Along with words and definitions, narratives play a critical role in reengineering society. To say that narratives have social significance is merely to say that human beings view the world through stories and interpret it according to narratives. Kurt Vonnegut, in a now famous video, lays out the storylines already primed in our thinking, and they are shockingly few. Taking from the video, this is what Vonnegut means by these storylines:

Now, the simplest story...if you watch television, it'll be told again and again and again. Nobody ever gets tired of this story: I call it

“man in a hole,” but it needn’t be about a man in a hole: somebody gets into trouble, and then gets out of it again.

Now, another story that’s very popular...I call it boy meets girl, but it needn’t be about a boy or a girl. It’s somebody on a day like any other day comes across something perfectly wonderful...[loses that thing], and gets it back again...⁸

We see the world, watch the news, think about the future, and see history according to a handful of *s*-shaped (up-down-up) storylines. With that in mind, consider the following example.

During the presidential election of 2012 (Obama versus Romney), some accused the media of allowing the polls to drive the national narrative. What they feared was that the rise and fall of polling numbers would enact in the mind of the American populace the “David and Goliath” storyline, one where the unlikely candidate (Romney), against all odds, takes on the establishment, comes from behind, and beats Goliath. That one. They knew that when humans anticipate a particular storyline, we can’t see the story ending any other way, so it doesn’t. It’s self-fulfilling.

Our narrative understanding of the world makes us vulnerable to this kind of manipulation, which is why there is always a battle to control the national narrative. Typically, when you watch the local news, what you’ll get is news. If you watch one of the major media outlets (CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, etc.), what you’ll get is “news stories”—that is, news told as a story. For example, if you watch Fox News, a conservative narrative threads through the stories. If you watch MSNBC, the “victim/oppressor” storyline of critical race theory threads through the stories. The major media outlets take the granular facts of the local news and supply narrative details that highlight a particular storyline.

It is difficult to understate how easy it is to control the populace when you control the narrative—when you decide what people are hearing in the news, movies, classroom, etc. All critical theories exploit this fact and seize upon the media and the classroom as the commanding heights of social revolution.

But while dominating the narrative confers an ideological advantage, there’s no substitute for silencing your critics. In the golden age of communism and

fascism, this was done at an industrial scale—mass liquidation. Surprisingly, “canceling” people is just as effective.

CANCELLATION

In a democracy, ideally, the best ideas for a country’s future will beat out—in a head-to-head competition—the worst ideas. In this case, the vision, plans, and ideas would stand on their own merit. But in the framework of a neo-Marxist revolution, a fair exchange of ideas is not what you want. You need a hostile takeover. And, as mentioned above, an initial step in that takeover is to control the messaging of educational, political, and media outlets and, in so doing, control the national narrative—tell the public a story that makes your vision seem reasonable, desirable, and inevitable. Going a step further, you probably want to silence opposing viewpoints altogether, and today, that’s accomplished not by jail or murder but by cancellation. Cancel culture produces a similar result to imprisoning and executing political opponents—your opposition is indefinitely silenced.

Perhaps the most famous cancellation of any individual is that of J.K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter series. It received global attention. Rowling summarizes the history of the controversy on her website (the blanks within the statements below represent where profanity and vulgar language are referenced):

This isn’t an easy piece to write, for reasons that will shortly become clear, but I know it’s time to explain myself on an issue surrounded by toxicity. I write this without any desire to add to that toxicity.

For people who don’t know: last December I tweeted my support for Maya Forstater, a tax specialist who’d lost her job for what were deemed “transphobic” tweets. She took her case to an employment tribunal, asking the judge to rule on whether a philosophical belief that sex is determined by biology is protected in law. Judge Tayler ruled that it wasn’t.

My interest in trans issues pre-dated Maya’s case by almost two years, during which I followed the debate around the concept of

gender identity closely. I've met trans people, and read sundry books, blogs and articles by trans people, gender specialists, intersex people, psychologists, safeguarding experts, social workers and doctors, and followed the discourse online and in traditional media. On one level, my interest in this issue has been professional, because I'm writing a crime series, set in the present day, and my fictional female detective is of an age to be interested in, and affected by, these issues herself, but on another, it's intensely personal, as I'm about to explain.

All the time I've been researching and learning, accusations and threats from trans activists have been bubbling in my Twitter timeline. This was initially triggered by a "like." When I started taking an interest in gender identity and transgender matters, I began screenshotting comments that interested me, as a way of reminding myself what I might want to research later. On one occasion, I absent-mindedly "liked" instead of screenshotting. That single "like" was deemed evidence of wrongthink, and a persistent low level of harassment began.

Months later, I compounded my accidental "like" crime by following Magdalen Berns on Twitter. Magdalen was an immensely brave young feminist and lesbian who was dying of an aggressive brain tumor. I followed her because I wanted to contact her directly, which I succeeded in doing. However, as Magdalen was a great believer in the importance of biological sex, and didn't believe lesbians should be called bigots for not dating trans women with penises, dots were joined in the heads of twitter trans activists, and the level of social media abuse increased.

I mention all this only to explain that I knew perfectly well what was going to happen when I supported Maya. I must have been on my fourth or fifth cancellation by then. I expected the threats of violence, to be told I was *literally killing trans people with my hate*, to be called ____ and ____ and, of course, for my books

to be burned, although one particularly abusive man told me he'd composted them [emphasis Rowling's].⁹

We will return to this example in chapter 2.

I've experienced firsthand the impact of cancel culture in the ministry that I lead, which is on campuses all over the US. There are speech codes, club funding, and speech zones to contend with, along with mandates like allowing Muslim or Buddhist students equal opportunity to run the ministry. Seriously, would anyone think it rational that a vegetarian club on campus be required to allow a meat-eater to run for club president, or allow a neo-Nazi to lead the Jewish club? We've had more than 150 legal inquiries on campuses due to cancel culture, four federal victories, five appellate court victories, two assists in Supreme Court victories, as well as a victory involving atheist groups and the Department of Education that was overseen by President Biden over dismantling a regulation intended to protect religious groups on campus. There exists a campus cancel culture database. By far, most of these cancellations are happening to conservatives and Christians.¹⁰

The College Fix, who hosts the database, defines cancel culture as "any effort by people or groups to identify someone or something as offensive or unacceptable and seek in some way to censor or punish the transgressor or item."¹¹ The detailed repository of information lists nearly 2,000 successful or potential cancellations via protest this past decade or so, including everything from statues hauled off campuses to renamed buildings and mascots. It includes professors who have been suspended or lost their jobs for saying or researching something politically questionable; student groups attacked or barred for their conservative, pro-life, or libertarian views; and guest speakers shouted down or disinvited. Yours truly has been the victim of campus cancel culture as a speaker at least three times.

There is much more to be said about cancel culture that we will cover later, but for the moment, it's important to see how it fits within the tactical approach of critical social justice. Through social media, it is possible to break into the home of your ideological rival, threaten them, denigrate them, ruin them, and then make them disappear.

FROM WOKE WORD TO WOKE WORK (DEI)

When it comes to understanding critical social justice in our culture, proponents display significant aspects for us under the acronym DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion).

As we've seen, these terms are misleading, sometimes meaning their exact opposite—for what decent human being would disparage someone's cultural background, or exclude them, or treat them unfairly? No one. And in all three cases, that's not what the word signifies in the context of critical theory. Through the lens of critical theory, *diversity* points to a concerted effort to marginalize majority culture, typically white people (when race is the topic). *Equity* means equal outcomes, not equal opportunity, and so handicapping advantage. And *inclusion* means embracing anyone's declared identity, whether someone identifies as, for example, gay or straight or trans, or pan, or even if they identify as an animal.

There are three major branches in my field of philosophy, and they can be ordered in terms of what is most to least foundational: Metaphysics concerns what exists or what is real, epistemology concerns rationality and theories of knowledge, and ethics concerns matters of good and evil. Philosophy, in a nutshell, explores what is real; then, how to know what is real; and finally, how then we should live based on what we know about reality.

Philosophy examines all worldviews through this trifold grid, and it will be instructive to view DEI through it. But to better understand it and for more than mere rhetorical purposes, occasionally we'll treat the ordering of the acronym DEI as DIE, which becomes more profound when we see actual consequences from the wages of our cultural sin that leads to death.

Diversity: Order 1—Metaphysics of Human Relations as Social Binaries

Social justice ideology teaches that all people everywhere exist in social binaries juxtaposed in conflicting relationships along the axes of class, race, sex, gender, ethnicity, ability, religion, and so forth. For every social group, there is an opposite group.

The focus of critical theory is to identify and segregate the various oppressor/oppressed, dominant/subordinate social binary groups (men versus women,

white versus black, Christian versus non-Christian, rich versus poor, heteronormative versus LGBTQ+, haves versus have-nots, etc.). Oppressor groups have power and therefore privilege over other groups. Our primary identity is a group identity, not an individual identity. Groups come with identity power, ergo the focus on identity politics. Moreover, everyone has multiple group identities that often intersect in layers of power imbalance. Black female lesbians, for example, are thrice oppressed according to this matrix. This intersectionality depicts a complex interlocking power dynamic of group inequalities and therefore group injustices. To have justice for all requires having outcome equality for all.

Inclusion: Order 2—Epistemology of Standpoint

Standpoint theory or standpoint epistemology is a notion coined by early '70s feminist philosopher Sandra Harding, who concedes that she got it from Marxism. The way we know about such reality of human social relations is that our social position/location in society informs us. We have “lived experience,” which, even if not supported by argument, reason, or evidential data, trumps all else. As an example, a black man knows his oppression by white men. He knows what it's like to live in a white-man world, but not vice versa. He has special knowledge simply by virtue of being black. And a black woman has special knowledge that a black man lacks.

Here, we are to assess blame by including oppressed groups and excluding oppressor groups from sharing their voices or opportunities because oppressors are often blind to their oppression and need to listen. We choose the victims in this narrative because they come with knowledge and moral authority, which resides esoterically only among the oppressed. They are the enlightened (i.e., “woke”). Such “knowledge” is grounded in social location, in one's standpoint relative to the identity of the group(s). Knowledge is also viewed as socially constructed and infused with ideology and power. The rest of the people must simply listen, learn, and lament about the oppression, with little hope for absolution from their blindness owing to their culpable group oppression of the oppressed.

Equity: Order 3—Ethics of Critical Social Justice

Whereas the original notion of “social justice” was coined by a Catholic priest,¹² contemporary social justice means something else. While traditionally

equity was a finance term and inequality a mathematical term, times have changed. Again, changing the meaning of words influences the narrative. It is time to exact consequences for inequalities between groups. Inequality under this new paradigm entails injustice. Social group inequality, in every instance, entails social injustice. Because the human problem is social inequality / oppression, then the solution is social justice / liberation.

Given this context and the meaning of the term *social justice* within critical theory, meting out justice¹³ implies things like reparations and payback to right the wrong of the power imbalance. Often, there is no purgatory and no forgiveness. Social justice advocates now contrast equity with equality because they think systemic oppression requires unequal treatment of groups in the power imbalance to arrive at real social justice. That is, we ought to treat white and black applicants unequally given the past. Hence, equity is equal outcome, not equal opportunity.

WOKE IN THE WORKPLACE

Now, you can see how such an esoteric worldview might thrive on the college campus; tenured professors live in an imaginary world, unconstrained by a competitive marketplace or having to make payroll. To put it bluntly, their ideas don't need to work. So how did critical social justice jump from the public sector to the private sector? How did it get out of the lab?

What happens at the university doesn't stay at the university. But for theories to affect reality, there must be a vehicle of transport, some bridge extending from the university out to the real world. DEI is that bridge.

The question must be asked: In the case of DEI, how could so much philosophical complexity be overlaid onto a corporate structure? First, you would need to hire dedicated staff whose only job is to think about group disparities in terms of race, gender, and sexual orientation. This is why many businesses do not have simply a DEI person; they have a whole DEI department.

Second, while organizing a workforce according to social identity groups based on their degree of oppression (intersectionality) may sound daunting, practically speaking, it's not—oppressors to one side of the room, everyone else (oppressed) to the other.

Third, DEI initiatives move in only two directions. There are, first, programs and events and, second, processes and protocols that buoy the “everyone-else” side. Examples of programs are diversity days, ethnic-heritage months, and BIPOC socials. An example of processes and protocols are practices like hiring and promotion quotas, making sure minority identity groups are equally represented.

Managing the main oppressor group (heterosexual, white males) requires more nuance, but in short, a concerted effort is made to treat white people in the workplace like blacks, Hispanics, and Asians were treated in the US in the 1940s. They may be passed over for promotion, unfairly subordinated to less qualified individuals, spoken of pejoratively, scapegoated for workplace failures; they may go unrecognized for accomplishments, have their opinions marginalized, and be caricatured as obtuse, lazy, and so on.

WOKE WEARS OUT ITS WELCOME

While DEI has successfully spread throughout the business world, it is losing traction, and the reason is obvious. Besides splintering the workplace, the aims of DEI are fundamentally at odds with the aims of a for-profit company, eating into the bottom line. A case in point is the now infamous Bud Light transgender activist commercials. They have cost Budweiser more than \$1 billion in lost revenue.¹⁴ Or take Target’s transgender bikini apparel in the children’s aisles, which led to a huge number of customers refusing to shop at the retail chain.¹⁵ Woke ideology can cost money and stir up legal problems. For companies, whether the focus is working toward profit, the cost of legal fees, or simply hiring people who are good at their job, the bottom line will always be the bottom line.

Or consider the attempted assassination of Donald J. Trump while speaking at a campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. According to an article in *The Western Journal*, 39 members of the Secret Service signed a petition demanding an investigation into whether the agency’s training was adequate or whether diversity initiatives had caused lower standards.¹⁶ This petition was submitted in May, months before Trump gave his earlobe to the cause of liberty.

At issue were DEI hiring policies. Kimberly Cheatle, head of the Secret

Service, made it “job #1” the day that she took office to make female agents comprise 30 percent of the workforce, which put the emphasis of hiring on gender, not competence.¹⁷ As opponents of DEI like to point out, DEI could just as easily be DIE, and in this case, it was—some argued that DEI policies had led to lower standards of security and resulted in someone’s death, other injured persons, and the near death of a former president.

For a Christian company, DEI not only adversely affects the bottom line, but it also adversely affects Christian values, which is why Chick-fil-A, a Christian-owned company founded by the late S. Truett Cathy, initially resisted the waves of DEI hiring that have become commonplace in the United States. But the pressure of the LGBTQ+ community was overwhelming, and if not for the support of Christians going out of their way to buy from Chick-fil-A (and a mainstream popular Kanye West song), the company would likely have had no choice but to capitulate.

Over time, however, Chick-fil-A not only showed evidence of compromise relative to pulling its own charitable donations from conservative ministries (e.g., Salvation Army and Fellowship of Christian Athletes), but it began giving donations to LGBTQ+-friendly enterprises without the awareness of most of its supporters, along with what appears to be conciliation with DEI practices and policies.¹⁸ The web page still gives Chick-fil-A’s corporate purpose, which is “To glorify God by being a faithful steward of all that is entrusted to us. To have a positive influence on all who come into contact with Chick-fil-A.” But until recently, the website included content about valuing identity groups and endorsing diversity, equity, and inclusion—content that it has since removed.¹⁹ While these moves in the corporate office don’t necessarily reflect the viewpoint of all of Chick-fil-A’s franchises, it is nonetheless unfortunate that a Christian company felt compelled to hire a vice president of DEI even though its most ardent supporters provided it with the ability to resist succumbing to cultural pressure.

While some companies willingly or willfully embrace DEI, others get pressured from consumers or financiers. On the Blackrock Financial website, Larry Fink, a social justice advocate and CEO of Blackrock (which is one of the world’s largest investment companies), said that corporate social responsibility is now part of the cost of doing business. Companies are now

being given ESG (environmental, social, and governance) scores. ESG analyses evaluate risks and opportunities beyond the scope of traditional financial analyses. Fink said in his 2018 letter to investors, “To prosper over time, every company must not only deliver financial performance, but also show how it makes a positive contribution to society.”²⁰ And by “positive contribution,” he means in accordance with diversity, equity, and inclusion—DEI. Certain social credit scores are now assigned to companies and are taken into account when a business seeks to be financed. The gun of financing is being held to their corporate heads. Some corporations push back, some capitulate, most passively accept DEI and ESG as the “new normals.”

DEI, cancel culture, the policing of words, and controlling the narrative—all things we’ve touched on—are in the category of what Joseph Nye famously called “soft power,” which is defined as “the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the outcomes you want.”²¹ Hard power is not that. Once ideology is codified into law, dissent becomes illegal, and the state is then authorized to use “hard power” to physically enforce its laws, and that’s when things get interesting.

PASSED INTO LAW

From the Justice Department and the Office of the Attorney General to the National Institutes of Health, Sandia National Laboratories, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation, these organizations have all spent years pursuing antiracism initiatives and training people to check their power and privilege. How this is supposed to assist in productivity, security, and genuine equality at America’s nuclear labs is not clear. According to cultural critic Chris Rufo, what is clear is that appointing people to what ought to be meritocratic positions is endangering us all.²² President Biden signed his most sweeping executive order of his presidency in early 2023.²³ It is an all-government expansion of equity, creating cadres of DEI officers.

In Marxist regimes, an administrative tier of political commissars monitor and police state policy and ideological adherence—foot soldiers of “the Party.” To many, the intent of Biden’s executive order was to create such a tier within the US government, populated by DEI officers whose mandate is

“Embedding Equity into Government-wide Processes.”²⁴ Its intent is to redistribute resources and outcomes via coercive means even without congressional approval and oversight. In a manner best described as gestapo-esque, the department of DEI commands the heads of federal departments and agencies to establish agency equity teams within 30 days. This edict runs all the way from the most prestigious and powerful departments, such as the Treasury and Defense, to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the National Science Foundation (NSF). Note carefully that Biden, in his push to further antiracism and combat systemic racism, systemic sexism, patriarchalism, heteronormativity, white privilege, and the like, did not in any way give up his seat of power to the “underrepresented” classes. It never happens.

We’ve been seeing this poison in public policy for some time. Until a decade ago, cultural support for same-sex marriage was in the minority. Sentiments toward LGBTQ+ have quickly become normal, and in the mind of many, it is quickly becoming normative (i.e., denoting the way it ought to be).

In his first term as president, it was difficult to tell where Barack Obama stood on the various ideologies amalgamated in LGBTQ+; in fact, he was on record for saying that marriage was “the union between a man and a woman.”²⁵ But in May 2012, he changed his views and publicly endorsed gay marriage. A Pew Research Center poll reveals that support for the change among Democratic voters moved from 50 percent in 2008 to 65 percent in 2012.²⁶ It was time, both practically and ideologically, to make the move.

Consider an important aspect of voting. As people age, some “age out” of voting due to death or otherwise, and at the same time, a new generation is always “aging in,” which might seem to balance out, but it doesn’t. Older generations are—by and large—more conservative, while emerging generations are, by and large, more progressive, making the electorate ever so slowly lean to the left. Only now, the change hasn’t been so slow, not since TikTok, social media, and progressive teachers’ unions made it their mission to reeducate our youth.

That same year, 2012, the LGBTQ+ movement became a part of the party platform at the Democratic National Convention (DNC). Not unimportant is the fact that at the DNC that year, electors were in a tug-of-war over whether “God” should remain in the party platform or not. With visible perplexity

and reluctance, having taken several repeat votes hearing from the “yeas” and “nays” so closely in competition, the resolutions chairman concluded in the affirmative that God could stay in the platform. But if you listen to that 2012 vote on video, it’s pretty clear that the “nays” won, and God did not.²⁷

The first openly LGBT nonincumbent elected to the US Senate was Tammy Baldwin (D) in 2012. (Baldwin served in the US House of Representatives from 1999–2013.) The first openly bisexual member of Congress was Kyrsten Sinema (D) in 2013. In 2014, President Obama signed an executive order protecting transgender people in matters of employment hiring, and he was the first president to use the term *transgender* in a State of the Union speech, which he delivered on January 20, 2015. Months later, *Obergefell v. Hodges*, a case in which the US Supreme Court ruled (5–4) on June 26, 2015, meant that states had to license and recognize same-sex marriages under the due process and equal protection clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution. In 2020, the High Court’s ruling in *Bostock v. Clayton County* confirmed the protections under the law that sexual orientation and gender identity have regarding employment discrimination.

It is important to recognize this is not a partisan observation. The internationally famous athlete who won the 1976 Olympic decathlon (who appeared on the Wheaties cereal box), Bruce Jenner, made the public announcement in April 2015 that he was now a woman—a transgender woman dressed scantily on the cover of *Vanity Fair* with a note: “Call me Caitlyn.”²⁸ He was finally living as his true self in accordance with his truth. Just six years later, in April 2021, the new Caitlyn Jenner ran for governor of the state of California—not as a Democrat but as a Republican. What’s more is that Jenner possessed various national-level Republican support. In 2023, ironically, in response to the increased involvement of men who were trans entering women’s sports, Jenner launched a political action committee to oppose it.²⁹ While the Republicans may be trailing the Democrats in culturally changing values, clearly the face of politics is changing—and changing rapidly—with many on the left now labeled “moderate,” not because of politics, but because of proximity to the far left.

For now, however, our media and many elitists in our academic and political culture have celebrated many “firsts” in our nation’s progress. Here’s just a partial list from the Biden early presidency:

- first black female vice president
- first gay transportation secretary
- first transgender assistant secretary for health for the US Department of Health and Human Services
- first gay and Jewish State Department spokesman
- first black female Supreme Court justice
- first black lesbian White House press secretary
- first nonbinary gender-fluid deputy assistant secretary of spent fuel and waste disposition in the Office of Nuclear Energy
- first government military recruiting video explicitly marketing to gay, feminist, and trans people to join the US Army, followed by a navy recruiting video featuring a drag queen

The list of that administration's accomplishments goes on and on, but they are only viewed as "accomplishments" through a certain philosophical window. From the perspective of merit, many are underqualified and many have underperformed.

A TOUR OF CAMPUS

To give you a basic primer on critical social justice, we've discussed the topic in contexts you likely are familiar with. In the next four chapters, you'll join me in my context, the university, where this ideology has reached a level of madness you have to see to believe.