

ELITES CELEBRATE WHAT DIVIDES US

Pluralism is a good thing, just so long as it is not pushed to extremes, because when it is, it becomes a separatist threat to cultural cohesion. Unfortunately, we live in a time when our society is more polarized and segmented than ever before. For example, we should be encouraging new immigrants to learn English; it makes it easier for them to assimilate.

In the 1980s, when I was a professor, a colleague of mine, a nun, introduced me to an Irish priest from Fordham who had written a book on Puerto Ricans. I was aware of the book—I assigned it to my students in a Minorities class—so I was pleased to meet him. In the course of our discussion, he and the nun said they were opposed to mandating that Puerto Ricans speak English in the schools, preferring a bilingual approach.

I disagreed with them, pointing out that when I taught in Spanish Harlem in the 1970s, the Puerto Rican parents were opposed to bilingual education, insisting their kids speak English. The priest was honest enough to admit that I was right.

We are hurting Spanish-speaking people, not helping them, when we don't hold them to the same standards as other non-English speaking people. Most of the immigrants who came here from Europe had to learn English as well, and in time they did.

So why did this learned priest, a sociologist whose expertise was studying Puerto Ricans not support the aspirations of the people he studied? No doubt it was because he believed that the Puerto Ricans were not enlightened. He, on the other hand, was, and therefore he need not respect their wishes. This is the way liberals think.

By enlightened, liberals mean that it's time to stop with the

chauvinistic adoration of America, or what most Americans would simply call patriotism. Thus do they incline to a more critical perspective. Mandating Puerto Ricans to master English carries with it, they say, the odious implication that there is something inferior about their heritage. They are clearly wrong about this, but don't try to reason with them.

My anecdote is illustrative of what was going on in higher education in the 1980s. That is when multiculturalism was all the rage. Multiculturalism does not celebrate diversity in a healthy way, such as promoting respect for different racial and ethnic groups, and the heritages they represent. No, it celebrates division.

We now have a well-paid Diversity industry, fully credentialized experts—most of whom are badly educated activists—who are busy telling employers that they need to embrace what makes us different, not what unites us. This, in turn, has led to a new wave of segregation, only this time it is heralded as a victory for social justice.

We have separate racial and ethnic dorms on campus, separate graduation ceremonies, and the like. Yet some wonder why there is so much racial tension on campus. It would be astonishing if we didn't witness polarization—we've done our best to nourish it.

What makes this so disconcerting is that we started out as a nation which boasted of its ability to unite people. As far back as the 18th century, a French student of the American colonies, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, wrote about this in his classic, *Letter from an American Farmer*. He had never seen such assimilation; the ability to “melt” disparate peoples into a new man was unparalleled. The idea of the “melting pot” had been born.

People like Horace Mann picked up on this idea in the early 19th century, and in his case he decided that the best way to

achieve a “melting pot” was the public schools. This was the best way to unite the multiplicity of racial and ethnic groups that came here. The goal was assimilation.

From the perspective of multiculturalism, and the Diversity industry, the “melting pot” idea is anathema. That’s because our ruling class is bent on dividing us, not uniting us. Most Americans find this hard to believe, thinking these people are simply misguided.

Americans, for the most part, are a good and honest people. They want the best for their country. They also want to be able to get along with everyone, regardless of their race, ethnicity or religion. Subcultures, such as Chinatowns, are okay, but it is still important that we all seek to fit into society, and not live apart from it (the Amish are an exception), much less undermine it.

Unfortunately, even though most Americans want this, it is not being promoted in the schools or in the workplace. It is not unity the elites want; it is division. Some of those who are intentionally dividing us are motivated by ideological reasons: they hate America. Others are doing it because it is a lucrative business.

“E Pluribus Unum,” out of the many, one. Our nation’s motto is being attacked—the elites find it atavistic. It’s about time Americans realized that what we are witnessing is not a matter of misguided policies; rather, it is the result of what the “enlightened ones” are intentionally doing.