



## **Questioning Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives**

*Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives are portrayed as the answer to America's racial divide, but are they? Here are a few questions to help you think about them.*

### **What are Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives?**

Answer: These are initiatives that are intended to make the workplace more “inclusive” through diversity, equity, and inclusion. They usually come in the form of diversity training, which consists of lectures and workshops on explaining how racism, homophobia, sexism, and transphobia manifest in the workplace. This may sound good, because no one should be harassed at work, but the issue with DEI initiatives is the ideology behind them.

### **What is the ideology behind DEI?**

Answer: DEI initiatives are rooted in Critical Theory. Critical Theory is a social philosophy that believes society is categorized by oppressors and oppressed. The oppressors are white, Christian, heterosexual, cisgender (someone who identifies with their birth sex), able-bodied, males. Critical theorists believe these individuals—and anyone who shares one of these categories—automatically have an advantage in society and are oppressing anyone who does not fit into these categories. Robin DiAngelo, a prominent DEI speaker makes this clear when she explains that by being white, she and all other white people are racist and benefit from it.<sup>1</sup>

### **What is the goal of DEI initiatives then?**

Answer: The goal of DEI initiatives is to eliminate different outcomes. This is what is meant by Equity in DEI. “While equality assumes that all people should be treated the same, equity takes into consideration a person’s unique circumstances, adjusting treatment accordingly so that the end result is equal.”<sup>2</sup> Equity is equality of outcome.<sup>3</sup> DEI advocates believe that society should be equal in every aspect of life, including income and resources. They articulate this goal as dismantling systemic racism.<sup>4</sup>

### **What is systemic racism?**

Answer: Systemic racism is any policy or institution that leads to racial inequities.<sup>5</sup> For example, prison systems are seen as systemically racist because more black people than white people are in prison.<sup>6</sup> The education system is seen as systemically racist because black and Hispanic students don't do as well as white and Asian students.<sup>7</sup> It also includes nonracial categories, so laws advocating for traditional marriage against same-sex marriage are seen as systemically racist.<sup>8</sup> Restricting abortion access is seen as systemically racist.<sup>9</sup>

### **What is the issue with systemic racism?**

Answer: Systemic racism when applied to racial categories acknowledges real disparities, but it's an ideologically loaded term. Systemic racism operates under the worldview of Critical Theory believing that there should be no disparities in society. Any disparities must be caused by racism, which advocates describe as an ever-present force rather than overt racial prejudice. However, there has never been a society without disparities in the history of the world. This is because disparities have more to do with people's social environments than racial bias. Economist Glenn Loury calls this "social capital."<sup>10</sup> This is clear when you compare the upbringings of Nigerians and Black Americans, for example. Nigerians would be under the same amount of oppression and systemic racism as Black Americans. However, their median household income is much greater than Black Americans.<sup>11</sup> We can also look at people from India, who again would be victims of similar levels of oppression and systemic racism, yet Indian people are among the top-earning racial groups in the country.<sup>12</sup>

### **Should schools and businesses adopt DEI initiatives?**

Answer: No, for two reasons. First, because DEI initiatives rest on unfalsifiable philosophical assumptions, they are inadequate to bring about any sort of meaningful change. We can't test whether they're working or not because there is no standard to determine whether they work or not. Second, DEI initiatives cause more division than unity. No examples of DEI initiatives have brought about a unified and healthier workplace.<sup>13</sup> However, there are examples of DEI initiatives stirring up division and even violence where they are applied. The antisemitism on college campuses attests to this.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, Reprint edition (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 71-87.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/mckinsey-explainers/what-is-diversity-equity-and-inclusion>.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.aei.org/carpe-diem/dont-be-fooled-by-equity-its-is-a-mandate-to-discriminate-to-achieve-equal-outcomes-with-unequal-treatment/>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.aei.org/carpe-diem/dont-be-fooled-by-equity-its-is-a-mandate-to-discriminate-to-achieve-equal-outcomes-with-unequal-treatment>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*, First Edition (New York: One World, 2019), 18.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2020/07/27/disparities/>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibram X Kendi, *How To Be An Antiracist*, 101-102.

<sup>8</sup> Ibram X Kendi, *How To Be An Antiracist*, 193-200.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp2209737>.

<sup>10</sup> <https://glennloury.substack.com/p/what-is-social-capital>.

<sup>11</sup> <https://africanmind.org/statistical-portrait-of-nigerian-americans-accomplishments-paradoxes-and-misconceptions/>.

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.ncrc.org/racial-wealth-snapshot-asian-americans-and-the-racial-wealth-divide-2023/#:~:text=Among%20Asian%20American%20subgroups%2C%20Indian,and%20Chinese%20Americans%20\(%2482%2C000\)](https://www.ncrc.org/racial-wealth-snapshot-asian-americans-and-the-racial-wealth-divide-2023/#:~:text=Among%20Asian%20American%20subgroups%2C%20Indian,and%20Chinese%20Americans%20(%2482%2C000)).

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/gender-equality/focusing-on-what-works-for-workplace-diversity>.

<sup>14</sup> <https://ohiosenate.gov/news/on-the-record/how-our-college-campuses-became-hotbeds-of-antisemitism#:~:text=While%20most%20Americans%20grieve%20and,of%20DEI%20indoctrination%20on%20campus>.