

# The cult of ethnicity



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Political correctness, a concept originally meant to protect minorities and the under represented and thus strengthen the country, has in today's America become no more than a necessary evil and catalyst for the cult of ethnicity. In theory political correctness sounds like a very reasonable idea and when looked at very shallowly this remains the case. When it is more thoroughly looked at thought its dangers become more and more apparent. By creating a set of "correct" terminology and assigning each ethnic background a name that separates them from the main culture of America we run the risk of further exaggerating the potentially volatile situation created by the cult of ethnicity in the country today. So a balance between extreme political correctness that drives groups apart and a complete lack of social regulation as to what is acceptable, that causes groups of people to be oppressed, must be reached. Note not all aspects of political correctness are as potentially corrosive as those that pertain to race and ethnicity; some, such as those which are used for gender related issues and handicaps to name a few, are helpful while other terms, which there are too many to list, are downright comical. Words can and have been used to harm and oppress people and races in this country and abroad. America has long been a melting pot for various ethnicities and taking the good with the bad has also experienced many different waves of racism. Before this century, and more accurately before the civil rights movement, many ethnicities, and African-Americans in particular, were held down by highly negatively loaded language. From the time of slavery African-Americans were held down by various words that today hold such engrained meanings and are so hate charged that mentioning them even for analytical purposes in this essay would be risky. Later on new groups got exposed to these types of words as Irish, Italian and

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whatever the newest immigrant group of the period was, got negatively charged ethnic slurs 'assigned' to them. In its initial intent, to eliminate harmful and hurtful words from common use the move towards political correctness was highly successful. In other ways it may have set back ethnic relations more than anyone could have expected. As necessary as it is in many ways, political correctness does have one major drawback, that being that it furthers the current cult of ethnicity that exists in America today. The terms that are now supposedly politically correct today are in many ways very segregating in nature. Each given group is referred to by a given name but these names are troublesome because they place the group in front of the whole. People now are quick to refer to themselves and others by the politically correct name that is formatted with the ethnic background first, an example being Irish-American. Just in structure these names are a problem as they place the ethnicity before the nation. The main problem with these politically correct names for various ethnic groups lies in the gravity that many groups place in being referred to by their proper name. Now as in the example of African-Americans this may very well be justified but nevertheless promotes the cult of ethnicity and with it all the potential negative repercussions. In order for people to be concerned with the name their group is referred to they must first be highly aware that they belong to a separate ethnic group. With the extent to which political correctness encompasses ethnic relations in America today this poses an obvious problem as when we think of it that way then political correctness and people's attitudes towards it can be used as a gauge of the cult of ethnicity. The subjects of the cult of ethnicity and political correctness are in many ways intertwined in a delicate manner. Ideally there would be no need for

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social and political standards of speak as all people would be treated the same but as we all know the world is far from perfect and when left free of regulation the powerful will abuse the minorities or outnumbered peoples. African American is one term that has been formed in this movement that I feel we must keep as the pain which this ethnicity has been put through by hateful language is immeasurable. Other classifications of ethnicities have to go. There is no need to constantly refer to natively born and raised, Caucasians facing no threat of discrimination by a special name. All this practice does is make the cult of ethnicity not only acceptable but in fact the expected norm of society. Bibliography none Word Count: 768