

Blogpost

HAS “CELEBRATING DIVERSITY” DEVOLVED INTO “IDENTITY POLITICS”?

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It sounds so good, the phrase, “celebrate diversity”! But in the last few years, this issue has begun to make my blood boil even hotter than it did way back in 1996, when I wrote about this as a columnist for *Sagewoman* magazine. Why?

Here goes.

Usually I’m all for non-binary approaches to life, realizing that life is much more colorful than merely black and white. But there’s something about the LGBTQ movement, or whatever it calls itself now, that just doesn’t sit well within me.

There may have been a few more comments added since last I looked to the increasing subcultural differentiation of the supposed gender spectrum. Notice my snarky tone. And indeed I do feel snarky about this issue, the latest, to my mind, designed and promoted to set us apart and divide us further into tiny little warring groups, not just based on “interest” anymore, but on what we now call “identity.” Voila: IDENTITY POLITICS. And: “if *you* don’t realize I’m at ‘this’ place on the gender spectrum, and don’t call me by the pronoun(s) that I declare valid, then I will judge you unmercifully as bad or wrong.”

I'm trying to take my own temperature here; trying to figure out precisely why I get so triggered by people who get triggered when others don't see them as they want to see themselves "on the gender spectrum." As I said above, and let me repeat: ordinarily I do not "advocate" for binary anything. Indeed, I spend inordinate amounts of time and energy trying to educate others on the fact that opposites need to be bridged and there are lots of shades in between.

But I do think I'm beginning to recognize what I consider so off and off-putting about this movement to increase the range of gender possibilities in the human world, and to base one's self-worth on whatever part of the "spectrum" one decides to "identify with" and then insist that others agree.

I now realize it's because I'm getting sick and tired of people identifying with the body as their main underlying source of not just "identity" but self-worth. As I told a male friend recently who wants to identify as both male and female and wears skirts on occasion, I've been working to integrate male and female within myself for probably 50 years now. (Carl Jung called this process of integration "individuation.") That for me, this issue is a mental/emotional/spiritual one, not a physical one. At least not usually.

Of course, I realize some people are born with ambiguous genitalia. Native Americans call them "berdache," and see them as special, holy. And many of us, even as small children, seem to gravitate for a while to what at least our culture sees as opposite sex activities and attitudes.

But to me, those who use hormones to alter their bodies natural function, and worse, much much worse, those who would mutilate their bodies through surgery in pursuit of the opposite sex, are going in a direction that not only might they regret later, but that is against what nature intended, at least in this life.

I realize that I may be considered hopelessly antediluvian in this attitude towards this latest "celebrate diversity" category, and though I'm usually all for seeing life in terms of a spectrum of possibilities, I do assume that, with few exceptions, most bodies are designed by nature as either female or male, period, no matter what their occupants might decide.

So, though I was a tomboy as a kid, and though many people at first glance might think me lesbian (short hair, active, direct thrusting manner), I tell anyone who asks that I am decidedly heterosexual. Not that being lesbian is “bad,” either, but it’s simply not my proclivity to sexually desire a member of the same sex. While I find that the female aspect of myself is by far the more problematic than the male aspect, that does not mean that I want to cut off my breasts and pretend I have a penis. Why do that? I don’t identify primarily with my body. My body, as a part of nature, happens to be a female vessel housing emotional/mental/spiritual aspects of myself.

Nature’s ways are mysterious. And I will learn from Nature whatever it is I need to know about being in this body rather than its opposite.