"The End of Diversity"

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Main Argument

In this article, Walcott argues that the language of diversity is ineffective in achieving structural justice and societal transformation. It instead exists to placate white guilt while reinforcing white supremacy. He suggests that to address these structural injustices will require a more radical approach.

Key Terms & Ideas

Diversity:
The language of diversity emerged during movements in the 1960s as a call for inclusion. Today, the language is lacking. It is incapable of challenging the structural norms which pervade Canada's social, cultural, political and economic systems, but instead serves to enforce them.

Whiteness
Whiteness is a "structure of authority, power and violence." It upholds white supremacy by serving as a barrier, preventing nonwhite individuals from inclusion in the structures of human life. Whiteness not only refers to "white people" who are defined by phenotype, but also "a structure of feeling" which marks people as white and allows them to experience the same structural benefits.

White Lies:
"White lies," Walcott suggests, are the collective narratives that whiteness tells to assure itself that the current organization of society is just. These lies falsely suppose that society has progressed, thus attention to injustices in the past are unnecessary. This ignores that racial inequality is not something of the past, but ongoing and affirmed in the current structures in society. Diversity, according to Walcott, is one of these white lies.

The Multicultural Lie:
The "multicultural lie" is a national lie told by Canada in reference to its multicultural policy. The narrative suggests that multiculturalism is successful as a form of inclusion. In reality, multiculturalism is assimilative and presents Canada as a white nation. The failure of multiculturalism is witnessed in the lived experiences of Black and Indigenous people in Canada.

Unconscious Bias:
Unconscious bias" is language that has emerged as a way to absolve individuals from accountability. This language both ignores the structural component of racism, which is reproduced in Canada's institutions, and also removes the blame of white supremacy from those who benefit from it. The language of "unconscious bias" protects white people from acknowledging the oppression they are benefiting from.

Image of Walcott, From: https://xtramagazine.com/health/rinaldo-walcott-211379

Why "The End of Diversity"?

Through the articles title, Walcott suggests that diversity has reached its end because it prevents the changes needed to disrupt the racist structures in society.

Image of the Berlin Wall From: https://hub.jhu.edu/2019/11/05/berlin-wall-mary-elise-sarotte/

The Benchmarkers of Diversity

Walcott emphasizes two important time periods to support his work: Post-World War II and Post-1989. The Post-World War II period, alongside the creation of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, marks the turn towards human and civil rights. This directly influenced the emergence of diversity rhetoric as a tool for these institutions. However, the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 marks an end to this as it closes the potential for a radical alternative to capitalism. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the neoliberal organization of Western society was affirmed and the language of diversity became stagnant. Following this point, "diversity" exists within the oppressive, capitalist model of Western society instead of as a way to challenge it.

Image from: https://thegauntlet.ca/2020/06/08/calgary-community-rallies-to-peacefully-protest-police-brutality/

Multiculturalism, Diversity & Whiteness in Canada

As a settler colonial state, Canada understands itself to be a white-nation state. This is upheld by the structures within society which privilege white settlers.

Despite multicultural policy existing in Canada since 1971, Black Canadians have not experienced considerable change and continue to live under racist conditions. They face "continual brutal exclusion, criminalization and subordination," which is upheld by a state which sees itself as politically and culturally Eurocentric. Despite multiculturalism existing in language, the policies ineffectiveness is seen through lived experiences.

Access to whiteness is a privilege. When race is framed as a social construct, these privileges are minimized, and those who do not benefit from them are framed as "creatures of their own making."

"Diversity" does not undo the oppressive systems. Instead, it calms white fears and guilt. Even while supposedly challenging white supremacy, the language used protects white people who benefit from it.

Beyond Diversity: A Pure Decolonial Project

In his concluding remarks, Walcott offers his concept of a "pure decolonial project" as a radical alternative to diversity frameworks. This project seeks the conscious refusal of the structures of whiteness and to push for, and be accepting of, an alternative that is "not-yet-known." The existing frameworks cannot satisfy these calls to action, thus it requires structural change and a complete transformation of what it means to be a human being. The also requires an openness to alternatives to the current capitalists structures which contributes to systemic oppression.

Significance

Diversity rhetoric and its related policy does not address the structural injustices faced by Black and Indigenous people. For this to be achieved, there must be an intentional disruption of white supremacy. There is a need to challenge these norms and make those benefitting from them uncomfortable. This is required to achieve tangible change.

Bibliography

Walcott, Rinaldo. "The End of Diversity." *Public Culture* 31, no.2 (2019): 393-408. https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-7286885