

# Diversity training goes overboard

'Anti-racist' ideology in an NYC schools program does more harm than good



Cathy Young

Are “objectivity,” “perfectionism” and “worship of the written word” aspects of “white-supremacy culture” that need to be eradicated from our public schools? According to the New York Post, a slide making that extraordinary claim was included in a mandatory seminar for New York City school administrators held by the city Department of Education as part of a pro-diversity program.

The report on the seminar is part of a series of Post stories alleging that, under the stewardship of Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza, a \$23 million anti-racism initiative in the school system has taken a bizarre and toxic turn that some would consider more racist than anti-racist. Critics claim that anti-bias training sessions, many of them mandatory for school personnel, promote hostility toward whites and Asian Americans — and sometimes mini-

mize anti-Semitism.

Thus, a DOE-sponsored workshop organized by the Center for Racial Justice in Education — an advocacy group which gets about \$400,000 from the city for these sessions — featured a speaker who reportedly claimed that Asian American students “benefit from white supremacy” and enjoy “proximity to white privilege.” Another speaker was quoted as saying that school interventions should focus on helping middle-class black students over poor white students in the name of “racial equity.”

Meanwhile, a Jewish educator told the Post that when attendees at a meeting were asked to share experiences that inspired them to work for racial justice, she talked about her grandparents’ ordeal as Holocaust survivors — only to be “verbally attacked” for making this about “being Jewish” rather than about “black and brown” students.

Other people unhappy with the training say its focus on “interrogating whiteness” makes white people feel “belittled and harassed” instead of promoting



JEFF BACHNER

New York City Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza attends a City Hall news conference about school funding in April 2018.

understanding, and that people who complain are accused of being “fragile.” The materials used at such sessions include “white privilege exercise” worksheets in which people are asked to rate their own privileged status, sometimes based on highly questionable claims. Is “I can be pretty sure that if I ask to talk to ‘the person in charge,’ I will be facing a person of my race” really a statement that applies to white people in New York in 2019?

The DOE has not commented on the material or content of the anti-bias training. But comments from supporters of the initiative, including Matt Gonzales, an outside adviser on the DOE’s school diversity task force, suggest that the criticism is well-founded. Gonzales told the Post that the program “requires discomfort” and that “having to talk about someone’s own whiteness is a requirement for them to become liberated.” Meanwhile, Car-

ranza himself has said that people who don’t think the initiative is beneficial “are the ones that need to reflect even harder upon what they believe.”

Most people agree that racial prejudice against African Americans, Latinos and other groups remains a problem that needs to be addressed. But this particular brand of “anti-racist” ideology does more harm than good. It rejects the goal of treating people as individuals and stresses group identity. It also assigns racial labels to cultural values that have nothing to do with race (such as individualism and the work ethic), and then defines whiteness as conformity to those values. It presumes that white people, and many if not most members of minority groups, are infected with a white supremacist mentality and that constant self-policing is needed to root it out.

This is not the way forward in a multiracial, multi-ethnic society. At a time when white nationalism is rising on the far right and is abetted by a large portion of the conservative movement, toxic “diversity” can only generate more toxic backlash.

Cathy Young is a contributing editor to Reason magazine.



BLOOMBERG / KYOSHI-OTA

President Donald Trump and Shinzo Abe, Japan’s prime minister, at a news conference Monday at Akasaka Palace in Tokyo.

## President should have been in U.S. on Monday

I would like to thank President Donald Trump for honoring this country’s war dead on Memorial Day by going to Japan [“Trump, Japan’s Abe at odds over N. Korea missile tests,” News, May 28].

Actually, the truth is, I felt in-

sulted that our commander in chief would be out of the country on this important holiday. I know he placed flags at Arlington National Cemetery on May 23, but I believe he should have been there on Monday.

Some fellow members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion shared my opinion when we talked

about it after the East Rockaway Memorial Day parade.

I believe Trump has done some good things and some bad things, but on this matter, he made a mistake.

Joseph Bruzzo,  
East Rockaway

**Editor’s note:** The writer served on U.S. Navy submarines off Korea, 1955-59.

## NY needs to pass bill against climate change

As a teacher, I know how important it is to model the right thing for others, and New York State now has the opportunity to model for the rest of the nation how to address climate change and protect our environment in the most effective way possible. And that way is by passing the Climate and Community Protection Act.

As your May 17 editorial, “Heat on Albany for climate pact,” said, “A comprehensive climate plan must include build-

ings, transportation, agriculture and manufacturing.”

Unlike other plans that fall short, the Climate and Community Protection Act would move all sectors of New York’s economy off fossil fuels, not just electricity; set a deadline for that transition; invest 40 percent of state climate funds in communities that are bearing the brunt of climate change and pollution; and make sure green jobs pay prevailing wages.

More than 150 community, faith, labor, and environmental organizations across the state support passing the act with these provisions. Albany must do the right and necessary thing now to ensure the protection of our great state and our children’s future, and to set the example for the rest of the nation.

Laura Maffei,  
Cedarhurst

The proposed Climate and Community Protection Act offers important language on in-

vesting in disadvantaged communities and improving statewide health outcomes. It also helps ensure that workers employed on these projects will receive fair wages. Any state plan should include these key benefits.

A commitment to create a zero-carbon energy future will offer New York major health and economic advantages and will dramatically reduce our dependence on imported fossil fuels. Albany should not delay. Pass a significant climate bill this session.

Scott Carlin,  
Hampton Bays

**Editor’s note:** The writer teaches about environmental sustainability at LIU Post and was a co-chair of the Sustainable Advisory Committee for the Town of Southampton.

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