

In Defense of *Diversity Within Unity*

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In the tradition of Passover, which is upon us, let me start by noting that if all *Diversity Within Unity* (DWU) had achieved had been to occasion these three critical essays, we would have been richly blessed, it would have been *Da'yenu*. These essays contain carefully laid out arguments, draw important distinctions, and sharpen issues, all in the best academic tradition.

To further appreciate DWU, it has achieved quite a bit more. The very fact that public intellectuals from a large number of countries were able to fashion a joint statement on a thorny issue is of social import, further fortified by the fact that over 140 scholars from 20 nations endorsed it and translated it into several languages (for details, see www.gwu.edu/~ccps/diversity_within_unity.html). Better yet, a sizeable group of public leaders will meet this summer to examine whether the ideas included in the document are ones they might embrace and whether they might be helpful in dealing with widespread and intense racism, xenophobia, and anti-immigration feelings.

All this is important because DWU is first and foremost, quite deliberately, a document that lays out a public philosophy, and in this sense is a political and not an academic document. This does not mean that it is improper to wonder if the definitions are sharp enough or whether there are related topics that the short 17-page document does not cover (or not in enough detail). But one should keep in mind what we are dealing with here. Just as one does not criticize a short story for not rhyming, one may not wish to focus here on the fact that the document does not deal with some exceptions to the rule—say, with immigrants from Suriname or the Dutch Antilles, and “only” with

religious minorities, whose treatment happens to be the main bone of contention.

I am not saying that because the goal is a public dialogue and not an academic one, one should tolerate counterfactual or illogical statements, and most assuredly not unethical ones, but one must keep in mind the main purpose of the document one is tackling. Above all, one needs to ask whether such a document moves public life toward one in which minorities and majorities can live better together, whether it can help to reduce the hate, the racism, the growth of the extreme right wing, and above all the violence, without violating academic or moral standards.

Professor Hollinger focuses on one segment of DWU, the one in which a compromise was worked out during the drafting sessions, between traditional establishment and full disestablishment. Hollinger notes that “remarkably few scholars or public leaders are willing to argue for disestablishment.” It seems questionable to him that people don’t go to church but still do not wish to disestablish. It might have been useful to ask why this is so common. Surely we do not wish to accept people’s positions as they are, but when looking for workable approaches, as DWU does, we’d also better find out how far their beliefs need to and can be modified.

Hollinger is concerned that state-funded social services provided by religious groups would promote the segregation of religious minorities rather than help them find their way into a community of communities. And he fears that such delivery of services would strengthen the hands of the extremists rather than the moderate leaders of these communities. It should be noted first of all that the United States, one of only two democracies generally considered to be disestablished, has long reimbursed numerous religious groups for health care and social welfare programs they provide (e.g., Catholic and Jewish hospitals and welfare agencies), covering about 40 percent of their costs, and over recent years has expanded the realm of faith-based services. This reimbursement has not had the effect of making these groups more extreme—because what makes a group more or less extreme is driven by many factors of which money is a relatively minor one, especially if it is equally available to, say, Reform and Orthodox Jews, Wahhabi and moderate Muslim groups,

and so on. These factors include schooling, integration in the workplace, and mass media, among many others. Indeed, whether or not public cash flows to religious groups, the children of most diehards tend to be moderate. Moreover, the fact that such provision of services may keep people tied to their ethnic group, rather than fully assimilating, does not trouble me because we do not seek to end such affiliations.

To ensure that sufficient integration will take place, DWU takes an uncompromising position on schooling and opposes schools segregated by religion or ethnicity, holding that all children should get the same basic education and mingle with children of other backgrounds. DWU favors a relatively small portion (15 percent) of the curriculum being dedicated to electives over which the different groups in society might have some say. Who will decide what these electives are going to contain, Hollinger asks? The religious groups? The DWU answer is: the same public educational authorities who are responsible for the rest of the curriculum. They may wish to consult with various groups about what to include in classes about, say, Turkish history and culture or Romany traditions, but the selection of teaching materials and teachers would be up to the people who run these public schools.

Hollinger is right that DWU focuses on religious minorities and not others, and that there are others. Some of the same issues arise with regard to these groups. (For example, how much variance should French schools allow for those who wish to learn Corsican instead of, say, Spanish as a second language?) However, there are surely some special issues raised by nonreligious minorities that DWU does not deal with. Actually, there are quite a few other such omissions in our short document, which seeks to outline a basic approach rather than cover all bases.

Hollinger closes by pointing out that religion would flourish even if no public funds were given to it. I agree. But the question is whether social services would. Even in the United States, we find that hospitals run by religious groups do much better than those run by profit-making corporations, and that religious groups are much better at dealing with drug addicts, hard-core criminals, and alcoholics than many secular ones are. We might be better off regulating what these

religious groups can and cannot do with public funds (e.g., discriminate in hiring) rather than banning them from receiving public funds for their social services. Above all, because in much of Europe religious groups play such an important role in delivering social services, there must be a compelling reason if we are to upset all these arrangements and turn them over to civil servants or wait until Europeans develop secular voluntary organizations. Hollinger does not tell us what that reason is.

There is much less reason for the endorsers of DWU to differ with Professor Bauböck's learned study of the various factors that make for social cohesion. Surely shared values are a factor, although it is true that not all shared values will have this effect. And it is true that we can all strongly favor human rights, but that this will not make us Austrian, French, and so on. But there are some values associated with one's nation—for instance, the commitment to peace that now is strongly embraced in Germany, which immigrants from different cultures without the German historical experience may not share. Moreover, values are embodied in institutions rather than existing separately. Thus, the partial separation of state and church that characterizes many Western European countries may not be a value/institution that many immigrants would readily accept. Finally, identities are indeed important, but they themselves are tied to our values. Thus, Austrians used to see themselves as playing an important global role as a bridge between the East and West, an identity they have lost; their identity is further undermined by the evolution of the European Union; and their identity has been weakened by immigrants who bring with them values that are incompatible with the ways Austrians see themselves.

DWU does not advocate that identities of the host country should be overriding, that they should wipe out the identities of immigrants or all of their loyalty to their country of origin. But it does call for layered identities and loyalties, in which the more encompassing community (the nation or the European Union) would provide the overarching identities and loyalties, within which various groups could maintain their *sub*-identities—for example, as Turkish-Germans. The test comes when loyalties come into conflict. Will Americans from Panama fight for the United States if the United States

invades Panama, or for Panama, or will they demand a right to sit out such a conflict? Will French-Canadians take their cues *on matters concerning national policies* from Quebec or Ottawa? Dual citizenship is not a problem if it means that a person has rights in two countries and involvement in both—as long as there is no conflict between the two. But as a rule, a nation will demand that in such situations loyalty to it will take precedence.

As for the need for transformative identities on the part of the majority, it is a point well taken, with which the DWU endorses very much agreed when they stated that “in each society, the basic shared core of identity and culture has changed over time and will continue to do so in the future.” But to elaborate, it is not simply a matter of finding a midpoint between different views. Say some immigrants favor forced marriage, yet the host country’s values abhor it—the solution is not *mutual* transformation. Societies should try to take from immigrants their best attributes, after a deliberative process, such as enriching their culture by absorbing cuisines, dance, and music from immigrants and expanding their sense of the diversity of the human race. But societies should not adopt their values and practices just to meet them halfway or to make them feel more at home.

Professor Rubio-Marín and Professor Bauböck both criticize DWU for stating, “Arguments that territorial groups or the home-born have a higher level of rights than immigrants are incompatible with the DWU model.” This point occupies a few lines in the short statement. Our main observation was that when a minority is concentrated in one geographical area (which native minorities are much more likely to be than immigrants) and maintains a strong sense of separate culture and identity, it is more likely to seek secession than immigrant groups spread throughout the population. Compare French-Canadians to Muslim immigrants in Canada, Corsicans to North African immigrants in France, and so on. It seems to me incontestable that territorially concentrated groups are more of a threat to unity than most immigrants. They may have been historically more disadvantaged, and most of their members were born into the society, while immigrants often chose to come. Hence native minorities may have all kinds of additional claims, but none of this changes the fact that they pose a greater threat to unity than most immigrants.

Rubio-Marín criticizes DWU for not treating minorities' claims as rights, and she supports recognition of group rights. The notion that there are group rights versus claims or interests is a troubling one. As Mary Ann Glendon pointed out in her book *Rights Talk*, expressing differences in terms of rights makes disagreement more contentious, litigious, and difficult to resolve peacefully than if they are put in other terms. It is very compatible with the DWU model to allow national minorities and indigenous peoples a high degree of political and cultural autonomy. But one can strongly favor doing right by such groups without invoking group rights. Using this terminology best associated with individuals fuels conflict. Personally, I see strong reason to hold that if a group has a subculture that conflicts with basic human rights—say, husbands beating up their wives, much less a culture favoring honor killings—individual rights should trump the cultural claims of the subgroup rather than asking whose rights, women's or the group's, should take precedence.

Professor Rubio-Marín raises numerous other issues, seeking specifications and elaborations. All of her questions are of great merit, and future academic treatment of the public philosophy of the political document at hand should definitely deal with them.

After 12 years, the Communitarian Platform is again open for endorsement. The text of the platform, a list of previous endorsers (which includes leading intellectuals and public leaders), and a form to sign the platform are available at www.comunitariannetwork.org.