



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on May 8, 2013

Words That Replace Thought

If there is ever a contest for words that substitute for thought, “diversity” should be recognized as the undisputed world champion.

You don’t need a speck of evidence, or a single step of logic, when you rhapsodize about the supposed benefits of diversity. The very idea of testing this wonderful, magical word against something as ugly as reality seems almost sordid.



To ask whether institutions that promote diversity 24/7 end up with better or worse relations between the races than institutions that pay no attention to it is only to get yourself regarded as a bad person. To cite hard evidence that places obsessed with diversity have worse race relations is to risk getting yourself labeled an incorrigible racist. Free thinking is not free.

The Supreme Court of the United States has ruled that the government has a “compelling interest” in promoting diversity — apparently more compelling than the 14th Amendment’s requirement of “equal protection” of the law for everybody.

How does a racially homogeneous country like Japan manage to have high quality education, without the essential ingredient of diversity, for which there is supposedly a “compelling” need?

Conversely, why does India, one of the most diverse nations on Earth, have a record of intergroup intolerance and lethal violence today that is worse than that in the days of our Jim Crow South?

Even to ask such questions is to provoke charges of unworthy tactics, and motives too low to be dignified with an answer. Not that the true believers in diversity could answer anyway.

Among the candidates for runner-up to “diversity” as the top word for making thought obsolete is “fair.”

Apparently everyone is entitled to a “fair share” of a society’s prosperity, whether they worked 16-hour days to help create that prosperity or did nothing more than live off the taxpayers or depend on begging or crime to bring in a few bucks.

Apparently we owe them something just for gracing us with their presence, even if we feel that we could do without them quite well.

At the other end of the income scale, the rich are supposed to pay their “fair share” of taxes. But at neither end of the income scale is a “fair share” defined as a particular number or proportion, or in any other concrete way. It is just a political synonym for “more,” dressed up in moralistic-sounding rhetoric. What “fair” really means is more arbitrary power for government.

Another word that shuts down thought is “access.” People who fail to meet the standards for anything from college admission to a mortgage loan are often said to have been denied “access” or opportunity.

But equal access or equal opportunity is not the same as equal probability of success. Republicans are not denied an equal opportunity to vote in California, even though the chances of a Republican candidate actually getting elected in California are far less than the chances of a Democrat getting elected.



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By the same token, if everyone is allowed to apply for college admission, or for a mortgage loan, and their applications are all judged by the same standards, then they have equal opportunity, even if the village idiot has a lower probability of getting into the Ivy League, and someone with a bad credit history is less likely to be lent money.

“Affordable” is another popular word that serves as a substitute for thought. To say that everyone is entitled to “affordable housing” is very different from saying that everyone should decide what kind of housing he or she can afford.

Government programs to promote “affordable housing” are programs to allow some people to decide what housing they want and force other people — taxpayers, landlords or whatever — to absorb a share of the cost of a decision that they had no voice in making.

More generally, making various things “affordable” in no way increases the amount of wealth in a society above what it would be when prices are “prohibitively expensive.” On the contrary, price controls reduce incentives to produce.

None of this is rocket science. But if you don’t stop and think, it doesn’t matter whether you are a genius or a moron. Words that stop people from thinking reduce even smart people to the same level as morons.

Thomas Sowell is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305. His website is www.tsowell.com. To find out more about Thomas Sowell and read features by other Creators Syndicate columnists and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com.

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