

Robin's Zugzwang

July 19, 2020 Category: Domestic Politics

Download as PDF

It is fashionable in some circles for racists to masquerade as anti-racists. This peculiar phenomenon is nothing new. * Be that as it may, such a contorted approach to equity has undergone somewhat of a renaissance in recent years; especially amongst those espousing what has come to be known as “identity politics”. Robin DiAngelo is a case in point.

Behold someone who has managed to find a way to exploit the notion of exploitation. And behold a racist who shrewdly elides her obsession with racial identity via a regime of projection. Robin's willingness to do so can best be explained by the (neurotic) defense mechanism known as “Reaction Formation”.

The schtick proceeds as follows: “Hey, look. As a white person, if I'm criticizing all white people, I can't possibly be THAT racist.” This is, of course, not true. It brings to mind an arsonist who makes highly-conspicuous donations to the local volunteer fire department. Expending such copious time and effort trying to convince everyone that she “gets it” is, of course, an indication that Robin is overcompensating for a maladjustment within herself. (Think of Queen Gertrude's wry quip: “Thou dost protest too much.”) Tellingly, an emphasis of our shared humanity makes no appearance in Robin's daft prognosis.

Robin handles the topic of inter-racial relations as though, by some ethnological alchemy, one could engender comity by stoking (tacit) acrimony. The thinking is as follows: Don't like alterity? Maybe we can make it vanish by *amplifying* it. Hence some illusory version of equity is achieved by sowing suspicion and resentment between those with different demographic profiles...BECAUSE they have different demographic profiles.

Such duplicity would be comic if it weren't so invidious.

This feint is plain to see for anyone who cares to pay attention. Alas, many aren't paying attention. Despite the disturbingly large number of fawning acolytes she has managed to accumulate in recent years, Robin is not nearly as coy as she thinks she is. That she veils her unscrupulousness in the theatrics of self-flagellation makes her crusade all the more galling. It also makes it rather difficult to ascertain whether she's supposed to be on a high-horse or on a crucifix. (Sometimes, such things are one in the same.) Robin is a reminder that one can be as ornery as one wishes so long as one disguises it as humility.

When a Pecksniffian expositor proposes programatic groveling as a balm for racial injustice, it's time for all of us to take pause; especially when we are notified that all white people are obliged to treat p.o.c. with condescension (so that said balm can be thoroughly slathered over the entire body politic). Spoiler alert: The salve turns out to be an irritant.

As one might expect, Robin's gambit to temper HER OWN racist framing started backfiring as soon as she began making a spectacle of herself for financial gain. Her true motives are as plain as day. In between bouts of finger-wagging, she manages to charge exorbitant fees for her sessions of “sensitivity training” (which have been conclusively shown to be—at best—a complete waste of everyone's time). The candy-coated catholicon Robin prescribes ends up exacerbating the very dysfunctions it's supposed to ameliorate. How so? Other than engendering a contrived neurosis in all participants, her moralizing emboldens that which she purports to stifle (racial alterity). Robin hawks her magical elixir, and then

congratulates herself for the feat. Presumably, she accepts all major credit cards.

Robin's position is as follows: Rather than transcend racial divides, we should MAGNIFY them. How, then, shall we proceed? In order to hamper the systemic derogation of p.o.c., we should derogate NON-p.o.c. It's as if racism in one direction will somehow nullify racism in the other direction. This is, of course, the opposite of how tribalism works. Bigotries pointed in opposite directions don't cancel each other out; they exacerbate one another...in a vicious cycle of recrimination of self-fulfilling prophecy.

Here's how Robin's theory works. Being oppressive / ignorant / arrogant / apathetic is the sole preserve of a nebulous thing called "whiteness". The hallmarks of this inborn psychical / social malady include false pride, false certainty, self-importance, and self-absorption. ** So it is their "whiteness" that leads white people to oppress p.o.c. And it is their "whiteness" that causes them to be ignorant, arrogant, and apathetic. Whiteness is incompatible with good will...BY DEFINITION. Thus: To be white is to be racist.

This circular reasoning with a radius of zero.

For the most vociferous proponents of this worldview, White Supremacy is equated with white-NESS. Thus the very concept of race has been transformed. After all, racism IN GENERAL was, we are told, INVENTED by WASPs. Which ones? Well, ALL of them, apparently; as they deigned to establish "white-ness" as the quintessence of humanity. There is an element of truth to this: Many WASPs HAVE insisted on making "whiteness" the archetype of all mankind (in a gambit to maintain their position of privilege over p.o.c.) Be that as it may, it is perfidious to equate White Supremacy with white-ness PER SE. And it is even more perfidious to suggest that racism and socio-economic power are NOT independent variables. (The Orwellian definition of "racism" is "racism + power", thus countermanding that most fundamental rule of definitions. According to this thinking, one cannot be a financially impoverished bigot.)

So our NEW point of departure is: "White-NESS" = "White Supremacy". Alas, this equation comes to seem more plausible with regard to concerns about the (perceived) need for "code switching", whereby p.o.c. are inclined to shift between two "gears": One where they engage in social cues that affirm their ethnic identity (as needed) and the other where they participate in social norms that are countenanced by the wider culture (as needed). This shift is typically linguistic or sartorial in nature; but it could involve any cultural element. The former "gear" is adopted, in part, to maintain street cred within the community. The latter "gear" is adopted, in part, to operate seamlessly—and to be accepted—within social contexts that exist outside of that community. Such a shift in comportment can be eminently practical. After all, we tend to perceive others in terms of cultural signifiers; so p.o.c. conduct themselves in one or the other gear as the occasion warrants.

Problems arise, however, when the wider culture is ITSELF associated with "whiteness". In reality, social norms found in society-at-large invariably reflect certain values that TRANSCEND ALL culture—things like the scientific method and proper grammar / pronunciation. When "code switching" is problematized, though, such estimable things—be it erudition or elocution—are associated explicitly with "whiteness": a spurious assessment with which White Supremacists would wholeheartedly concur, ironically enough.

There are infelicitous social consequences to such misattribution. For to engage in such (otherized) social norms is seen as betraying one's ethnic group—as if one were eschewing one's ethnic identity instead of embracing it by switching to the latter "gear". In some cases, doing so is even seen as complicity in the subsistence of white privilege. Hence something as anodyne as punctuality or perspicacity or speaking eloquently is characterized as an inherently "white" behavior.

Pursuant to this spurious semiotic distortion, the (widespread) expectation that EVERYONE comport themselves in such a manner is (mis)construed as a sign of “white” hegemony. According to such thinking, even something as quotidian as language proficiency or hiking one’s pants up to one’s iliac crest can be seen as “acting white”. In this view, asserting one’s ethnic identity requires that one rebuff anything that is seen as indicative of “mainstream” culture, adopting overt tribal signifiers that emphasize perceived cultural demarcations.

Consequently, socio-economic injustice is diagnosed in terms of disparities in certain STIGMAS. (Accordingly, EVERYONE is presumed to participate in stereotypes.) For p.o.c., failure to play along (that is: neglecting to remain in the first “gear”, irrespective of social context) is interpreted as some sort of capitulation to white cultural domination. For any social norms that are attributed to “whiteness”—no matter how pro-social—are taken to be a proxy for structural inequalities along racial lines. The solution to socio-economic injustice, then, is a matter of COMPORTMENT.

In sum: “Whiteness” is a collective pathology; and any meme that is outside the locus of the agreed-upon tribal signifiers is seen as a sop to white privilege; and thus as some sort of ethnic betrayal. Those who demonize salubrious social norms (by ascribing “whiteness” to them) shoot themselves in the foot. For in an effort to EMPOWER p.o.c., they end up demeaning them.

Robin plays into these misapprehensions. After pathologizing an entire ethnicity, all Robin has left to do is offer a cure-all. Like other mythical substances (aether, ambrosia, phlogiston, pixie dust), quacks concoct some ethereal STUFF to explain an otherwise beguiling phenomenon. In the early 16th century, a Swiss alchemist named Theophrastus von Hohenheim (a.k.a. “Paracelcus”) posited a (chimerical) universal remedy called “azoth”. Half a millennium later, Robin DiAngelo posited a (chimerical) universal remedy called “anti-whiteness”.

The difference is that, in ancient times, people didn’t know any better. There was no tried-and-true scientific method; only rampant superstition. (Rustling in the bushes? Must be a ghost!) To engage in such dogmatic splurges in the 21st century is inexcusable. Alas. For Robin, anti-whiteness is supposed to be Kryptonite for anti-p.o.c. racism. It’s just nebulous enough to seem plausible to those who do not subject her (specious) claims to critical scrutiny.

Like any other snake-oil salesman, Robin charges exorbitant sums to hawk her proprietary elixir: an azoth redux that makes racial bias vanish in a puff of contrived gentility. (Add to this the fact that she sets a Kafka Trap for any interlocutor who has the gall to push back on her claims, and we quickly find that she has forfeited any right to be taken seriously.)

And so it goes: “Whiteness” is a pestilence in our land; and must be eradicated. How? By adjusting how those afflicted with it COMPORT themselves. Who, exactly, is afflicted with it? All white people. How shall they comport themselves? By being LESS WHITE. What does that mean? Eschewing their “whiteness”. But what does that entail? Self-effacement, self-deprecation, self-abnegation...combined with lots of groveling and pandering. THAT’S the ticket.

Robin fails to see that we’re not dealing with theoretical abstractions; we’re dealing with actual human beings.

It’s not merely that Robin’s prescription is unhelpful; it actually shoots an otherwise noble cause in the foot. Positing anti-whiteness as a salve for white privilege is like prescribing anti-Semitism as a salve for Revisionist Zionism. Little does Robin realize: It’s not skin color that’s the problem; it’s the (derisive)

TREATMENT OF skin color that's the problem.

With glib obduracy, Robin decrees that white people stop being “defensive” when met with the unfounded accusations of racism she so blithely propounds. She seems not to grasp that, when leveled sans evidence, “racist” (or variants like “anti-Semite”) is a vulgar accusation. As a consequence, anyone with a shred of dignity would not hesitate to push back were such an accusation made against them for frivolous reasons.

As if that were not obnoxious enough, whenever anyone objects to talking about race in the cockamamie manner Robin prescribes, she characterizes the dissent as a kind of mendacity (i.e. heedlessness, evasion, or stonewalling); ascribing sub-conscious bigotry to anyone with the temerity to question her specious pronouncements. So far as she is concerned, to not obsess over race as she does is tantamount to not wanting to talk about race AT ALL, thereby conceding her point. (!)

What makes Robin's hoodwink so risible is that she projects her own racism onto not just a few sundry bystanders, but onto every white person on the planet...as if the “whiteness” (however defined) of all caucasians somehow trumped their capacity to simply be HUMAN. For, so far as Robin is concerned, this singular phenotypic trait (that ethereal penumbra: “whiteness”) is an inborn pathology afflicting anyone who is not categorizable as a p.o.c.

Determined to expose veiled racism behind even the most trivial gesture, this unctuous schoolmarm manages to find an excuse to shame any and every non-p.o.c. for saying / doing virtually ANYTHING. (Disagree with her? You've just proved her point!) Hence dissenting views are taken as corroboration of her thesis. This discursive swindle is known as a “Kafka trap” (a tac that is standard operating procedure for most hucksters).

This scheme invariably involves prodigious amounts of gas-lighting—that is: getting people to doubt their perception of reality, or even their own sanity. (Such head-games are straight out of the cult leader handbook.) The subtext is clear: Shame on you for not feeling ashamed about something that I insist you should feel ashamed about! Think I'm being unfair in my aspersions? Well then, that's the “fragility” I'm talking about. Q.E.D. (!)

Robin posits a hobgoblin she dubs “aversive racism”, whereby ostensibly Progressive people are in denial about their REAL (read: covert) racism. What, pray tell, are the signs that one is guilty of this hidden sin? Well, one has many p.o.c. as friends. One sees / treats all people as individuals, irrespective of ethnicity. And one judges people by the content of their character rather than the color of their skin. (According to Robin's diagnostic shenanigans, these are symptoms of a malignant affliction.) Thus the hallmarks of NON-racism are construed as EVIDENCE FOR racism. It's as bonkers as the misandrist “feminist” who could look at a toaster-oven and see a scourge of misogyny. In the end, Robin wants us to believe that something is racist simply by dint of her saying so.

(Note that “objectivity” and “universalism” are other bogeymen that Robin warns us about; as things like impartiality and global human solidarity are, apparently, inconceivable. Championing our shared humanity is a pipe-dream. Intentions are irrelevant. Common decency is just a mirage.)

That said, we might note that there are some valid concerns about (what could be referred to as) “aversive racism”; though it would more accurately be called “evasive racism”. This occurs whenever ostensibly anti-racist attitudes are merely performative; and thus compensatory. For “evasive racism” involves a stage-managed tokenism (of the sort that Robin prescribes), whereby any inter-racial interaction is viewed transactionally (rather than about forging a genuine human connection, even if fleeting). Such “evasive racism” may be illustrated by juxtaposing it with CONVENTIONAL (overtly right-wing) racism:

White right-wingers tend to say: “Don’t get too close, but we’ll respect you if you rise high (in terms of socio-economic success).” Plenty of racists revere Michael Jordan.

White left-wingers tend to say: “You’re welcome to come close, just don’t rise too high (unless I can take credit for supporting said rise).” Any idiot can boycott Aunt Jemima maple syrup, yet makes little effort to rectify serious societal dysfunction.

BOTH involve an anti-racism of convenience. The former is a reminder that class interests sometimes trump ethnic interests (as exemplified by the likes of Thomas Sowell and Clarence Thomas). The latter is a reminder that p.c. is primarily a matter of theatrics; which is simply to say that it involves posturing (as with white people who patted themselves on the back for voting for Obama). With “evasive racism”, virtue-signaling is misconstrued as a sign of rectitude; which is precisely what enables TACIT racism to be elided with such ease. (Generally speaking, p.c. depends on us confusing piety for probity. Thus participants are obliged to put on airs, and then congratulate each other for being “woke”; i.e. pious.) This is, of course, the FAUX Progressivism on which the corporate wing of the Democratic Party depends.

There are serious dialectical problems as well. More than just derisive, Robin’s theory is self-validating; and thus un-falsifiable. As one might suspect, this is a feature, not a bug. One would think that this fact alone would disqualify Robin from being taken seriously by, well, anyone. Yet there’s a sucker born every minute; and Robin is counting on her audience’s credulity (and its predilection for virtue-signaling). This all works out splendidly...if, that is, we are to believe that being eternally chastened is preferable to being edified.

Were a student in a Freshman seminar on the scientific method to propose this zany theory, it would surely elicit a chuckle from the professor...if not a swift palm to the forehead. It is no surprise that Robin lasted only a year at her sole academic position (at Westfield State University 2014-2015), where—as someone who commands virtually no knowledge of other cultures—she was hired to pontificate about “multi-culturalism”. (For more on the conflation of multi-culturalism with cultural relativism, see my essay: “The Progressive Case For Cultural Appropriation”.)

The indiscriminate imputation of “white fragility” to hundreds of millions of people that she’s never met is, of course, disingenuous in the extreme. But given her designs, it makes perfect sense. After all, stirring up anxiety about phantom menaces is the metier of any snake-oil salesman. The trick is the oldest in the book: Create the impression of an ailment, then offer the purported cure. (See Christianity, “original sin”.) Like any other cultic scheme, the idea is to offer atonement / redemption by insisting that everyone hew to some sort of catechism. Instead of incantations, Robin traffics in chimeras. Her currency is fabricated contrition.

In surveying Robin’s material, one finds that there are too many cringe-worthy proclamations to count. A brief sample should suffice to make the point (I paraphrase): “We white people feel entitled to our racial advantages. We have an unspoken sense of superiority. We feel that we are deserving of more than p.o.c. deserve.” Wait. What? One must wonder: Has Robin only ever commiserated with racists? “Many white people believe that racism ended in 1865.” Is that so? One must wonder: Has Robin only ever commiserated with ignoramuses? Who in heaven’s name is she talking about?

Such comments are enough to make one wince. They are absurd not merely because they are demonstrably false; but because nobody in their right mind actually believes such things.

So what’s going on here? Robin assumes that because SHE feels these things, then ALL white people must be of the same mind. It seems that she has only led a segregated life; as she avers that in America, there is

no racial mixing. As someone who lived in Harlem / Washington Heights for almost two decades, such an assertion is laughable. (Even the most uneducated hillbilly would hesitate to make such a spurious claim.)

The gimmickry here is actually quite simple: You, dear white person, don't REALLY know what you're misapprehending. I'M here to bring it to you're attention. (For those familiar with cult leaders, this should sound oddly familiar.) Robin pulls off this stunt by acting as though she knows anything about race and racism (which she clearly does not). In fact, one can't help but wonder if Robin has ever spent time with a p.o.c. outside of the controlled environs of her hallowed seminars. It is obvious that she has no experience communing with African Americans at length (let alone living amongst ANY p.o.c. over an extended period of time). It's like a self-proclaimed botanist who has never stepped foot in a forest; yet asserts expertise due to having sporadically tended to the chrysanthemums on a few hand-picked window-sills.

A consummate con-woman, Robin perpetrates this racket by pretending that she is not completely full of shit. So we are invited to witness a shake-down artist using a guileful combination of pedantry and perfidy to cash in on corporate consultation gigs. This is no exaggeration. Outside of over-priced corporate seminars, focus groups, and workshops, it is plain to see that Robin has absolutely no relevant experience with black people (or even, it seems, with WHITE people). The way she blathers on about p.o.c., it quickly becomes evident that she has never actually spent any appreciable time getting to know p.o.c. in the real world—which is to say: in their communities, contending with everyday situations. (Recall who tends to use focus groups: political advisors and marketing departments; i.e. propagandists.)

Testament to Robin's blinkered thinking is her (befuddling) pronouncement that "racism is not an event." It seems nobody has ever brought to her attention that no sane person has ever suggested that "racism" was an EVENT. She may as well have declared that objectivity is not a vegetable. Yet Robin makes this statement as though she is bestowing upon the world a glimmering pearl of wisdom that will—finally, at long last—usher in a much-needed paradigm shift.

In a (purported) stroke of genius, Robin notes that when a person uses locutions like "diverse" and "bad neighborhoods" as pejoratives, it is a sign of racism. She seems to think that it is a jaw-dropping revelation that most racism is not overt. (Newsflash: Racism isn't just about *being mean* to p.o.c.) In sum: Robin has made an art-form of stating the obvious; then patting herself on the back for having the wisdom to enlighten the rest of us.

Meanwhile, Robin defines racism as a "system"...rather than what it actually is: a frame of mind (to wit: the tendency to make judgements about people's worthiness / character / merit according to race). Thus she pretends that racism is systemic BY DEFINITION. Presumably, then, an Aryan Supremacist could not possibly exist as a hermit—grumbling to himself in seclusion. Robin is advised to read up a bit on systems theory before expounding about SYSTEMS. ***

All this is, of course, artificially-flavored hogwash. There is, after all, a reason we make the distinction between isolated incidents of racism and systemic racism (or, for that matter, between individual cases of X and systemic X; where X could be any pathology). The former occurs interpersonally; the latter is reflected in power structures. Such is the difference between the individual and the institutional. To conflate these two modes of racism—as Robin does—is to fixate on the former at the expense of addressing the latter.

This conceptualization is key if we are to expose the fatal flaws of Robin's paradigm. On the level of the individual, racism is a way of thinking (based on a tribalistic mindset). This is something that may or may not be systemic. And what of measurable effects? Anyone's racism could yield any number of results, depending on the virulence of the racism and the socio-economic leverage they have.

Systemic racism, on the other hand, IS a result (sometimes inadvertent, sometimes by design). The fact of the matter is: It is theoretically possible for structural inequalities to exist due—in part—to systemic racism without there being even one racist person on the entire planet; which means that trying to eradicate systemic racism by scolding racists would be like trying to dismantle the military-industrial complex by preaching pacifism on a street corner. ***

Systemic racism means that the moral dereliction is not conscientious; it is built into society's institutions. In other words: It is hardwired into power structures...whether or not anyone intends it to be so. This is something that does not require conscious thoughts of—or deliberate acts of—racism (that is: on the part of any given person). And this is a key point that Robin DiAngelo doesn't get.

Why, then, doesn't Robin deal with the ACTUAL meaning of "racism"? I suspect that—deep down—she realizes that a perspicacious treatment of the phenomenon would incriminate of her own ministry. In other words, the real definition of racism is a perfect description of HERSELF. Openly conceding this would undermine her ability to perpetuate her scam. Indeed, were she ever to use plausible definitions, the entire jig would be up. (Recall that her con-game is based on projection. When she's not engaged in finger-wagging, she engages in finger-pointing.)

Little more than a grievance-peddler, Robin seems to think that it's an earth-shattering revelation that biases are oftentimes SUBCONSCIOUS; and only her penetrating insight is capable of finally exposing this little-known fact. (Memo to Robin: The vast majority of biases are subconscious. THAT is why we tend to persist in having them even when we don't want to.) Equipped with this ersatz wisdom, Robin forges on as if she might somehow make racial biases magically vanish in a frenzy of pearl-clutching.

It seems to have never occurred to Robin that gross generalizations about the ideological bent of entire haplo-groups is the very definition of racism. No matter; gross generalizations are her stock-in-trade. Oddly enough, the way she describes "white people", one would think that she has only ever commiserated with racists. (Many of the things she claims all white people think / say are things that only racists would ever think / say; which makes one wonder about the company she keeps.) Meanwhile, her supercilious caricature of "black people" is so condescending, it is virtually indistinguishable from the ghastly pontifications of Richard Spencer. (Robin's weird portrayal of p.o.c. imbues them with a hyper-fragility that surpasses the fragility of her thesis. To hear *her* tell it, most black people have a frangible constitution, and are chronically peevish.)

What Robin fails to understand is that if one claims to see a problem around every corner, one vitiates the meaning of the indictment, thereby stripping important terms of semiotic ballast; and so utterly denuding them in the event that they are actually needed to make a point. (This is a lesson most children learn from the tale of the boy who cried wolf.) If a term of disparagement can mean anything, then it means nothing. Promiscuous use of important terms (e.g. "assault", "aggression", "violence", "harm", "injury") deprives ACTUAL victims of the ability to express legitimate grievances with ample gravity; thus doing them a grave disservice.

The indiscriminate use of language also diverts desperately-needed attention from incidents that REALLY DO warrant redress. Such semantic dilution makes it impossible to convey what needs to be conveyed in the event we need to invoke potent language. (Something that might be said to Madame DiAngelo: Please, for the love of god, stop. You're not helping.)

Robin seems not to realize that white people—privileged or not—do p.o.c. no favor by simpering. Civil rights is about taking the bull by the horns, not about eating crow. We don't empower people by coddling

them. (To be patronizing amounts to congenial hubris.) More to the point: Incumbent power structures are not fundamentally transformed by penitence.

But no matter. Robin has explicitly stated that she doesn't like the question: "So what can we ACTUALLY DO?" Presumably this is because she does not have a good answer. Even worse: She doesn't seem to care about there even being an answer. She is satisfied with her "tsk-tsk-tsk" campaign; and that's all there is to it. She even writes on a slide in her presentation that being a good or bad person is irrelevant. (No kidding.) Probity is not the point; it's all about contrition.

So, we might ask: What insights are worth heeding? Well, brutally candid self-reflection is always a worthwhile exercise. But the fact remains: Robin's asseverations offer insight into the plight of African Americans in roughly the same way the 90's sit-com "Friends" gave the world a penetrating look into the plight of impoverished Latinos in New York City barrios. The parallels here are rather disturbing. In Robin's contrived set-pieces, p.o.c. are used as props. And all interactions are strategically choreographed so as to hit the right notes (to a song that only Robin is capable of hearing, but which we must trust is playing in the aether that surrounds us). The difference is that the bizarrely all-white, un-realistic, mildly-amusing TV show did not purport to be an accurate depiction of the most ethnically diverse city in the world...let alone a incisive documentation of what life might be like on the Lower East Side for, well, actual people. In sum: "Friends" wasn't meant to be taken seriously. By contrast, charlatans tend to take themselves very, very, very seriously.

In this respect, the message to Robin is simple: Want to empower p.o.c.? Stop patronizing them.

So far as I can surmise, Robin has not written a single page articulating possible ways to mitigate structural inequality (which is a real problem) in ANY way, let alone proposed measures that might attenuate the vestiges of systemic racism lurking in our institutions. Regrettably, Robin is solely concerned with tacit prejudices on the micro- and meso-levels. This makes sense, as she is not in the business of proposing (credible) solutions to anything...let alone to systemic problems at the macro-level.

For Robin, racial issues are to be understood primarily—if not entirely—in terms of inter-personal dynamics; and everything (yes: EVERYTHING) is to be taken personally. *** Her boondoggle is predicated on inculcating myopia under the auspices of enlightenment. We should be wary of those who deign to lord it over an entire demographic group; especially when they seem to do so with oodles of cordiality.

Robin has proven to be a maestro at ingratiating herself with her target audience. She's going for the applause line, not for edification. What makes this so grating is that, when it comes to the topic at hand (racism), Robin is not only tone-deaf, she's insufferably priggish. This does not prevent her sycophantic admirers from showering her with accolades in a flurry of virtue-signaling fervor. And so far as she's concerned, as long as the check clears, hers is a job well done.

To reiterate: Robin's preachments do more harm than good. She stigmatizes Progressives as puritanical ideologues, thereby making our mission that much more difficult. (It's hard to imagine someone providing right-wing polemicists with more fodder.) Rather than fostering healthy human connection across demographic lines, her oleaginous scolding emphasizes those lines, turning them into boundaries. The result is to engender a chronically captious disposition amongst all participants...in what can only be described as a cloying charade. We are then to proceed as if we could "tsk-tsk-tsk" racism into oblivion.

Robin is not merely your run-of-the-mill grifter; she's a race-hustler. The tragedy of her sales-pitch is that she makes the battle against structural inequality (spec. along ethnic lines) all the more difficult for those of us who actually care about curtailing bigotry. Meanwhile, she laughs all the way to the bank.

At the end of the day, Robin's avocation is singular: monetizing shame. The irony here is quite striking. For as she cavils about the scourge of "entitlement" / "privilege" ...she fails to look in the mirror, where she would come face to face with its most glaring personification.

...

{ Perhaps the most flagrant example of this is Revisionist Zionism. Even as they actively promote crimes against humanity, proponents of this execrable ideology pretend to care about human rights. History has shown that those abiding ethno-centric agendas will always find innovative ways to rationalize their iniquity, even when it's something as obviously malign as ethnic cleansing.}*

*{** This is an inversion of another form of bigotry: The association of admirable traits (e.g. good grammar / vocabulary) with "whiteness" ...as if p.o.c. were less capable of speaking well. This entails racism against p.o.c.; and—in a weird irony—is often perpetrated BY p.o.c. Other specious associations include: morality with **religiosity**, logic with **patriarchy**, and masculinity for men / femininity for women with **heterosexuality**.}*

*{*** When it comes to systemic racism, outcomes are the focal point; as the issue is: **things that actually occur**. By contrast, when it comes to a person's racism, outcomes are entirely beside the point; as any given person's racism exists irrespective of its (often idiosyncratic) manifestations in everyday life. When it comes to systemic racism, the demographic categories of the culprit and victim are salient factors; as the exigency is invariably a function of power asymmetries (which are often part of an institution's architecture). By contrast, when it comes to an individual's racism, the myriad (intersecting) demographic categories of the culprit and victim is generally irrelevant. Why? Because a person's character is what it is irrespective of his position in the socio-economic strata; and is largely independent of his own demographic profile. Thus: In the former case, we are looking at the kinds of things that HAPPEN (societal events). In the latter case, we are looking at how someone THINKS (personal sentiments / dispositions), regardless of the effects such thinking has upon the world; and regardless of the proximal causes of such problematic mental processes, which vary from case to case. The former is not personal; the latter is ENTIRELY personal. The former has nothing to do with subjective states; the latter is ALL ABOUT subjective states. When observing the (often bewildering) world in which we find ourselves, we must be very careful when assessing outcomes. And we must be especially perspicacious when drawing sweeping conclusions; as all factors must be taken into account if we sincerely seek an exhaustive explanation (re: exactly what happened, how it happened, and why it happened). Disparities defined in terms of demographic categories arise for myriad reasons...ONE of which may be systemic racism. However, structural inequalities, even when they occur along ethnic lines, may emerge due to any number of factors (e.g. class-related interests, run-of-the-mill corruption, tyranny, etc.) Systemic racism comes in many grotesque forms: red-lining (which persists tacitly if not explicitly), biased policing tactics, the "war on drugs" (replete with egregiously unfair laws and racially-skewed incarceration rates), sub-prime mortgage targeting, unequal public funding to poor minority communities, and a slew of other venal things that have become so normalized as to escape notice. Yet heaven forbid if one were to ever insinuate that there may be other factors AS WELL: exigencies that account for structural inequalities (spec. grievously warped financial incentives). When assessing inequities in terms of demographics, we must bear in mind that correlation is not necessarily indicative of direct causation (or that it has a singular proximal cause). We must recognize that problematic incentive structures (spec. those in which a particular racial group is marginalized) are not exclusively a function of racial biases.}*

Epilogue 1

I saw fit to compose (6) epilogues to the preceding piece, as I found more points to make on the this matter. To reiterate, Robin DiAngelo's "zugzwang" is highly problematic, as it is not merely dubious; it has been shown to exacerbate the very societal dysfunctions it claims to ameliorate.

Before proceeding, let's be clear: WASPs (and other non-p.o.c.) need to recognize that they were born into a society fraught with structural inequalities that exist, in part, along racial lines. It is a set of exigencies that—all else being equal—happens to advantage them (and thus disadvantage others). The catch, though, is that, when it comes to socio-economic status, all else is NOT always equal. In other words, while socio-economic injustices disproportionately impact p.o.c., not ALL socio-economic injustice is attributable to institutionalized racism. There are other societal dysfunctions at play (corporate power doesn't care how diverse its boardroom is), and it is important to address those dysfunctions if we are seriously concerned about rectifying those injustices.

Institutionalized racism cannot be reduced to personal interactions. So pretending that this systemic problem can be addressed by altering how each person conducts himself does little—if anything—to fix the underlying problem. The institutional is, by definition, not personal.

Let's begin by assaying the new hobgoblin for Potemkin Progressives: "implicit bias". My contention is that "implicit bias" is largely a chimera. * For there does not need to exist racial prejudice at the individual level for structural inequalities (along racial lines) to exist. Institutional dysfunction takes on a life of its own; and is not remedied by people comporting themselves in a more "woke" manner. Collegiality is all fine and dandy, but it does nothing to remedy barriers-to-entry that exist for marginalized communities.

Robin DiAngelo's approach is analogous to thinking that one can keep the Titanic afloat by changing the pattern of the drapes in all the state rooms. At the end of the day, etiquette is just window dressing. But for Robin that's just fine; as she's only concerned with optics.

Robin seems to think that one can give p.o.c. a leg up by being more polite to them; by never offending them; and by catering to the sensibilities of any bystander who happens to be p.o.c. This turns activism into street theater. It's as if putting on airs would magically eradicate all the structural inequalities that have been baked into the system over the course of generations.

Robin urges us to focus on cosmetic changes, as if socio-economic justice were primarily a matter of keeping up appearances. This gives people the opportunity to talk the (quasi-scripted) talk without walking the walk. Everyone postures (according to the assigned script / choreography), while all the institutional dysfunction remains fully in tact.

Consider the mantra of Identity Politics: Instead of celebrating diversity, we should be wary of it. This is a message from which genuine Progressives recoil; as it is an explicit repudiation of the cosmopolitan ideal. Rather than embracing our shared humanity, it admonishes us to ignore it in favor of a framing based on some sort of demographic categorization.

Robin DiAngelo, the high priestess of identity politics, insists that things would be so much better if we stop focusing on our shared humanity, and fixate more on race. When it comes to attenuating structural inequalities, human solidarity needn't play any role. Instead of striving to overcome racial divisions, we should AMPLIFY them.

As I hope to have shown in the preceding essay, magnifying alterity by sowing resentment and suspicion is not a winning strategy. Yet, for the last few years, this has been Robin's stock-in-trade. Such perfidy makes Robin's "white fragility" campaign as appalling as the tendentious asseverations of other grifters

who engage in race-baiting under the aegis of anti-racism. Anyone with common sense realizes that racism in one direction is not defused by directing it in the opposite direction. To reiterate the point: Bigotries pointed at each other don't cancel each other out; they fuel each other.

Such an approach is not only morally bankrupt; it is also impractical. Tendentious language is not an effective way to win over those who need to be won over: those who are currently NOT NOTICING structural inequalities, abiding racial inequities, socio-economic stratification, the problems of highly-concentrated wealth / power, systems of domination / exploitation / marginalization, etc.

An elementary point—which seems to escape Robin—is that one does not appeal to the better angels of people's nature by berating them for having been born a certain way. And one certainly does not persuade well-meaning people by accusing them of thought-crime. Robin does not wear her sanctimonious proclamations well, especially once we consider that those same proclamations are feeding her bank account.

To recapitulate: Robin is doing more harm than good with her frivolous “white fragility” indictment; and her groundless conjectures about inborn moral degeneracy. As is now evident, in the midst of her finger-wagging fervor, she sows division more than good will. (Her “anti-racism” seminars actually exacerbate the very problem they purport to ameliorate.) This is a reminder that dividing people by race never ends well.

Alas, virtue-signaling has become a lucrative cottage industry. Now, ersatz “Progressives” (read: Reactionaries masquerading as Progressives) are peddling a new form of authoritarianism and puritanism.

In this scheme, hyper-sensitivity is a kind of bravery. The fetishization of hurt feelings is based on narcissism: “It's all about ME; and how I happen to feel. The rest of the world is obliged to recognize this.” So Robin is happy to spread an ethos of pathological safety-ism...and watch the money roll in. (Hint: If one is gas-lighting an entire demographic group, one is not a civil rights activist.)

Those who've made an avocation out of being “offended” are now in the business of shaming heretics in the public square...instead of doing the hard work of dismantling inequitable power structures (by, say, advocating for meaningful policy changes). This ill-considered enterprise leads to a massive misallocation of limited resources. For it entails diverting time and attention away from the things that will really solve the problems that DiAngelo pretends to care about.

DiAngelo convinces her acolytes that non-p.o.c. must PANDER to p.o.c. in order to ameliorate the racial inequities of American society...and that p.o.c. can empower themselves by being PEEVISH. In DiAngelo's proposed scheme, p.o.c. are to be treated as subjects rather than as fellow humans. She thus uses p.o.c. as props in her tendentious prognosis.

In effect, DiAngelo demands alterity as a means to comity, as if to say: Divided we stand, united we fall. With every sanctimonious asseveration, she ends up furnishing bullies with another harebrained rationale to bully...while SEEMING to do something valiant.

DiAngelo seems not to understand that there is no connection between being “offended” and being oppressed. It is possible for one to never—even for a fleeting moment—feel “offended” by anything anyone ever said ever again, yet still be hamstrung by structural inequalities for one's entire life. Her daft scheme only seems to work insofar as we conflate propriety with probity.

Robin's boondoggle follows a simple formula: Combat racism by coercing anyone with fair skin to acknowledge that they are (unwittingly) racist BY NATURE. Her message to all those who aren't p.o.c. is

as follows: Blithely going about your business, even in the most anodyne of ways, is—in reality—a covert form of “racial control”. So you should be ashamed.

If you don't concede this point, then you're being “defensive”; and that defensiveness is—in and of itself—proof of your racism. (But if she drowns, then she wasn't a witch.) It used to be that someone who said “heads I win, tails you lose” was laughed out of the room. Alas. It turns out that common sense is not so common in p.c. circles.

Robin is a grifter. She peddles her magical elixir of guilt with a glib unscrupulousness—a cross between a snake-oil salesman and an evangelical preacher. And, as with any huckster, her exorbitant consultation fees ensure that she's financially compensated for her astonishing wisdom.

Shaming THESE people for the color of their skin is part of her grift. Patronizing THOSE people due to the color of their skin is the other part. This purportedly offers a panacea for trans-ethnic comity. What it really does is sow resentment...without solving any of the underlying problems.

For Robin's adoring fans, finger-wagging is a courageous act. Pearl-clutching is a sign of valor. And—by the way—NOT obsessing over race is a form of racism. As with any other grifter, her prognoses is downright Kafka-esque; yet oddly compelling for credulous audiences. It gives people who don't really give a shit an opportunity to feel like they're fighting the good fight, without having to do anything substantive.

In the advent of the Enlightenment, exhibiting piety via self-flagellation was relegated to the rubbish heap of risible medieval practices; but Robin is determined to bring it back...though with a “call-outs” instead of cat o' nine tails. Until very recently, shaming people for their skin color was considered racist. Now it's called “anti-racist”...in the event that the shame is inflicted upon those who aren't p.o.c. (In other words, racism is cancelled out by racism pointed in the other direction.) Reality tells a different story. It is a basic principle of tribalism that countervailing bigotries don't nullify each other; they exacerbated each other...leading to a vicious cycle. Why? Because divisiveness is reciprocal; and contempt fuels contempt. (Robin may want to read up on positive feedback loops.)

The most basic feature of STRUCTURAL inequality—specifically when along racial lines—is that it is not resolved on the micro-level (i.e. by simply eliminating interpersonal racial biases). For the problem is hardwired into INSTITUTIONS—irrespective of how noble individual intentions might be. Inequitable power structures will remain fully intact even if those complicit in their socio-economic hierarchies were to grovel 24/7, and nobody ever “offended” anyone else ever again.

We should not be fooled by DiAngelo's seemingly collegial pretensions. Such posturing only serves to deepen our divisions—stirring acrimony where none would otherwise exist. It's like prescribing an irritant, then calling it a salve. The perverse irony here is that this (purportedly) “anti-racist” grifter doesn't give p.o.c. nearly enough credit. (This is probably because she knows so little about ACTUAL p.o.c.) Being offended for a marginalized group—on their behalf—does nothing to remedy any structural inequality with which they may be dealing. It is only a chance to virtue signal...and then to pat oneself on the back for vanquishing bigotry from the face of the earth.

Memo to DiAngelo: The problem with racism is not poor manners. Etiquette is not ethics.

One does a grave disservice to p.o.c. by supposing that all one needs to do is placate them (on an interpersonal level). The idea, it seems, is to help a targeted demographic by pandering to its members' most choleric disposition; not by actually doing anything substantive. DiAngelo doesn't seem to grasp

how condescending this is. As is the case with anyone else grappling with inequity, p.o.c. aren't helped by being coddled; they are helped by being accorded respect.

Dismayingly, Robin's garish pageant of virtue-signaling allows her to get away with peddling stereotypes of African Americans. She pulls off this stunt by passing off her candy-coated dreck as INSIGHT. What does it mean to be black in America? According to Robin's mawkish depiction: Frangible? Yep. Captious? Yep. Petty? Yep. Concerned with electing genuinely Progressive figures to public office? Don't hold your breath.

Every decent person recoils from this puerile caricature—or from ANY generalization of an entire racial group. And what of white people? Well, you see, all of them are FRAGILE. Every last one. (And once they all fess up to this congenital defect, the world will magically become a better place.) We are all familiar with this gimmick in its older forms. In Christianity, it's called "original sin". The schtick is as old as time: Propagate the impression of an ailment, then peddle the alleged cure. It's like a homeopathic remedy for racism; though Robin's artificially-flavored hogwash is laced with a mild toxin. It's little more than an opportunity to virtue signal, without having to do anything to address structural inequality...along ANY lines. (Note: A recent critique of Robin's fatuous approach to racial justice is Jonathan Church's "Rethinking Racism".)

Robin's daft crusade is a reminder that virtue-signaling is faux activism—a way to appear virtuous without actually have to do anything constructive (e.g. support Progressives running for public office, push for Progressive legislation, engage in work that helps to solve real problems, etc.) Simpering while stating, "I'm sorry for being white" never once helped a p.o.c.; as coercing people into apologizing for being who they are (since birth) is ALWAYS a horrible idea. Progressives should know better. Alas. Many on the "Left" are clamoring for an excuse to publicly congratulate themselves for being "woke". It is to that audience that Robin caters. Little do such people realize: "I recognize the disadvantages you face as a member of a marginalized community" is only a POINT OF DEPARTURE. Virtue signaling needn't play any role in any activism that ensues.

Overmuch focus on proprieties, which operate solely on an inter-personal level, risks diverting vital attention away from macro-problems: systemic racism and the structural inequalities that it abets. By fixating on being politically correct, otherwise well-meaning people miss the forest for the trees. For instead of learning how to address structural inequality with political action, people occupy themselves with following the assigned choreography—reciting pieties, then calling it a day. Meanwhile, fawning fans pay to hear Robin churn out more hokum.

In "Sociological Imagination", C. Wright Mills noted that, if one is to procure a thorough understanding of how power and politics interact, a crucial distinction must be made between "personal troubles and public issues." To automatically construe the former as the latter is not insightful; it is narcissistic. While case-studies on the individual level can be illustrative of issues on a macro-level, and while a sufficiently large sample set can reveal broader trends (which can help identify systemic problems); a given person's subjective state at any given time and place cannot be invoked to diagnose societal dysfunction.

Personal experiences don't necessarily account for the myriad ways that incumbent power structures impact life outcomes; nor do they offer a full explanation for how larger socio-economic forces may impact any given person's life. Problematic one-on-one interactions may be symptomatic of institutional problems. It does not follow from this that mitigating the occurrence of such interactions somehow makes those institutional problems vanish. If anything, it only elides some of the more overt signs that such problems exist.

Fussing over an episode in which one person may have been uncouth toward another person, thereby eliciting a fleeting sense of discomfiture in the latter, may tell us something about the psychology of the two people involved in that particular interaction. However, such an interaction cannot possibly provide an account of the systemic realities that shape society-at-large.

Robin takes the opposite approach. According to her, racial inequities along racial lines can be corrected by making token gestures across those lines (gestures that are designed to INGRATIATE); and—the contention goes—this can only be done by fixating on racial differences in our day-to-day lives. “Want to eliminate socio-economic injustices? Don’t offend anyone!”

Obsessing over propriety does nothing in the way of generating awareness about structural inequalities; it merely makes people un-necessarily anxious about adhering to the latest prescribed etiquette in every encounter. Moreover, it creates the illusion that, so long as one is exhibiting proper conduct / speech in all quotidian interactions, one is doing one’s part in eradicating racism. Worse than FAILING to solve an underlying problem is pretending that one is taking measures to solve it when one is doing nothing of the sort. We cannot rectify structural inequalities by minding our manners; and thinking that we CAN actually diverts our focus from doing what needs to be done.

I concur with Robin that, when it comes to hubris, there is nothing worse than a wealthy, white person with a sense of entitlement—whether such conceit is based on ethnicity, socio-economic status, or anything else. The difference is that I don’t become the very thing I decry. Obsessing over etiquette does absolutely nothing to attenuate structural inequalities; it is merely an opportunity to peacock. Alas; virtue-signaling is all Robin’s most ardent followers are interested in.

It is this a hankering to APPEAR Progressive that enables her to charge exorbitant fees, attracting those who have no sincere interest in supporting Progressive figures / policies...yet still want to get credit for fighting the good fight. After all, political correctness is about putting on airs.

So WHAT OF that sense of entitlement? To combat this abiding social pathology (entitled caucasians who are heedless of what it’s like to NOT BE caucasian), the key is to identify those who are ACTUALLY culpable. To do so, some degree of discernment is required. That is to say: Sapience requires that we make the crucial distinction between those who have a sense of entitlement and, well, those who don’t. One obfuscates this distinction by simply painting all white people in the world with the broad brush of “entitlement”—as if it were an inborn stain. There is no better way to elide the fact that CERTAIN white people need to be indicted than to bunch them in with, well, everyone else. As we learn in childhood, “crying wolf” dilutes the gravity of an indictment. (This point is illustrated by those who categorize uncouth flirtation as “sexual assault”, thereby conflating rudeness with RAPE.) Impropiety is not violence; and to pretend otherwise is to do a grave disservice to actual victims.

In Robin DiAngelo, we find just another charlatan who knows how to ingratiate herself with an obsequious target-audience. The trick, Robin seems to have learned, is to pass her indiscriminate musings off as gnostic discernment. Those who are hornswoggled into giving her asseverations oxygen are soon distracted from things that REALLY MATTER (i.e. our shared humanity). This ends up being a misallocation of time and energy—very limited resources that should be devoted to promoting STRUCTURAL change. Even as it affords us an opportunity to congratulate ourselves for doing nothing, good etiquette gets us nowhere. Piety is not probity. Touting it as a cure-all is a fool’s errand.

The larger lesson to take home should be loud and clear to those who are sincerely interested in moving things forward. It’s time to call out the mendacity of identity politics, and expose it for what it is: A right-

wing phenomenon masquerading as an intrepid social justice crusade.

In the end, making non-p.o.c. aware of the travails of p.o.c. is the point. There are certain ways this has been done in compelling ways—from W.E.B. Du Bois’ “The Souls Of Black Folk” (in 1903) to Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter From A Birmingham Jail” (in 1963). Ralph Ellison conveyed this reality in his 1945 essay, “Richard Wright’s Blues”, then in his 1952 novel, “Invisible Man”. James Baldwin did so in his 1953 memoir, “Go Tell It On The Mountain”, then in his 1955 anthology, “Notes Of A Native Son”. (My hunch is that the vast majority of those who are smitten with Robin have not read any of these works.)

Making activism about comportment will guarantee that nothing substantive will ever be accomplished. Want to fight structural racism? Get money entirely out of politics. Eliminate all corporate influence on public policy. Completely reverse the privatization of State functions—from prisons to schools, from utilities to healthcare. In other words, attend to INSTITUTIONAL matters, not personal matters. Want to be edified? Listen to the likes of Cornell West and Briahna Joy Gray instead of hacks like Ta-Nehisi Coates and Henry Rogers (“Ibram X. Kendi”). Instead of picking up “White Fragility” or the (now debunked) “1619 Project”, read something by Christ Hedges or Noam Chomsky.

The more white people are cognizant of the tribulations that are still endured by p.o.c. (and understand WHY p.o.c. still endure those tribulations), the more everyone will be able to come together to formulate effective solutions. For, at the end of the day, this is a common cause.

{ Jesse Singal does a great job debunking the paranoia surrounding “implicit bias” in “Quick Fix”. It is a creature of the anti-scientific fad known as “critical race theory”, a topic I discuss in Epilogue 3.}*

Epilogue 2

Robin DiAngelo’s success represents the extent to which the public discourse—nay, deliberative democracy itself—has degenerated. Even the most stalwart Progressives now often find themselves treading water in a roiling caldron of contrived indignation. Consequently, they are reticent to be candid lest they be castigated for breaching the latest speech codes...or, even worse, being guilty of impropriety.

At first blush, Robin’s prescriptions seem to be a good way to generate awareness amongst non-p.o.c.; until, that is, one realizes that all the H.R. departments in the world won’t make structural inequalities go away; as such departments are PART OF those dysfunctional structures. We can censor speech ’til the cows come home; and systemic racism will persist behind all the pleasant smiles and token gestures. We can meet diversity quotas ’til kingdom come; and systemic racism will persist even as we congratulate ourselves for using this or that member of this or that marginalized group as a prop. Structural inequalities persist even when the optics are magnificent

Let’s consider an eventuality in which the executives at Wall Street Banks start saying: “Alright. Fine. We’ll do ‘sensitivity training’ and issue ingratiating press releases. No problem.” After saying this, they then congratulate themselves for being “woke”. When this occurs, yet structural inequalities persist, we can be quite sure that there is nothing substantive going on in the way of rectifying socio-economic injustices.

PR is, after all, just another name for “propaganda”. And when those most responsible for societal dysfunction are eager to embrace a program that promises to placate dissidents, we are right to be suspicious.

So long as we are fixated on caviling about micro-aggressions and “white fragility”, the status quo will persist indefinitely. How so? Because all the trigger warnings and “call outs” in the world will do nothing

to erode structural inequality. As it turns out, incessant pearl-clutching amounts to an elaborate distraction from society's real problems...while providing us with the illusion that we might be accomplishing something worthwhile.

What does this have to do with Robin DiAngelo? In her (ostensibly) anti-racist fervor, she seems not to understand is that being churlish precludes our ability to be empathic. As discussed in the preceding essay, she purports to heal rifts along racial lines by concocting reasons to be resentful along those same lines. Her aim is to attenuate racial inequality by conjuring race-based antagonisms; as if creating fissures somehow engendered solidarity. The inverted logic would be laughable if it weren't taken seriously by so many.

The untenable presumption is that a scourge of impropriety is primarily to blame for America's socio-economic injustices—especially when those injustices fall along racial lines. In the scheme that Robin puts forth, no matter what a white person says / does, it can be interpreted in SOME cynical way that enables her to ascribe nefarious intent...no matter how specious such ascription might be. There is no viable way to extricate oneself from this crucible of (imputed) culpability; as all unsanctioned roads lead to accusations of bigotry. Acrimony reigns supreme; though it is sold as a regime of (obligatory) sensitivity.

It is plain to see, then, that the so-called "sensitivity" training Robin touts is a racket. In fact, these DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusivity) seminars have consistently been shown to do far more harm than good. For such programs create racial tension where it would otherwise not exist; while also imposing a financial cost on the organizations that are duped into hiring race hustlers (to reiterate: purely for PR purposes). Such an infelicitous result should not come as a surprise after one has fumigated a space with the semiotic equivalent of a nerve agent. After all, drummed-up resentment invariably translates to hostility. (It's a small step from wallowing to simmering.)

With Robin's workshops, the idea is that by contriving frivolous grievances, implicit biases might be exposed. Such exposure will then—in a flourish of virtue-signaling splendor—make structural inequities vanish. Or so we're told.

This is nothing but a sham. In each of Robin's mendacious interventions, each individual is admonished to hold others in abeyance for even the most trivial breaches of etiquette. Such persnickiness, when widespread, can't help but create a toxic atmosphere; and be off-putting to those who aren't fans of being accused of bigotry simply for having been uncouth during a fleeting encounter. One does not bring about social cohesion by sowing division...even if doing so is meant to generate "awareness".

Self-awareness (and being vigilant of one's own biases) is crucial to fighting racism. But indiscriminately leveling a raft of spurious indictments across racial lines only succeeds in amplifying alterity. It creates a dynamic that leads to acrimony rather than to comity. Recrimination is invariably reciprocal; and leads to a vicious cycle. (Again: Robin seems not to be aware of how positive feedback loops work; or that they even exist.)

Alas. These "interventions" are extremely lucrative for the charlatans who orchestrate them. Robin isn't alone. Many have been hired to serve as proctors for these hallowed "anti-racism" sessions. As is often the case with scams, we find that charismatic speakers are compensated handsomely for their cupidity; and the rubes who fall for their schtick walk away feeling enlightened.

When we put trepidation over vigilance, walls go up, not down. Yet as Robin would have it, we bring about comity by stoking anxiety. It's as if we could combat bigotry by walking on eggshells...while casting aspersions whenever we feel unsettled. Alas. Robin is convinced that being insufferably captious

is the best way to engender compassion; when all it is, really, is an opportunity to virtue signal.

Any so-called “call-out” is tantamount to “Hey, look at me!” Such guileful pageantry works well for people who want to take credit for doing absolutely nothing...other than perform a few token gestures (and occasionally give lip-service for image-burnishing purposes).

In Robin’s guilt-mongering campaign, there is something oddly reminiscent of the Puritans’ demand to “REPENT”. And after repenting, be sure to truckle...and then pander to the whim of anyone (in the aggrieved demographic group) irrespective of merit. It’s as if solidarity between members of a privileged group (racially defined) and a marginalized group (racially defined) could be forged by the former being CONDESCENDING toward the latter (based sheerly on racial distinctions). But that’s not how cosmopolitanism works. That’s not even how HUMANISM works.

When it comes to promoting socio-economic justice, the sine qua non is neither faux amity nor artificially-stoked acrimony. Rather, it is fellowship. Such fellowship is based not on honoring formalities; it is based on our shared humanity.

One does not persuade ACTUAL racists to stop being racist by chiding them for being racists. Racism can’t be tsk-tsk-tsk-ed into oblivion. And, at best, finger-wagging accomplishes nothing; and more often than not exacerbates the very problem it purports to address. Moreover, one only succeeds in vitiating the ballast of an indictment by indiscriminately leveling it at anyone who fails to sufficiently hew to a regimen of etiquette that the latest self-proclaimed “anti-racist” popinjay has mandated.

Being chronically preoccupied with breaches of etiquette guarantees that empathy will continue to be sacrificed on the altar of political correctness. By participating in the fatuous charade that is “call-out culture”, we find ourselves in a constant state of anxiety: more focused on policing everyone’s adherence to newfangled—often inane—formalities than on doing what’s necessary to effect structural change.

So what’s to be done with the vestiges of Jim Crow? There’s no simple answer; but we can be quite sure of one thing: Being peevish is incompatible with being empathetic, so can not possibly be part of the solution. When seeking to promote civil rights, being self-deprecating is not productive. Posturing is not a form of activism.

And if empathy is really what we’re after, Robin’s approach to trans-ethnic interaction is the opposite of what we should be doing. What she seems not to grasp is that the things that truly matter are those things that transcend demographic categories. Being a good person is about embracing our nascent humanity, not about whiteness or blackness...or any other divisive demographic categorization scheme.

Yet there is no evidence that those who think like Robin are sincerely interested in forging genuine human connections; they are only interested in virtue signaling. So far as Robin is concerned, the solution to racial problems is POSTURING. Though, like all posturing, the posturer does not admit that all he’s doing is, well, posturing. Posturing often works because it is passed off as NOT JUST posturing, but as some sort of intrepidity. This is just theatrics; as one simply pretends to take a bold stand without actually having to stand up (and then publicly congratulating oneself for the gesture). It’s as if we could empower ethnic minorities by PATRONIZING them.

As we all know, it is easier to proclaim that one is against racism than to do the hard work to address the underpinnings of racial inequity. And it is much easier to pat oneself on the back when one isn’t busy doing anything that challenges incumbent power structures. Why go to the trouble of addressing government policy when all one needs to do is talk the talk? For in Robin’s world, lip service is all we

need; no dissidence required.

And so it goes: The “anti-whiteness” crusader makes things all about the decorum of non-p.o.c. rather than about the power structures that actually perpetuate racial injustices. As far as exponents of this approach are concerned, institutional dysfunction will eventually vanish if we all fixate enough on personal impressions.

And there’s an added perk. Pretending to care about racial injustice by “calling out” (read: shunning) purported transgressors is sure to earn one waves of validation on social media. The incentive, then, is to put on airs. The trick is to maintain one’s sanctimony while picking fights that will never actually move anything forward. But here’s the thing: Leveling accusations that are based on contrived grievances—that is: on illusory “problems”—is not only unhelpful, it is counterproductive. Not only does it divert attention away from the crux of the problem, it stirs resentments that weren’t there to begin with.

No person in the history of the world has ever achieved enlightenment by being scolded by an officious schoolmarm. Bigotry can’t be attributed to bad PR. Contrary to Robin’s prescriptions, civil rights aren’t about better optics; they’re about rectitude.

More to the point: We don’t generate awareness by being obsequious and petty. Want to eliminate racial inequities? Advocate for universal public healthcare and universal public education—nay, for equal access to ALL public goods—while working to reduce structural inequalities. That means ending any and all systems of oppression / exploitation / marginalization. None of this has anything to do with good manners. Power structures don’t care about how polite you are.

And what about the need to “call out” objectionable speech / conduct? Being reflexively—and gratuitously—antagonistic the moment any bystander happens to experience discomfort can only succeed in undermining endeavors to foster comity across racial boundaries. The world is festooned with micro-aggressions—both actual and chimerical. Maturity is about being able to handle such things without getting bent out of shape—which is simply to say: maturity is—among other things—about not being narcissistic.

Pandering plays no role in forging human bonds. (Helpful hint: If one finds that one has to pander to another person in order to maintain good relations, that person is not one’s friend.) In trying to be neighborly, the key is not to coddle every bystander; it’s to treat them as fellow humans. Civility is not based on nicety.

When we obsess over OPTICS, we miss what’s going on beneath the surface. And imposing obligations / restrictions on EVERYONE due to any given person’s subjective state is a recipe for histrionic anarchy. Making not offending anyone the prime directive is not the way to go. It is no secret that when one spends all one’s time and energy jumping through hoops, good will—which should be the ENTIRE POINT—eventually gets shunted aside.

It may behoove Robin to note: Trans-ethnic comity starts with being able to laugh WITH each other ABOUT each other. One need only look at any healthy inter-racial relationship—romantic or platonic—that has ever existed if one wishes to corroborate this indubitable fact. (One wonders if Robin has ever been acquainted with a well-adjusted inter-racial couple. She seems heedless of what makes human interaction work.) Comity, then, is a matter of celebrating—not weaponizing—our differences. At the end of the day, our shared humanity trumps everything else; and it doesn’t require us to go through the motions, as stipulated by this or that social choreographer.

Being tetchy is never the best way to forge human bonds. And approaching complicated interactions with

a chip on one's shoulder is unlikely to ever yield positive outcomes. What to improve the relationship between black and white Americans? Step one is to ignore virtually everything Robin DiAngelo has ever said on the matter.

Is this hyperbole? No. The notion that racial biases can be ameliorated via a regimen of ad hoc PROPRIETY is bonkers. Propriety is not probity. Good manners do not make one a good person; they only make one APPEAR TO BE a good person. Indeed, rectitude has nothing to do with keeping up appearances; as principles only truly matter when no one else is looking.

Yet the way Robin would have it, non-racism is ALL ABOUT keeping up appearances. For her, morality is primarily performative in nature. According to her worldview: Discomfiture—in anyone for any reason—is the primary way to gauge culpability in societal dysfunction. But a dearth of congeniality is no metric for racism. (Put another way: The problem with racism isn't poor manners. Plenty of racists RADIATE charm, and never once wind up in trouble.)

It's as if structural inequality could be eradicated by weaponizing etiquette. In effect, Robin and her ilk think activism is about PIETY. As far as they're concerned, those who are most pious help the world the most—a worldview shared by religious fundamentalists of all stripes. Indeed, Robin's exhortations to self-indict are indicative of the shaming mechanism indicative of the Roman Catholic Church during its most draconian epoch, whereby purifying the world was primarily about calling out blasphemy (whenever and wherever one thinks one might have seen it).

And so it goes: Robin's prescription is to rectify racial injustices by being simultaneously CRAVEN and CHURLISH. (The two often go hand in hand.) She seems not to realize that the basis of mindfulness is neither servility nor irritability; rather, it is level-headedness and integrity. The suggestion that mandating a raft of semiotic adjustments is the best way to attenuate structural inequalities is preposterous.

The problem with racism isn't flawed etiquette; it is hubris. The problem with political correctness is, not coincidentally, also hubris. Robin's boondoggle is successful, in part, because she is adept at passing off her hubris as humility. Her adoring fans misconstrue her mendacity as beneficence. So they assume she MUST be on to something.

For those duped into playing along with Robin's game, paying lip service to a cause is seen as fighting the good fight. The trick is to feign concern for socio-economic injustice even as one does nothing about it. White people are urged to recognize their inborn privilege as white people—as if one could make structural inequalities vanish by slapping oneself on the wrist.

Normal interaction between fellow human beings does not require self-deprecation; it simply involves common courtesy...which is, after all, just a matter of common sense. Not being a douchebag is hardly rocket science.

The problems we must focus on are the (formidable) STRUCTURAL ones, none of which cannot be traced to the speech / conduct of any particular person. This requires change on a grand scale, which means passing certain kinds of legislation...which, in turn, means supporting certain kinds of political figures (i.e. genuine Progressives).

Talk is cheap. And hollow gestures are—at best—acts of self-ingratiation. This does nothing to address power asymmetries—in terms of privilege or anything else. Those who are disadvantaged are not helped by being patronized.

Cosmopolitanism rejects tribalistic thinking rather than encouraging it. It ALLAYS social anxieties rather

than stoking them. What those engaged in “identity politics” don’t seem to understand is that generating awareness requires neither tribalism nor shame. Recriminations do nothing to advance civil rights.

Robin’s superciliousness is not a sign of sapience; it is the sign of a grift. Racism is not something that can be curbed by a litany of semantic tweaks, let alone by a prescribed routine of unctuous glad-handing. While they may be ingratiating, token gestures are typically hollow gestures; and do nothing to address the root of societal dysfunction. Civil society is realized by everyone recognizing that we’re all in this together; that we ALL suffer when we allow ANYONE to be oppressed / exploited / marginalized.

Robin thinks she’s doing society a favor by exhorting all white people to be assiduously unctuous in every quotidian interaction with p.o.c. The irony is that she ENGAGES IN prejudice in a gambit to ATTENUATE prejudice. Put another way: She deigns to expose certain biases by amplifying other biases.

Good things rarely happen when we focus more on our differences than on what we have in common. While it is important to celebrate diversity, it is also important to begin from a recognition of our shared humanity. For without that recognition, everything else—no matter how well-intentions—is built on vapor.

Hopefully, those supporting the likes of Robin DiAngelo will soon learn: We do not foster global human solidarity by being tendentious. Captious-ness and obsequious-ness are not virtues. And caricaturing entire demographic groups does nothing to advance the cause of either racial equality or socio-economic justice.

Finding solutions that work for humans requires understanding how humans work. Robin fails abysmally on this score. Instead of reverse-engineering a problem to figure out how it came to be in the first place (and thereby how best to solve it), Robin engineers an entirely new problem on top of the old problem. In urging hasty, unfounded generalizations about vast swaths of people based solely on their race, prejudice is MANDATED rather than mitigated. It’s as if she believes tetchy-ness might serve as a surrogate for compassion.

Robin proceeds as if prejudices leveled in opposite directions somehow cancelled each other out. In reality, alterity is not zero-sum. Counter-bigotry compounds rather than ameliorates the original bigotry. When Henry Rogers (a.k.a. “Ibram X. Kendi”) tells us that the only remedy for past discrimination is present discrimination, and the only remedy for present discrimination is future discrimination, we know that we’ve gone through the Looking Glass. Don’t concur with his (absurd) prognosis? Well, then, you’re not sufficiently “anti-racist”. (!)

Far from forging solidarity, Robin’s approach is certain to alienate the very people to whom civil rights activists most need to get through. Regarding those whom it is difficult “to get through to” yet who are open to persuasion, inroads are entirely shut off. For instead of paving the way to conciliation, she sets up a reticulation of incendiary trip-wires along the way.

And so it goes: Robin prescribes a regime of endless recrimination—as if we could somehow SCOLD our way out of society’s variegated inequities. The grift is strikingly straight forward: The more suspicious and resentful people are, the more attention Robin gets; and the higher the balance of her bank account goes.

When she isn’t busy clutching her pearls, Robin may want to check out W.E.B. Du Bois’ “The Souls Of Black Folk” or the essays of James Baldwin...or perhaps even opt to live in a working class black neighborhood for a few years. She’ll quickly learn that one does a marginalized group no favors by patronizing them.

Epilogue 3

It is incontrovertible that there are structural inequalities that exist along racial lines in the United States. (They exist for reasons that are obvious to anyone who's paying attention.) Given that all p.o.c. must be accorded the full compliment of civil rights, how are we to rectify this regrettable exigency?

Like anyone else, p.o.c. range from idiots to savants; and everything in between. And, as with all other homo sapiens, they run the gamut from the morally dubious to the morally upstanding; and everything in between. So the point is not to heed any p.o.c. whatever he / she happens to say. Rather, it is to heed the words of those who demonstrate both erudition and rectitude. This requires us to exercise sound judgement when considering any given point of view.

One person does another person no favors by lowering their standards in a gambit to ingratiate themselves. Coddling is not a sign of respect...any more than is patting someone on the head and saying "Good boy/girl!" Lip service accomplishes next to nothing; and often does more harm than good.

Robin DiAngelo seems not to understand any of this. She doesn't recognize that one does not build multi-ethnic coalitions by pandering. Alas. Between every cloying asseveration, Robin puts whiteness at the center of the universe, and fashions THAT as a viable way to attenuate the white privilege she sees around every corner.

Robin presents us with this game; and then maligns anyone who fails to play along. Just as absurd, she is under the impression that scolding is somehow a means of edification. Little does she realize: We cannot tsk-tsk-tsk our way to enlightenment. One cannot at the same time reach out to people and pillory them for chimerical crimes.

Let's be clear: There is almost nothing more cringe-inducing than white Americans of high socio-economic status (which the majority of them did not earn) with a sense of entitlement. It's obnoxious. It's perfidious. It's grating. But here's the thing: The problem with structural inequality is not a scourge of IMPROPRIETY. And one does not address such societal dysfunction by indiscriminately leveling accusations at every white bystander. (As if to add to the perfidy, the message is: "If you disagree, you're proving my point. Your defensiveness is evidence of your guilt!")

Robin's double standards are risible: All white people must stop being "sensitive"...while all p.o.c. are encouraged to be as hyper-sensitive as possible. This is Ms. DiAngelo's recipe for inter-racial comity. According to this theory: Systemic racism would dissipate if only white people would stop being so darned psychically "fragile". Paradoxically, Robin propounds this observation...even as she urges white people to be "vulnerable".

The ramifications of this are made quite clear: Any white person should be indicted for racial biases the moment he / she exhibits any sign of "fragility" when the topic of UNIVERSAL white fragility is broached. As a matter of course, Robin exhorts all white people to engage in "call out" / "call in" culture...as if one could somehow shame people into good will. (Memo to Robin: Shame is an engine for compassion in roughly the same way that anxiety is an engine for serenity.)

It should go without saying: Seeing every human being first and foremost in terms of racial category is NEVER a good idea.

But this is how Robin insists we perceive the world. This has a slew of daffy repercussions. As far as Robin is concerned, the movie, "The Blind Side" is...RACIST. What? Well, you see, the story reinforces black stereotypes and is therefore (covertly) "anti-black". Never mind that the film is based on ACTUAL EVENTS; and was produced by an African American: Broderick Johnson. Robin's take-away from this

inspiring film is that that the only value Michael Oher (an aspiring football player) had was his ability to generate money for the NFL...and entertain white people. Never mind that it is ROBIN who is cashing in on racial stereotypes. And never mind that Leigh Anne Tuohy ADOPTED Michael, and soon came to care about him—nay, came to LOVE him: seeing him, above all else, as a member of her family.

The ironies here are mind-numbing. Only through the grotesquely contorted racist lens that Robin employs could anyone possibly be so captious when hearing such a heart-warming story.

If Robin wants an example of what racial comity looks like, she might consider looking to Leigh Anne Tuohy. As things currently stand, Robin isn't half the human that Anne is. All Robin has left to do, then, is project her own white savior complex onto everyone else who ACTUALLY IS making a difference; and scoff at them for it.

So what's really going on here? It's hard to say for sure. Robin's overtures are—if nothing else—a sop to the “woke” commentariat, who plaudits she covets (for her own ego as well as for her own wallet). Her preachments—boorish, petty, shallow, and spurious—may seem sagacious to the naive; and extolled by the self-appointed constables of political correctness; but they are dismaying to those of us who have actually spent significant amounts of time living amongst p.o.c.; and genuinely care about them.

But this isn't about expanding one's sphere of empathy (to the person next door, let alone to encompass all mankind). Human solidarity is inimical to Robin's perfidious approach to race relations. She exhorts us to be aware; but for her, awareness is artifice—some oleaginous thing. This isn't just a matter of being intermittently skittish; it's about being chronically churlish. It's amity via acrimony. Harmony via discord. And so we have Robin's audience standing aghast when a caucasian happens not to laugh at a p.o.c.'s joke. For, you see, racial bias is the only feasible explanation for such an infelicitous event. That cursed caucasian—heedless of the discomfiture he has wrought by his humorlessness—must be rebuked: scolded for is insolence. This is how Robin brings people together.

And so it goes: Shaming bystanders for frivolous transgressions is the name of the game. But we must wonder: Is this the best way to unleash the better angels of our nature? To tap into our shared humanity? To forge human bonds across ethnic divides?

Apparently. For Robin, the best defense is a robust offense. So being irritable isn't enough; one must be captious. Sowing resentment will make systemic racism go away.

The problems with Robin's approach should seem obvious to anyone with a modicum of common decency. Etiquette does nothing to help one see the humanity in another; it merely behooves one to POSTURE. After all, political correct-ness is entirely performative. It's about putting on airs; keeping up appearances; telegraphing to bystanders that one is “with the program”. This is moral dereliction masquerading as “woke”. For propriety isn't probity. Virtue signaling, it turns out, requires no ACTUAL virtue.

In the end, this boneheaded “anti-racism” crusade is far more about Robin than it is about anyone else. She essentially proclaims: “I'm racist, therefore ALL white people must be racist; even if covertly.” She blithely avers that anti-p.o.c. bias INHERES in every caucasian soul; because, as far as she can see, THAT is the best way to mitigate racism.

Robin treats every human interaction as theater, as if socio-economic justice were somehow rooted in the way that people comport themselves. So, according to her, the primary vehicle for racial bias is faulty DECORUM. It makes sense, then, that the pageant virtue signaling in which she urges non-p.o.c. to participate is little more than bouts of performative indignation. It's activism as theatrics. Such pageantry

is integral to carrying out Robin's program of DE-whitening.

It is no secret that some of the most pedestrian social norms—those that have been normalized over the generations—are based in such things as misogyny, homophobia, and racism. It does not follow that everyone who blithely participates in those social norms are themselves guilty of those iniquities. To see toxicity in every anodyne gesture does nothing to ameliorate the severe socio-economic injustices that (undeniably) exist. It's very difficult to take bold stands—or do anything to make a difference—while walking on eggshells.

For p.o.c. and non-p.o.c. alike, Robin encourages hyper-sensitivity to even the most frivolous of transgressions, as if dyspepsia were a gateway to empathy. Little does she realize: Shaming people for being born a certain way is NEVER justified. And aggravation rarely leads to harmony.

Robin uses racist vernacular as a matter of course—peppering her asseverations with phrases like “white dynamic” and “white experience” and “white voice” and “white frame of reference” and “white worldview”. It's as if addressing white privilege (which tragically exists with far too many non-p.o.c.) can best be accomplished by employing gross generalizations. (She even posits a “white collective”, as if the world's Anglo-Saxons were like the Borg.) So far as Robin is concerned, the only identity that really matters is GROUP identity, a surefire recipe for the perpetuation of tribalistic thinking.

Robin indicts all non-p.o.c. for reciting from the same ol' script. Her solution to this is to assign everyone a NEW script to recite. Recourse to an innate moral intuition? Universal moral principles? Human solidarity? Bah humbug. EVERYTHING stems from socialization. What's all this based on? Well, you see, Robin claims to have observed a “reflex” in all white people (in the entire world, I guess?) that incriminates them; rendering them IPSO FACTO culpable in all anti-p.o.c. racism. What are we to make of this bold assertion?

Robin seems to think that being divisive is a way of being constructive. Making gross generalizations about ANY group of people—especially according to racial category—is objectionable. It takes a kind of hallucinatory gall to glibly do so about “black” people AND “white” people...while pretending that one is doing something to vitiate racist thinking. Quite the contrary: Robin's hyper-racist pontification only serves to keep race-based alterity IN TACT. As (African American) linguistics professor, John McWhorter (Columbia University) put it in a piece he did for The Atlantic in July 2020, Robin has taught non-p.o.c. “how to be racist in a whole new way.”

It is no secret that institutionalized prejudice is a telltale sign that inequity is afoot. What's incredible is that Robin's (purportedly) anti-racist program is ENTIRELY COMPRISED of prejudices. According to her logic, one expands the sphere of empathy by being tendentious (as if being petty was the best way to foster good will). We're asked to believe that JUST the right combination of posturing and histrionics will somehow, someday, magically generate awareness about structural inequalities along racial lines...rather than, well, just annoying the majority of bystanders. Rather than generate awareness, Robin ends up distracting people from much-needed focus on REAL solutions to the problems she pretends to care about.

This is worse than hawking snake-oil that does nothing; it's hawking an irritability-booster to alleviate racial biases. Want to engender trans-racial fellowship? BE MORE CHURLISH. Want to eradicate racial divisions? BE MORE CAPTIOUS. This is the perfidy of Robin's zugzwang.

From whence did this inordinate fixation on race come? It is certainly not warranted by the recognition that racism—nay, SYSTEMIC racism—has been a key factor in socio-economic injustices that disproportionately impact p.o.c. Common sense makes that incontrovertible. Rather, it seems to have

something to do with (what has come to be known as) “critical race theory”.

CRT began as an offshoot of Critical Theory (that is: it was Critical Theory with special focus on racial issues). The theory—developed, in part, by Derrick Bell during the 1980’s—was relatively straightforward: American culture was fraught with so much anti-p.o.c. racism because racism had become institutionalized: effectively baked into social norms. In other words: racial inequalities were largely the result of STRUCTURAL inequalities. Hence, many of the ad hoc measures being taken to promote civil rights failed to alter the underlying machinery that accounts for the socio-economic injustices that disproportionately impact p.o.c. This was simply an attempt to elucidate the structural inequalities that existed along racial lines. After all, critical theory was about how power structures impact how we perceive the world; and thus how we behave.

But then things started to go awry. A conceptual transmogrification began with Kimberlé Crenshaw in the early 1990’s, when she pioneered the theory of “intersectionality”. The new creed was given further gloss of academic credence by Gloria Ladson-Billings when she published her jargon-laden “Toward A Critical Race Theory Of Education” in 1995. In that tract, she submitted that the point of (the newly coined) CRT was to make race the primary—nay, exclusive—construct for understanding ALL inequality. This dubious paradigm was promulgated by Charles Mills, who took the explicitly class-based concerns of Marx and—in a flourish of donnish legerdemain—rendered those concerns a matter of racial confrontation (as which point, Marx surely rolled in his grave). Notable was Mills’ “The Racial Contract” (1997), in which he attempted to show that ostensibly impartial ethical systems—even that of Kant—were covertly racist.

The Categorical Imperative is racist? This was, to put it mildly, bonkers.

And so it went: The Frankfurt School’s noble enterprise (regarding power structures vis a vis the subjugation of the rank and file) was contorted by (oft-unscrupulous) academics, yielding an underhanded campaign to gaslight all non-p.o.c...thus alienating many of the non-p.o.c. who MOST NEEDED to learn about the socio-economic injustices that disproportionately impacted p.o.c.

The repercussions of this were detrimental to the public discourse, as it served to actually HELP those who were most responsible for perpetuating structural inequalities. Class consciousness (that is: a recognition of socio-economic stratification; and how the system was rigged) was transplanted with an obsession with racial animus. This shift in focus was just as America’s plutocrats wanted, as it served as an elaborate distraction. Due to this approach to “social justice”, perfidious pseudo-activists are now at liberty to support corporatism while pretending to be “woke”. Drenched in sanctimony, they glibly abide incumbent SOCIO-ECONOMIC power structures while patting themselves on the back for being marvelously “anti-racist”. Many of them have never forged a genuine human connection with a p.o.c. in their lives; but their cloying theatrics earn them plaudits from like-minded ideologues. So they get a free pass. Corporate power benefits; and the oligarchs laugh all the way to the bank.

Since Derrick Bell’s death in 2011, CRT has undergone an even more odd mutation; and is now a vulgar distortion of Critical Theory. (I discuss Critical Theory further in Epilogue 6; as it is important to understand its original incarnation if one is to fully appreciate how much of a distortion of it CRT really is.) The latest iteration of CRT is a marked departure the spirit of the civil rights movement embodied by Martin Luther King Jr. The contention NOW is that anti-black racism is ENDEMIC TO American culture—and thus PERMEATES American culture to its very core; and is thus inextricable from the very existence of the United States. Consequently, even all the civil rights activism in the world will never succeed in remedying the problem. This derangement is so severe that proponents could look at a jar of mayonnaise and see White Supremacy. Hidden agendas are thought to be everywhere—behind every innocuous gesture, behind every offhand remark.

Thus we are admonished to suspect some sinister scheme lurking beneath the quotidian activities of our daily lives. When one is determined to see subliminal signs of X everywhere, then one will soon discover that one will, indeed, see subliminal signs of X everywhere. Orange-tinted glasses, whether optical or ideological, will guarantee that everything appears to be orange. Accusations of “racism” are deployed with abandon, and the term becomes vitiated to the point of nullity.

And so it goes: Any hiccup in a bystander’s psychical equilibrium is catastrophized. Even a fleeting moment of discomfiture is treated as a micro-cataclysm; its purported cause a micro-aggression. (We encounter a similar phenomenon when, say, an unwelcome glance is characterized as a form of “sexual assault”, and is put on par with rape.) Participants in this zany charade make a vocation out of being offended; then proceed with their next witch-burning campaign. Scarlet letters are assigned with promiscuity, and shame becomes a social currency: a system of debits and credits (depending upon who is doing the shaming and who is being shamed). By participating in her recommended program, people can’t help but enter into any interaction with a chip on their shoulder, thereby exacerbating the very divisions from which the inequities arose in the first place.

We wind up with a cottage industry of offense-taking, which—as Robin DiAngelo reminds us—can be extremely lucrative. The result of all this is a round-robin of endless recriminations; and—all the while—nothing is done about structural inequalities, least of all those that exist along racial lines. Socio-economic inequalities persist...even as everyone is adjured to never offend each other.

To be clear, the zany form of CRT is anti-Marxian; as it proceeds from a race-obsessed identity politics—something that is completely inimical to Marxian ideals. Marx’s primary concern was socio-economic stratification. Indeed, the spirit behind a socialist commune is that IT DOESN’T MATTER who one is (ethnographically); as we are all part of the same human family. (In other words, we’re all in this together.) Marx, more than anyone else, realized that power structures exist regardless of who happens to be offended by what.

So WHAT OF that nebulous, inborn affliction called “whiteness”? And what, exactly, would it mean to be “less white”? Dancing better? Using poor grammar? Any answer invariably devolves into racist tropes (against non-p.o.c. in some cases, against p.o.c. in the others). Robin takes certain dysfunctions found amongst non-p.o.c., and posits them as racial markers. It’s as if white people who are conceited and self-absorbed were simply being too “white”.

So non-p.o.c. are exhorted to exorcise their “whiteness”, purging themselves of demons they were—one and all—given from childhood. And—here’s the key—they were inculcated with these demons via the only power in the universe: socialization. We are thus presented with a modern-day version of the exorcism; just replace medieval priests with propounders of critical race theory. This seems to make sense once we assume that everything under the sun is just a social construct.

Countenancing such pabulum requires one to suppose that hubris inheres in all white people and/or that deficiencies inhere in all black people. For example, some say that being “less white” in America means not articulating oneself adeptly in Standard American English—as if being well-spoken (using proper elocution / diction, having impeccable grammar, or availing oneself of scholarly exposition) were things of which only WHITE people were capable. Hence being “less white” entails that a person—black OR white—be sloppy with pronunciation, or allow oneself to slip into shoddy grammar, or deliberately refrain from employing advanced vocabulary.

This is not only fatuous; it is mendacious. It is a semiotic swindle that both fetishizes whiteness while

derogating blackness...in the name of attenuating whiteness. Using such traits as signifiers for RACE perpetuates the very stereotypes that we're supposed to be overcoming.

Socio-economic injustices that disproportionately impact p.o.c. are ameliorated not by expunging the bogeyman of "white fragility" from the universe; they are ameliorated by re-configuring institutions. Doing so entails structural change (that is: change on an institutional, not a personal, level); something that is primarily done via concrete public policy initiatives (e.g. effecting universal public healthcare). No seminars required.

Taking appropriate measures (like, say, ensuring universal access to high-quality public education and ending iniquitous incarceration protocols) does not require treating p.o.c. like simpletons who are in need of 24/7 cozening. One does not empower someone by incessantly pandering to them. Anyone who is serious about significant change will be focusing on, say, curbing the stratospheric budget of the (obscenely bloated) military-industrial complex, and re-allocating those funds to real solutions. Reciting pieties 'til the cows come home will do nothing to fix institutional racism.

Those who are not genuinely concerned with virtue, or solving problems, or even having a serious discussion, are inclined to jump at the chance to be validated by like-minded peers...while glibly patting themselves on the back for being "woke". (The enticing thing about virtue-signaling is that it affords one the opportunity to congratulate oneself for being chastened.) The rest of us are left to clean up the mess they leave behind.

In the meantime, Robin and her ilk will continue raking in money as they convened more over-priced workshops, each of which is a weird cross between an AA meeting, an Orwellian "Two Minutes Hate", and a Maoist struggle session. During these daffy play-acting confabs, those who are eager to show the world how "anti-racist" they are are afforded a golden chance to peacock. During that time, no genuine human connection is forged; but everyone is reminded of one of two things: how ashamed of themselves they should be (if a non-p.o.c.) or how resentful of others they should be (if a p.o.c.)

Question for Robin: Is it possible to be a good person and white? Robin seems to grapple with this question in the most ham-fisted of ways; and, in the end, only ends up being condescending to those she claims to uplift. (But no one is expected to notice, you see, because everyone's enjoined to keep up appearances.)

We might also recall the fundamental epistemological problems with Robin's moralizing. She seems to not apprehend the ideal of objectivity; for which she erects more straw men to set ablaze. As she sees things, the problem with objectivity is that nobody can ever achieve it to perfection, as all humans have biases. No shit. Somebody should inform Robin that objectivity is something we STRIVE for, knowing—all the while—that our approach is inevitably asymptotic. (Memo to Robin: Just because we cannot meet a standard PERFECTLY does not mean we shouldn't shoot for it.) So, according to Robin, due to the fact that nobody could ever possibly be completely impartial, the solution is to simply BE MORE partial. Presto! Racism is defeated with some dour hand-wringing.

In addition to committing the elementary mistake of confusing causation with correlation (discussed earlier), Robin proceeds to confuse objectivity (an admirable epistemic ideal) with neutrality (a rhetorical cop-out). Does $2+2 = 4$ or 6 ? Let's just say 5 and call it a day. This is a reminder that dissimulation is often passed off as diplomacy. But that's okay. For Robin, this isn't about seeking Truth (there's no objectivity, remember); it's about putting on airs.

So what's the connection between Robin's peculiar fetishization of group identity and her contempt for

objectivity? She explains herself thus: “Tackling group identity also challenges our belief in objectivity.” How so? “If group membership is relevant [which, per Robin, it MUST be], then we don’t see the world from the universal human perspective.” So much for cosmopolitanism and universal principles and all that. The only alternative, then, is seeing the world (and fellow human beings) “from the perspective of a particular kind of human.” So far as Robin is concerned, we have no choice but to see the world through a tribal lens.

She then insinuates that having a racial viewpoint ISN’T to be biased; it’s just being realistic. So non-bias is derided while certain biases are seen as estimable. And there we have it: In addition to setting a Kafka trap for every non-p.o.c. on the planet, Robin makes everyone characters in her own Kafka-esque farce. It’s enough to give one semiotic vertigo.

Some grifters peddle serums. Others peddle crystals. Robin peddles a numinous “anti-whiteness” as the cure-all for an affliction that she sees around every corner. (To reiterate: It’s not that SOME white people have a sense of entitlement; it’s that TO BE white is to have a sense of entitlement.)

In the title of her book, Robin asks (rhetorically) why it’s so hard for white people to talk about racism. The question answers itself: It ACTUALLY IS hard to talk about racism. Yet talking about racism come all-too-easy for Robin; and THAT should be cause for suspicion. It’s NOT SUPPOSED TO BE easy to talk about such things. They are complicated, difficult topics. And comporting ourselves differently does nothing to address the underlying societal dysfunctions that abet socio-economic injustices. Power structures don’t care about poor manners. In fact, they often subsist under the pretext of congeniality.

As she continues to posture, Robin indiscriminately casts aspersions at anyone who has the gall to breach the protocols that she has proclaimed sacrosanct; thus gas-lighting anyone who is caucasian...while pitying p.o.c. at the same time. Consequently, she manages to engage in perfidy from two different angels, simultaneously. By weaponizing etiquette, she guarantees that we will miss the forest for each leaf on each tree.

Instead of wagging her finger at everyone else, Robin may want to start educating herself. Want a non-divisive approach to mitigating systemic racism? Look to Heather McGhee’s new book, “The Sum Of Us”. McGhee doesn’t talk about white people having to expunge their ineffable “whiteness” in order to combat structural inequalities across racial lines. Rather, she focuses on solidarity: coming together and forging bonds based on our shared humanity. That is the approach we to which we should all aspire. Because THAT is what ultimately matters.

Epilogue 4

As we’ve seen, Robin’s speciality is inserting wedges into extant social fissures. She urges us to draw florescent fault lines where none exist. The idea is that we may then point to them and sound the alarm. It’s as if one could somehow expose all that undergirds structural inequalities (specifically, those that exist along racial lines) by sowing suspicion.

This approach is based on a heuristic of verging neurosis, whereby everything is seen through a racial lens. This leads one to conclude that all socio-economic injustice is due to racism. * It’s not.

Not all structural inequality is along racial lines; yet we’re asked to pretend that it only exists due to racial inequality. Per the DiAngelo approach, critical race theory (that is: critical theory with a focus on race) mandates that we see racism everywhere. Thus every instance of (perceived) unfairness vis a vis a p.o.c. is

IPSO FACTO due to racism. Consequently, one is forced to pretend that no other reasons exist for unfair treatment whenever a p.o.c. happen to be involved. This is absurd. ** Making race the primary—let alone, the sole—explanatory category for socio-economic injustice is not just erroneous; it risks worsening the very problems one purports to be solving.

An ideology of ascribed differences should not trump a recognition of (actual) commonalities—most fundamentally: our shared humanity. (See my essay on the Universality Of Morality.) Of course, race is a significant aspect of socio-economic stratification in societies where there are power asymmetries rooted in disparities along racial lines; and marginalization occurs along racial lines in different contexts. But this is not EVERY aspect of socio-economic stratification. There are important reasons that there are many NON-p.o.c. with lower social status and/or of a lower (economic) class. To obfuscate this, as Robin and her acolytes routinely do, only serves to inhibit endeavors to address the gamut of socio-economic injustices (spec. issues of class).

Pretending that EVERYTHING can be boiled down to racial identity, and that race-based politics is THE ONLY way to effect socio-economic justice, ends up sabotaging Progressive causes (i.e. causes that seek to remedy socio-economic injustices through structural change). Consequently, the “it’s all about race” tac is worse than unproductive; it is counter-productive.

Robin may want to remind herself of how (actual) racism works. For racists, white-ness or black-ness or any other X-ness (where X is a perceived racial category) is caricatured according to a set of racial stereotypes—whether X can be either endogenous (in which case it is exalted) or exogenous (in which case it is derogated). As a matter of course, any given X is (eventually) rendered a kind of INSTITUTION—replete with a (oft manufactured) legacy and an (oft fantastical) destiny. This is a problem. Identity politics is NEVER a good thing; and invariably leads to in-group / out-group thinking: the source of the very societal dysfunction we are trying to address.

In mapping racial inequities from the macro (institutional) level to the micro (personal) level, Robin urges us to frame every interaction as (potentially) adversarial; and so to treat any inter-racial encounter as a contentious encounter. Thus everything—from the grandest structures to the most quotidian exchanges—is about power asymmetry; and every power asymmetry is based on race. This goes for things like red-lining or incarceration rates (which are institutional); but it also goes for inter-personal relations. So every interaction is a PREDICAMENT; and is consequently about negotiating what—invariably—is a racially-charged CONFRONTATION.

By ascribing the worst possible motives to every off-hand remark, every gesture, we are all enjoined to be churlish rather than to engender amity.

Another problem arises from the DiAngelo approach: Socio-economic elites who want to masquerade as enlightened are eager to embrace Robin’s specious creed for reasons that are more perfidious than estimable. It furnishes them with an opportunity to telegraph to the world that they are “woke” ...without having to actually do anything to change the defective power structures with which they are ostensibly concerned. In reality, casting everything exclusively in terms of race is a diversion from ALL THE OTHER REASONS structural inequalities exist—including structural inequalities that exist along racial lines. So a company need only hold a “diversity training” seminar, and the corporate executives can congratulate themselves for a job well done. (They may not support universal healthcare or agree with getting money out of politics. But, hey! At least nobody will be offended by an uncouth remark. Mission accomplished.) By simply hiring some “advisor” to conduct a workshop on “racial sensitivity”, they wash their hands of any culpability in the abiding socio-economic injustices.

Such theatrics effectively serve a prophylactic against GENUINELY Progressive measures (regarding structural change)—measures that would fundamentally alter the incumbent power structures. Virtue signaling elides the fact that a sanitized vernacular, a milquetoast sense of humor, and carefully vetted phraseology do absolutely nothing to address the root causes of socio-economic injustice, which—rest assured—is not caused by a dearth of propriety. The notion that structural inequalities exist because of POOR ETIQUETTE is preposterous. And the suggestion that racial injustices can be eradicated by WEAPONIZING etiquette is downright insane.

But the question remains: Why has this grift been as commercially successful as it has? Surely, there aren't THAT many unctuous popinjays anxious to telegraph their "anti-racist" bona fides to the world.

Robin's schtick holds significant appeal for non-p.o.c. who are hankering to signal their ersatz "virtue" to the world...without having to actually do anything virtuous. But it also holds appeal to p.o.c. who have been hamstrung by WASPs who exhibit an obnoxious sense of entitlement and are utterly heedless of the structural inequalities from which they routinely benefit. Indeed, p.o.c. who have encountered this time and time again are—understandably—fed up. So Robin's pabulum comes off as a breath of fresh air. Those who are aggrieved can readily map her indictments onto their own experiences, and declare: "Ah! Well, at least SHE gets it."

But she really doesn't. Her concern is limited to episodes in which offense was taken (due to, say, a lack of tact on the part of the alleged culprit). Such infelicitous interludes do not necessarily indicate personal—let alone systemic—racism. Nevertheless, Robin encourages p.o.c. to posit subconscious biases; then to map such transgressions (often isolated incidents) onto ALL interactions with non-p.o.c., and see every quotidian encounter through the lens of racial confrontation. Each encounter, then, is not an opportunity for human connection; it is a queue to find chimerical subtext that reveals "white privilege": the mentality that enables the continuation of socio-economic injustices along racial lines.

So how does this boondoggle work? The claim is that ALL white people—simply by dint of being white—are complicit in the on-going structural inequalities that disadvantage many p.o.c. (never mind the structural inequalities that disadvantage NON-p.o.c.) And—as if that brazen proposition weren't risible enough—the directive is for all of us to judge others by the color of their skin. (So much for the entreaties of Martin Luther King Jr.)

Robin makes the presupposition that all people of a given race have a congenital pre-disposition that serves—often unwittingly—to perpetuate an institutional (as opposed to individual) racism. This complicity, she insists, INHERES IN the condition of white-ness. In other words: It is a cast of mind that is inseparable from one's racial identity. So the prognosis is as follows: White people can only solve problems of racial injustice by committing to a lifelong program of being less "white" (whatever that means).

What is this contention based upon?

Well, it starts out with some valid observations: Structural inequalities exist along racial lines (whereby some white people benefit simply by dint of their being white). This is, in part, due to enculturation—which is to say: biases that have been deeply ingrained in virtually everyone (non-p.o.c. and p.o.c. alike) over the generations. Some of those biases are reinforced by prevailing social norms (as well as by the underlying architecture of our institutions). Amongst white people, most of those biases pass without notice, as—from their perspective—such exigencies are unproblematic.

This “systemic racism” is often passive, tacit, and abides beneath the surface of things; yet it nevertheless perpetuates socio-economic injustices that disproportionately affect p.o.c. Consequently, white people enjoy comfort that is often not available to p.o.c. That being the case, it is easy for them to remain sanguine even as many p.o.c. are forced to contend with the ramifications of those biases. The problem, then, is that white people tend not to be as motivated to go out of their way to remedy inequitable conditions. Such insouciance is usually not out of any ill will; it is simply due to the fact that such societal dysfunction doesn’t adversely affect them. Because the biases are subconscious, no problem overtly presents itself—that is: from their (privileged) point of view. So they remain glibly aloof.

All of this is true.

But here’s where Robin’s “white fragility” narrative goes haywire: Because the status quo has racial biases (in favor of non-p.o.c.) built into it, white people are INHERENTLY RACIST. They are, after all, not inclined to go out of their way to dismantle the systems from which they benefit. This dereliction amounts to complicity (in the aforementioned “systemic racism”). Therefore all white people are inadvertently bigoted. The prognosis put forth by Robin: To be part of the solution, they are obliged to fess up to this INBORN depravity.

Robin’s approach is riddled with logical fallacies. It combines group homogeneity bias, defensive attribution bias, and—most of all—hostile attribution bias in order to seem plausible. Here, we find echoes of cultic thinking. When it comes to accusations of heresy, people’s real intentions are (seen as) entirely beside the point: They have sinned; and therefore must be tarred and feathered in the public square.

In sum: A regime (self-ingratiating) contrition—we are expected to believe—is the primary way to eradicate structural inequalities that exist along racial lines. Even more ridiculous, said contrition is compelled by SHAME; and comes only when everyone becomes chronically irritable.

And so it goes: Robin’s solution to racial injustice is for everyone to relentlessly fixate on race at all times; and, in doing so, to be—like her—as supercilious as possible. But does this help to solve the problem (structural inequality along racial lines) she purports to care about? No.

The assumption that the societal dysfunction in question (socio-economic injustices that disproportionately affect p.o.c.) is entirely—or even mostly—a function of inter-personal racism commits a logical fallacy: **affirming the consequent**. Here, one assumes an outcome that COULD be explained by a cause (X) MUST ALWAYS be explained by X, as if X was the only possible cause. Thus X (in this case, personal interactions that cause discomfiture) serves as an exhaustive explanation for the outcome. (In many cases, such discomfiture arises from the subtext that the complainant imagines dwells in even the most innocuous encounters.) Hence one is urged to catastrophize every trans-racial interaction. Such frivolous transgressions (known in the argot as “micro-aggressions”) are trivialities that are treated as miniature cataclysms on a person-by-person basis. **

The fact that socio-economic injustices that disproportionately affect p.o.c. might sometimes be caused IN PART by racism on the micro-level (which is granted) does not entail that focusing entirely on case-by-case offense-taking will solve the wider problem, which is often hardwired into the very architecture of major institutions. Indeed, the very definition of structural inequality is that it exists independently of personal intentions / attitudes / sentiments; and can abide even were everybody participating in those structures to be racism-free...and have impeccable manners. In other words: The underlying problem is at the institutional (meso-) level, not the individual (micro-) level. For the fact of the matter is: The problem is usually not personal; so mustn’t be taken as such. And no solution can be based on the subjective

experiences (personal impressions / sensibilities; or the psychological state) of any given party.

How, then, shall we proceed? For Robin, the idea is to reduce even the most quotidian interactions to some sort of contentious racial power competition (so as to counteract extant power disparities). Each interaction is treated as yet another iteration of one-ups-man-ship. This requires one to impute the worst possible motives to any given bystander at any given moment; thereby accruing the most “call outs”. The key is to imagine derisory innuendo even where none exists. The more proficiently one does this, the better one fares in this crucible of acrimony.

In this tournament, the most peevish person wins.

We end up with the following: The more captious one is, the more points one earns. Participants find themselves in a dialectical joust wherein every remark—no matter how anodyne—is seen as a salvo. To get this to work, Robin urges everyone to assume some sort of chimerical subtext in virtually any overture—supposing it to be derisive. This entails presuming ill-intent (i.e. implicit racism) in every encounter: every passing comment, every idiomatic expression, every turn of phrase, every off-the-cuff remark, every wry quip, every social queue, every casual gesture.

This sets up a contorted incentive structure that does ANYTHING BUT foster comity. Good-faith efforts to bring about trans-racial equity cease to exist. As might be expected, the most adept practitioners of this stage-craft are able to feign offense at virtually anything; and it is they who end up with the most plaudits for being “woke”. Those seeking validation are incentivized to play along, or risk castigation. We end up with a modern version of blasphemy laws.

Is this REALLY how we rid society of socio-economic injustices that disproportionately affect communities of color? While recognizing the salience of race in the DIAGNOSIS, obsessing over race GOING FORWARD—thereby pitting groups against each other in every conceivable scenario—only serves to drum up resentments. This not only fails to solve the macro problem (structural inequalities); it ends up exacerbating the dysfunctions that (we claim) we want to solve.

Any approach that demands that everyone be suspicious of each other is guaranteed to degenerate into a crucible of acrimony. Moreover, using shame as the primary tool by which people are brought into compliance is a recipe for an illiberal society. Scarlet letters are the mark of a puritanical, authoritarian regime.

Are many white people oblivious to the aforementioned biases, and the socio-economic injustices that persist to the present day? Tragically, yes. But being aloof is not the same as being a bigot. These two problems warrant two different solutions. Yet Robin pretends that institutional racism will vanish if only we could ameliorate instances of personal racism.

More to the point: One does not generate awareness by casting aspersions. If the aim IS to generate awareness, the key is to engender good will across racial lines, not to deploy a fusillade of scurrilous—and spurious—accusations based on racial affiliation.

The bottom line is, of course, to fight systemic racism. Robin and her ardent followers seem not to understand that this estimable cause (a cause they claim to care so much about) is predicated on coalition building, something that entails comity; which is simply to say that, when it comes to supporting certain policies (namely, those that abet socio-economic justice), the point is to get as many (otherwise heedless) non-p.o.c. on board as possible. Shunning all non-p.o.c. for every perceived impropriety is not a prudent way to do this.

Alas, Robin is convinced that if she wags her finger with sufficient vigor at enough people, then structural inequalities along racial lines will magically disappear. Therein lies the rub: Participants in this charade are not sincerely interested in solving problems; they are merely interested in telegraphing their “woke” bona fides. (Meanwhile, those of us who seek reality-based solutions are accused of perpetrating “solutionism”.)

It’s worth re-iterating: The thing about virtue signaling is that it requires no actual virtue. Robin and her ilk are doing virtually nothing to dismantle the structural inequalities they decry; but, hey, they all posted a BLM square on all their social media pages and recite the pieties-du-jour. What more could you want?

There is nothing laudable about being insufferably captious; yet, for p.c. aficionados, being insufferably captious is construed as the best way to broadcast one’s anti-racist credentials to the world...even though doing so accomplishes nothing. In fact, unctuous hand-wringing ends up doing far more harm than good.

Tragically, Robin’s sycophantic followers swallow her approach to “anti-racism” hook, line, and sinker; and so are under the impression that the more persnickety they are, the more they are helping the cause. It is rather peculiar feat: This self-styled race-whisperer has convinced millions that she has divined the secrets to racism; and that incessant pearl-clutching (coupled with pettiness) will somehow—eventually—eradicate socio-economic injustices (spec. those that disproportionately impact p.o.c.). Caviling is seen as a way to generate awareness; as if being chronically tetchy were a sign of enlightenment.

What explains the astounding efficacy with which Robin promulgates this artificially-flavored hogwash? Weaponizing etiquette does nothing to eradicate structural inequalities along racial lines. But it APPEARS to be a worthwhile measure for those who confuse propriety for probity. Generally speaking, those who are too obsequious to be principled are apt to conflate etiquette with ethics; believing the former can serve as a surrogate for the latter. By playing along, one expects to receive plaudits simply—as if one is taking a bold stand simply for sticking to the assigned script. (The parallels here with cult activity are obvious.)

As is the case with religionists, the designated catechism is associated with some kind of moral foundation. Hence to be out of step with the latest “woke” protocols—for even a moment—is tantamount to heresy. And being tone-deaf (with respect to racial sensitivities) even for a fleeting instant is, we are notified, the same as countenancing WHITE SUPREMACY—something that warrants banishment from the public square. The result of such harebrained hyperbole is to vitiate the vocabulary that is needed to accurately diagnose the problems at hand. (The same goes for those who, say, equate poor manners with ASSAULT.)

The fatuity of this thinking knows no bounds. When asked to define “racism” at the Aspen Ideas Festival (second only to Davos in sanctimonious preening by the socio-economic elite), Ibram Henry Rogers (a.k.a. “Ibram X. Kendi”) proclaimed that it refers to “a collection of racist policies that lead to racial inequity that are substantiated by racist ideas.” (We’ll leave it up to children in Middle School to point out why this ersatz definition is worse than useless.)

Predictably, Robin released a follow-up work to her blockbuster (“Nice Racism”), where she doubled down on her schtick. (It is no surprise that she decided to ride the wave, and continue to cash in while the market for her drivel is still hot.) There is, of course, SOME credence to the main thesis: that bigotry often operates behind a veneer of congeniality. (If one would have had lunch with Heinrich Himmler, one may have found that he had impeccable manners. Overall, the most dangerous people are the most charismatic.) As with her magnum opus, “White Fragility”, one finds there is a kernel of truth in much of

what she says. This is routine for charlatans: embed incontrovertible truths within the pablum; as doing so gives the rest of the material a patina of veracity.

Bizarrely, though, Robin ends up engaging in projection. In this encore publication, she decries “out-woxing”...even as she is, of course, the HIGH-PRIESTESS of “out-woxing”. Presumably, this was a gambit to pre-empt suggestions that she is doing precisely that. (It’s the good ol’ “I know you are but what am I?” defense.) Thus Robin levels the accusation so as to distract from the fact that she is the most egregious culprit.

All this from the woman who blithely averred that “white Progressives cause the most daily damage to people of color.” The statement is so patently false, one must read it two or three times to believe it was actually submitted. Certainly, this is not the case with GENUINE Progressives; but perhaps it is partly true of POTEMKIN Progressives like Robin, who have no qualms supporting corporate power even as they routinely broadcast their indignation for politically incorrect Tweets.

In Reality, genuine Progressives aren’t trying to out-woke ANYONE, as they recognize the entire charade is fatuous. They know that the only two alternatives are not white pride and white guilt—a false choice that Robin declaims. Moreover, telling non-racist, hard-working, poor, provincial WASPS that they need to “check their privilege” is not the best way to mobilize them behind Progressive causes. (It is a surefire way to get them to tell you to go fuck yourself.)

Robin’s consideration-via-alienation approach is doomed to failure. One does not forge solidarity with a certain group of people by shaming them.

Rather than reading the musings of a woman who has openly admitted she has not had many trans-racial relationships in her life (disqualification #1), one would be far better off reading, say, W.E.B. DuBois and James Baldwin—as I mentioned in the previous Postscript. One might also look to “Without Justice For All: The New Liberalism And Our Retreat From Racial Equality” and “Renewing Black Intellectual History: The Ideological And Material Foundations Of African American Thought” by Adolph Reed Jr. (professor emeritus at U. Penn). I would add to that list virtually anything written by Noam Chomsky. **

There’s no doubt that racial justice is an integral part of socio-economic justice. We should bear in mind that this is more than about civil rights; it’s about social responsibility. But the fight against racial injustice only works if it is a common cause, not a mandate to participate in a garish pageant of finger-wagging—where participants are assigned roles according to racial affiliation. In the end, we’re all in this fight together. In his acceptance speech at the Oscars in April of 2021, Tyler Perry urged everyone to “stand in the middle” (that is: amongst each other); and admonished the audience not to pass “blanket judgements” on those in any given ethnic group. We can only hope that Robin and her acolytes were listening.

* * *

{ One problem with the hokey new vernacular of p.c. is that it is—at best—inane (using “interrogate” instead of “investigate”; qualifying “experience” with “lived”; inserting a possessive pronoun before “truth”); and often misleading. An indication of this faulty thinking is the faddish use of “problematizing”, which effectively means trying to figure out a way to treat something—ANYTHING—as a problem (as opposed to identifying actual problems). Once “problematization” is rendered an avocation (whereby one gets accolades each time something is successfully “problematized”), people are incentivized to conjure problems rather than solve them. This is why “catastrophizing” is currently en vogue; whereby anything can be seen as a “micro-aggression”. Hence uncouth expression can even be seen as a form of assault / violence; and we’ve gone completely through the looking glass. But no matter. Using trendy lingo is one way to virtue signal. This is yet another illustration that virtue signaling requires*

no ACTUAL virtue. Such cloying verbiage is a reminder that p.c. is all about paying lip service, putting on airs, and—generally speaking—completely missing the point.}

*{** For those unfamiliar with Critical Theory, see the writings of the Frankfurt School thinkers—most notably: Adorno and Horkheimer. “One Dimensional Man” by Marcuse is a landmark work. It’s also worth reading anthologies like “The Cambridge Companion To Critical Theory”.}*

Epilogue 5

In the preceding analysis of Robin DiAngelo, I mentioned a tell-tale sign—nay, a bright, red flag—that someone is completely full of shit. They claim that anyone who disagrees with them, simply by disagreeing with them, proves their point. (A rhetorical boondoggle is known as the “Kafka trap”.) This is not a glitch in the “white fragility” theory she propounds; it is the primary feature. When it comes to accusations of “white fragility”, the Kafka trap is—quite literally—the THESIS.

And so it goes: Acolytes of Robin would take the present refutation of her prognosis as corroboration for her prognosis. Heads I win, tails you lose.

I also noted that Robin’s prescriptions serve as little more than an elaborate distraction from the crux of the problem with which she purports to be so earnestly concerned. An indication that someone has dubious motives is as follows: They are looking to divert attention from the actual culprits (in this case, corporatists who are perfectly happy to telegraph their ostensibly liberal credentials); redirecting animus TOWARD those who are sincerely trying to solve the problem.

In her latest book, “Nice Racism”, Robin does precisely this. She declares that—in the event they happen to be white—even the most well-intentioned Progressives are responsible for “the most daily harm” to p.o.c. While they cause harm in ways that are “less obvious”, their trespasses are actually “more insidious” than overt racists.

While it is true that racism is often hidden behind a veneer of congeniality (one might call it “bigotry with a smile”), Robin is taking this concern to extremes—sounding the alarms about the newest bogeyman: “nice racism”. In other words, she’s pointing out the obvious: unethical people are sometimes quite charismatic. This is where things become perversely ironic. According to Robin, those perpetrating “nice racism” are guilty engaging in virtue signaling. She levels this accusation even as she is the primary EXPONENT of virtue signaling. This is a perfidious response to the waves of criticism she has gotten since her crusade began. It involves what is known as “reaction formation”.

In this (rather blatant) act of projection, Robin blithely ascribes the very dysfunction she fails to recognize in herself to those who she is so eager to induct. By flipping the script in this way, Robin tries to exempt herself from the accusation that SHE HERSELF is engaging in precisely this kind of nonsense (i.e. putting propriety over probity). Robin’s “I know you are but what am I” tac is a transparent attempt at deflection.

There is irony upon irony here. For this is not just a matter of projection. Robin urges all white people to walk on egg-shells, then accuses them of being racist for, well, walking on egg-shells. So she scoffs at those who are guilty of what she dubs “nice racism”. Never mind that the prescription of her previous book was effectively “nice racism”. She mandated it; now she denounces it.

Let’s review Robin’s zugzwang.

First, the part we can all agree on. Racial injustice cannot be divorced from socio-economic injustice; as it

is a key factor in creating certain structural inequalities in the United States (as well as in other imperialist / colonialist powers of the modern age).

So far so good. But racism is far from THE ONLY factor contributing to socio-economic injustice. There are plenty of privileged p.o.c. who enjoy oodles of socio-economic status; and plenty of non-p.o.c. who suffer from grievous socio-economic injustice. So clearly, there are other important factors that must be taken into account...if, that is, we TRULY want to eradicate ALL structural inequality.

To make the point, let's use a metaphor. Say that p.o.c. were more likely to be the victims of a certain disease than non-p.o.c. (though it could technically afflict anyone). Would medical professionals be less apt to treat a non-p.o.c. who had the disease than they would a p.o.c.? Of course not. Yet according to Robin's logic, we are obliged to focus almost entirely one p.o.c.—whether or not they are in danger of being afflicted—simply by dint of the fact that they are, on the whole, more susceptible to ending up afflicted. This would be a contorted application of the Hippocratic Oath.

The parallels with socio-economic injustice should be clear: p.o.c. are more likely than non-p.o.c. to be adversely impacted. This disproportionality is due, in large part, to systemic / institutional racism. Therefore, Robin's thinking goes, we must take measures to help even p.o.c. of high socio-economic status. In doing so, we are forced to indict even non-p.o.c. of low socio-economic status.

And so we have a mandate that all white people apologize for BEING white. No kidding. Think this characterization is hyperbolic? It's not. Case in point was an NPR headline: "Tom Hanks Is A Non-Racist. It's Time For Him To Be Anti-Racist." Hanks had recently called for more widespread teaching of the Tulsa massacre. Not good enough; as his gesture failed to make up for the fact that he had the gall to build his stellar career playing "white men doing the right thing." Shame on him for portraying characters that coincided with his actual race; doing things that we are all urged to do in the fight against socio-economic injustices.

We've gone through the looking glass. There is an awkward dissonance between rhetorical commitments to equity (which we are enjoined see as entirely PERSONAL in nature) and the realities of socio-economic injustices (which are largely INSTITUTIONAL in nature).

Hence Robin elides what is fundamental: Structural inequalities exist for a variety of reasons—SOME of which are racial in nature. To fail to address ALL of those reasons is to be delinquent.

Yet the myopic approach—reducing EVERYTHING to race—is the mission Robin has assigned her fawning acolytes. There are perks for those who play along. The most sycophantic identitarians are showered with accolades for participating in this charade. So they are incentivized to be as unctuous and captious as possible. Participants earn cachet for following the assigned choreography, dutifully reciting whatever pieties are currently prescribed in the p.c. catechism.

We end up with what Matt Taibbi laments as a "moralizing, tendentious, humor-deprived, jargon-obsessed segment of American society." What Taibbi is referring to is a bevy of self-appointed constables—ornery schoolmarms who patrol the public square, adjudicating all private interactions. Their charge is simple: To vociferously enforce the latest protocols; and "call out" anyone who fails to toe the line. Such functionaries see their efforts to sanitize the agora as a noble act; and identity politics as the only path to racial comity.

Behold a cadre of sanctimonious magistrates who use virtue signaling as jet propulsion. These identitarians assiduously divvy the demos into demographic camps, each of which is jockeying for

prominence. They divide in order to unite; and then pat themselves on the back for a job well done.

Zealots of this creed mistake their histrionic posturing for serious activism; and see the weaponization of etiquette as the promotion of ethics. After all, they have been anointed (in their own minds) as the arbiters of acceptable conduct. They are impelled—and compelled—by empty gestures rather than substantive policy proposals; thus confusing propriety for probity. The more unctuous and captious they become, the more intrepid they fashion themselves to be.

Bystanders are encouraged to look for every feasible—and even infeasible—reason to be offended by anything at any moment, no matter how trivial. It's as if one could make society more civil by overloading it with frivolous grievances; and civil society might be held together with contrived indignation.

The proposition that we can expurgate racism from society by constantly obsessing over race—and indiscriminately shaming bystanders based on their racial profiles—is nuts. It's worth noting that the prelates of identity politics exude a sense of entitlement that is surpassed only by the caricature (of all white people) that they so glibly propound.

There is nothing so obnoxious as WASPs with a sense of entitlement; but it does not follow that TO BE a WASP is to—*ipso facto*—have a sense of entitlement. Homo sapiens of any stripe are capable of pathological narcissism. A higher level of melanin in the epidermis does not inoculate one from such conceit—a fact demonstrated by such figures as Larry Elder, Thomas Sowell, and Clarence Thomas.

In order for Robin's ideology to have purchase on credulous minds, one must first be convinced that the fundamental organizing principle of society is racism. All judgements must be performed through this warped lens. Of course, the reasoning for using such a lens implodes the moment one tries to apply it to ANY society that is majority p.o.c. (the majority of which STILL deal with their own versions of racism, not to mention egregious socio-economic injustices). Tragically, such bunkum has passed academic muster since Barbara Applebaum pioneered "Critical Whiteness Studies" more than two decades ago. (Applebaum made her name by enumerating the various ways that ALL white people are secretly racist.)

So we hear about "white credentialing" (which is rightfully decried as ethno-centric), yet hear nothing about the most important—and valid—credential of them all: our shared humanity. Averring that we are all one human family is, we are notified, ALSO veiled racism. That's right: Appeals to human solidarity is just an excuse to be secretly racist. (!) You've been warned.

Proponents of this deranged ideology could walk by a potted plant and see virulent racism lurking beneath each leaf. * Alas, perfidious academics—who masquerade as serious scholars—operate under the aegis of "Critical Race Theory" (CRT), which has become the *bête noire* of right-wing expositors.

As mentioned in Epilogue 3, CRT is a spin-off of "Critical Theory". Its tenets would come as a surprise to the entire Frankfurt School (Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse)...not to mention Karl Marx, Max Weber, Erich Fromm, Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, Jürgen Habermas, and all the rest. (I do not include in my roster of luminaries either Lukacs or Lacan.) More on this in Epilogue 6.

We might look back further in history, noting that Frederick Douglass praised Abraham Lincoln for being "the first great man that spoke within the United States freely, who in no single instance reminded me of the difference between himself and myself, of the difference of color." Robin and her acolytes might take note.

Sowing suspicions—and resentments—means that everyone is urged to monitor everyone else for every piddling impropriety; and promised that they will earn plaudits for each public denunciation. This

oleaginous regime of “call outs” is one step away from China’s (palpably Orwellian) social credit system.

Robin’s duplicitous ideology presents us with a rather daffy creed. We are notified that things like logic, objectivity, empirical evidence, and the scientific method are suffused with White Supremacy (and are patriarchal in nature). The search for—or even just the acknowledgement of the existence of—Truth? Yep. That too is a mark of (clandestine) White Supremacy. Even moral principles THEMSELVES are seen as “WHITE”, especially if they are—gasp—UNIVERSAL. How so? Well, you see, White Supremacy (and patriarchy) permeates EVERY ASPECT of Occidental culture—nay: anything that can be tenuously associated with the Enlightenment or “the West”. (Hence logic, objectivity, evidence, science, and universal moral principles are all tools of Western Imperialism!) Here we find all the hallmark traits of a paranoid conspiracy theory.

Alas, this manic view isn’t limited to unscrupulous academics; it can be found on the shelves of best-seller kiosks, in tracts by other race hustlers like Ibram X. Kendi and Ta-Nehisi Coates.

In her PhD dissertation for the University of Washington in 2004, “Whiteness In Racial Dialogue”, DiAngelo argued that “universalism” is a “master discourse of Whiteness in practice.” How so? Well, you see, to posit universals is to “posit that White interests and perspectives are objective and representative of all groups.” So recognizing universal principles—or any sincere attempt to be objective, for that matter—is really just a sneaky way for white people to engage in some hegemonic project to promote their own interests / perspectives AS white people. For the more fanatical ideologues, objectivity ITSELF—along with industriousness, punctuality, and rational thinking—is believed to be a diabolical scheme to advance white supremacy. To engage in ANY of these virtues, then, is to be too “white”. All this seems to make sense to DiAngelo (and her ilk), as elsewhere she has insisted that “there is no objective, neutral reality.” **

This is, to put it mildly, a flawed dialectic. According to such thinking, having basic epistemic standards like, say, recognizing facts (or even the difference between right and wrong) is seen as some kind of hegemonic enterprise (on the part of non-p.o.c.); and thus discriminatory against p.o.c. Thus impartiality—nay, all of science—is effectively a promulgation of white privilege. This is, of course, bonkers. And to make matters worse, it distracts from any focus on the ACTUAL problem: the structural inequalities that continue to exist along racial lines.

In their fervor to de-center “white-ness” (that is, eliminate ethnocentric thinking that favors non-p.o.c.), proponents of Robin’s ideology seek to demonize anything that THEY happen to associate with “white-ness”, irrespective of how pro-social such things might be for EVERYONE. (Spoiler alert: There is nothing inherently “white” about ANY of the aforementioned ideals.) In doing so, they end up propounding the stigmas that stem from the very ethnocentricity they decry. (The irony here is painfully obvious to everyone but them.)

The result of all this blinkered thinking: Everyone finds themselves engaged in a “war of position” whereby each group is vying to define “truth” at the expense of everyone else. It makes one wince to think that anyone would consider embracing such a demented (and stultifyingly cynical) epistemic theory.

The consequences of adopting this weirdly-distorted worldview are dire. Otherwise valid diagnoses (there REALLY IS misogyny; and there REALLY IS white privilege) are vitiated to the point of nullity. For if ANYTHING can be seen as bigotry, then the indictment becomes utterly meaningless; and those who are genuinely seeking to address such dysfunctions are deprived of crucial vocabulary.

We know we’ve gone completely down the rabbit hole when Robin opines that even inter-racial marriages

can be covertly racist, as racial mixing is often “inauthentic”. You read that correctly: According to Robin’s rules-of-the-road, miscegenation is veiled racism. (So shame on mixed-race couples!) This is not hyperbolic; it is quite literal. Other signs of White Supremacy: perspicacity, punctuality, diligence, and industriousness. Robin even suggests that SMILING TOO MUCH is racism in disguise. At this point, it seems she has no marbles left to lose.

The suggestion that a non-p.o.c. can be less racist by being “less white” is analogous to the suggestion that one can be less homophobic by being less straight; or that one can be less misogynist by being less male. Clearly, those who make such zany pronouncements do not understand what makes bigotry bigotry. As anyone with a modicum of common sense knows, what makes some (ostensibly) straight people homophobic isn’t their (purported) heterosexuality; and what makes some men misogynistic isn’t their (verging) masculinity. (The problem with male chauvinism isn’t being male; it’s being chauvinist.) It is an INSECURITY ABOUT his own masculinity that makes a man bigoted, not masculinity per se. After all, not all masculinity is toxic.

Alas, those who see the world through the Applebaum / DiAngelo lens could look at a scented candle and see a scourge of racism. Thus WASPs are bigoted simply by dint of BEING WASPs. Just being who they are is a crime for which they owe penitence—and, ultimately, restitution. All white people are complicit simply for being white; and for their wily whitely ways. (Replace “white” here with “Jewish”, and one finds oneself with the foundation for Mein Kampf.)

And so it goes: Robin will continue to hawk her premium anti-racism kits in hotel conference rooms across the country, and churn out her artificially-flavored hogwash with impunity; and for exorbitant fees. Her scam employs the oldest formula in the book: Create the (impression of) an ailment, then offer the (alleged) cure. Cults have been using this gimmick since time immemorial; and it continues to be staggeringly effective.

But what of the merits of her sociological approach? Robin posits race as the only metric for socio-economic stratification, and thus the sole factor in explaining / combating socio-economic inequalities. All injustice is reduced to RACIAL injustice, whereby p.o.c. are the de facto victims (by dint of their race) and non-p.o.c. are the de facto culprits (by dint of their race). We thus go from “race plays a role in structural inequalities” (correct) to “ALL structural inequality boils down to race” (preposterous). We are presented, then, with a one-dimensional assessment of a multi-faceted problem. As if such reductionism weren’t bad enough, Robin is also a race essentialist (what is referred to in common parlance as “racist”).

It is no revelation that socio-economic stratification exists in ways that confer on-going benefits to some groups rather than others. It is also well-established that structural inequalities in the U.S. abide due IN PART to the nation’s long history of racism. Okay, then. So what are we to make of THAT aspect of structural inequality? And what are we to do about it?

Systemic racism exists for identifiable reasons: prevailing perceptions, attitudes, and social norms; as well as an array of deeply ingrained biases—many of which are (implicitly, if not explicitly) racial in nature. ***

Such biases are even embedded in a few of the seemingly innocuous idioms found in our demotic language. These are issues of socialization / enculturation...which are themselves largely due to institutional exigencies. In other words, systemic racism—which sometimes manifests on the interpersonal level—is primarily a by-product of institutional racism; as our psychical activity (all our habits of thought, biases, stereotypes, etc.) is heavily influenced by the institutions within which we operate (shaping, as they do, our day-to-day lives).

Most of all, then, inequity—racial and otherwise—exists at the INSTITUTIONAL level; and must be

addressed as such. For example, there are barriers-to-entry that were originally put in place to favor certain communities (while marginalizing others); and much of this was done along ethnic lines—be it prejudice against Latinos or Jews or East Asians or anyone else. The question now is: How shall institutional inequities be dismantled? Put another way: What measures shall we take to rectify the inequitable state of affairs that we now face, considering it is built into many of our social structures?

The answer: Work to change institutions (incumbent power structures) so that the underlying causes of said inequities are eliminated. How is that to be done? Supporting Progressives—and ONLY Progressives—running for public office. And how shall we define “Progressive”? By the kind of policies being promoted. Put bluntly: It’s the policies, stupid.

The question remains: How are we to get people to do this? Well, by overcoming dysfunctional kinds of socialization / enculturation—a feat that can be accomplished by generating awareness about political issues (NOT by going to one of Robin’s workshops). After all, the problem is systemic (not personal), so the solutions must be systemic (not personal).

But WHAT policies? Universal access to quality education and healthcare is a start. That entails treating such things as public goods. Anyone who does not actively support such legislation is not serious about rectifying structural inequalities. Here’s the good news: The REAL solution doesn’t require anyone to go to a single DEI seminar. Here’s the irony: Many (most?) of Robin’s most ardent fans support corporate Democrats over Progressives.

The idea is that we are all in this together, as fellow citizens; so should proceed accordingly. Alas. Instead of seeding the landscape with pearls of wisdom, Robin sprinkles it with dragon’s teeth. It seems not to occur to her and her acolytes that stirring up acrimony is no way to foster amity; and it is the worst possible way to bring everyone together to pursue a shared vision. Festering resentment, which Robin PRESCRIBES, can’t help but lead to hostility; and does nothing to solve the problems that she purports to care about.

Instead of working to pass policies that would rectify socio-economic injustice, participants in this charade are adjured to cavil—finding even the dimmest flashpoint for effrontery around every corner. Such theatrics—effectively, choreographed tetchy-ness—creates a paradox that might be referred to as predatory victimhood. Thus captiousness is treated as a social palliative; and being unctuous is seen as a mark of compassion. (Such an approach brings to mind the old sports adage: The best defense is a robust offense.) The result: The (alleged) bullied become the (actual) bullies.

Robin confuses the splenetic with the irenic. Her “comity via alterity” / “amity via acrimony” approach to race relations is a surefire recipe for discord. She can’t seem to grasp the crucial difference between celebrating our differences (good) and obsessing over our differences (bad).

A message to those who have been taken in by Robin’s grift, yet are still open-minded enough to consider their folly: Try reading “Leave The World Behind” by Rumaan Alam; and picture everyone in the story conducting themselves according to Robin’s prescriptions (as opposed to how they actually conduct themselves). One will quickly find that this narrative modification would defeat the entire spirit of Alam’s inspiring work. The exercise serves as an illustration of how boneheaded Robin’s approach really is. Yet her grift will continue so long it remains so lucrative. The corporate speaking circuit pays Robin obscene rates to babble at a lectern for an hour; so she will continue to laugh all the way to the bank; and the rest of us will be forced to clean up the mess.

* * *

{ We encounter a similar derangement with those who see sexism around every corner. Anything that does not hew to post-modernist sensibilities is decried as “hetero-normative”, and thus contributing to the patriarchal order. According to proponents of this worldview, such things include science, math, and basic logic. This manufactured neurosis parallels Robin’s treatment of racism. Proponents could look at a glass of orange juice and see a scourge of misogyny. Thus the existence of anything and everything they happen not to like is attributed to sexism. Why would any man support Bernie Sanders? Sexism. Why didn’t Progressives support Hillary Clinton in 2016? Sexism. (That the same voters vociferously supported Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib, Ayanna Pressley, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and Cori Bush—often over male counterparts—is completely disregarded.) But this goes beyond political theater. Why would a man hold the door open for a woman? Sexism. Why accuse female corporatists of corporatism? Sexism. Why is the sky blue? Sexism. Just as with Robin’s acolytes, we see delusive ideologues becoming the very thing they claim to be against. In this case, the tell-tale sign is paranoia coupled with misandry. Hence the pejorative “Bernie Bros” (which—nonsensically—included women of color like Briahna Joy Gray and Nina Turner). It’s enough to make Kafka blush.}*

*{** If being on time is something that only WHITE people do, then one is forced to concede that only white people are capable of common courtesy. This, it would seem, is an extremely racist belief. But in Robin’s world, holding such a view is how we COMBAT racism. It is sometimes even proposed that objectivity itself (any recognition of facts, of universal principles, of right and wrong) is a hallmark of WHITE SUPREMACY. Meanwhile, proponents consider studiousness and scholastic aspiration to be a “white man’s game”. But here’s the problem: To associate such things with white-ness is to—ipso facto—denigrate all p.o.c. It is a perverse irony that some of those who most vociferously tout “anti-racism” are the most racist interlocutors in the agora.}*

*{*** As non-p.o.c. have heretofore been the majority in the U.S., it is a statistical inevitability that the way non-p.o.c. tend to think about—and do—things has been normalized over time; and thereby come to be seen as “normal”. Meanwhile, certain things that vary from those norms are seen as “ethnic” or “exotic” or even “deviant”. This is a consequence of the familiar juxtaposed with the foreign; and occurs in every country on Earth. For most non-p.o.c., such a disparity in characterization is based—in large part—on sheer statistics rather than on a sense of superiority. That SOME people construe normality (an accident of history) as superiority (as if by divine ordinance) does not indict ALL non-p.o.c. The point is for non-p.o.c. to recognize that, in being non-p.o.c. in a context of social norms that historically CATER TO non-p.o.c., they have it easier than p.o.c.; as they can feel accepted / normal (within that context)...even as non-p.o.c. feel as though they are obliged to conform to such norms in order to be accepted to get by. When there IS racism, then, it overwhelmingly impacts p.o.c. Insofar as this disparity happens to exist, it gives non-p.o.c. an advantage. The question, then, is: How shall this disparity be addressed?}*

Epilogue 6

As we’ve seen, Robin DiAngelo treats civil right activism as theater; and makes participation in her pedagogic regime a kind of religion. Her creed is primarily comprised of “non-falsifiable” tenets, each of which is treated as revealed truth. As a prelate of woke-ness, she promulgates her pabulum as if it were some sort of sacred doctrine. On queue, her fawning fans genuflect after every fatuous dictum. Those who fail to toe the line are deemed heretics, then summarily tarred and feathered in the public square. For what? For being insufficiently “anti-racist”.

What is fascinating about charlatans is their uncanny ability to persuade credulous followers that they are founts of wisdom. As we’ve seen, Robin DiAngelo passes off specious polemic as serious scholarship...all

the while pretending that she is furnishing us with vital tools for combating racial injustice. Yet, instead of critical analysis, we get sermonizing. Instead of penetrating insight, we get vapid moralizing.

So far as Robin is concerned, racism can be tsk-tsk-tsk-ed into oblivion. All white people need to do is take a look in the mirror and wag their fingers at themselves until they get their acts together.

And what of all those high-priced corporate seminars? It is now quite clear that “racial sensitivity training” (DEI training in the argot of the industry) not only doesn’t work; it actually exacerbates the very dysfunction that it purports to ameliorate. It has become increasingly apparent that—for the corporations that hire Robin—conducting such interventions is more a PR stunt than a sincere attempt to remedy the ongoing problems of systemic racism.

Indeed, “diversity” seminars only succeed in deflecting attention from STRUCTURAL inequalities (problems that exist on an institutional level), and focusing it instead on etiquette (which exists on an interpersonal level). Institutions with horrible records when it comes to perpetuating socio-economic injustices can simply wave away criticisms by pointing to the fact that, “Hey, at least we’re TRYING to address these problems. Look! See how much we care?”

This is nothing more than a feint. Such initiatives are—effectively—ass-covering measures when it comes to possible race-related litigation. It’s also a nice touch when it comes to burnishing the company’s image. After even a thousand workshops, Goldman Sachs will still be Goldman Sachs, Facebook will still be Facebook, and Raytheon will still be Raytheon. The tax evasion will still be conducted with impunity, the most destructive forms of malfeasance will persist, and social media will wreak havoc on our public discourse as much as ever. Meanwhile, corruption at the highest levels will continue...even as Bobby has learned to be more polite to Sally while chatting around the water cooler.

And so it goes: Holding DEI conclaves enables large corporations to keep up appearances. Put another way, convening “diversity” seminars is virtue signaling on an institutional level. Structural problems go un-addressed even as one employee has learned how NOT TO OFFEND another employee during quotidian interactions. This amounts to a whole lot of self-ingratiating pabulum. Deep-seated personal biases are not changed by fleeting interventions. And focusing on PROPRIETY does absolutely nothing to change the highly problematic architecture of the underlying power structures.

The DEI-industrial complex is a bonanza for hucksters. Companies across the U.S. have been hornswoggled—and in some cases, strong-armed—into spending over \$8 BILLION each year on DEI “training”. Practitioners earn well over half a billion dollars annually on “consulting” fees. This boondoggle has done absolutely nothing to attenuate structural inequalities (let alone to stymie racism), but has been a boon to right-wing polemicists; as they have been served a sumptuous feast of (ostensibly) “Lefit-ist” idiocy on a silver platter—bounteous amounts of fodder to use as ammunition against ACTUAL Progressivism.

On the policy level, OF COURSE we must consider the role that race places in the abiding structural inequalities that plague our society. But on an interpersonal level, the ultimate goal is to STOP fixating on race. DiAngelo-inspired “diversity training” programs do the opposite. That fact alone should be enough to give us pause. Imagine trying to eliminate homo-phobia in the workplace by requiring that everyone fixate on everyone else’s sexuality.

Robin prescribes a meticulously choreographed regime of posturing to all non-p.o.c.; as if by magic this will make structural inequalities vanish. We don’t prevent racism—on either the personal or institutional level—by obsessing over racial differences any more than we prevent bacterial gastroenteritis by drinking

disinfectants.

Robin's approach is not a matter of over-egging the pudding; it's more akin to trying to make a garden more fecund by drenching it with chemical pesticides. I suspect that Robin has never once, for even a moment, helped a p.o.c. and non-p.o.c. feel closer to each other. After all, she's not in the business of showing people how to forge human connections. Her approach to inter-racial interaction is quite simple. Step #1: Everyone fixate on race. Step #2: Feel slighted / ashamed. Rinse and repeat. One may as well try to end misogyny by insisting that, henceforth, everyone fixate on everyone else's gender.

Again, the key is to engage in gross generalizations. Robin's schtick is to claim that all white people have been socialized into racial biases; and so have "internalized" a perception of racial superiority. (While SOME non-p.o.c. may be like programmed robots, most are not.) Robin makes declarations like "white people are invested in the racist status quo"; as in ALL white people, everywhere, all the time, irrespective of circumstances. Intent is beside the point. Agency is irrelevant. The result of this wacky indictment: Even those who are CLEARLY not racist are complicit; simply due to the paucity of melanin in their epidermises. (Read this sentence aloud without laughing: "Due to his fair skin, Noam Chomsky is invested in the racist status quo.")

All this is from a woman who claims that she first TRULY realized that she was white ("in the abstract sense") when she was 34—that is: when she read Peggy MacIntosh's "White Privilege: Unpacking The Invisible Knapsack". Upon reading that essay, Robin claims to have had an "out of body experience", after which she "felt so loudly white that I didn't even want to go outside because everybody could see that I was white." These are the words either of a person contending with a severe neurosis and/or of a person who is completely full of shit.

In considering how to proceed when we encounter Robin, we must ask: How are sane people supposed to respond when she makes cringe-worthy statements like: "Even before I took my first breath, as my mother carried me [during] pregnancy, the forces of race were operating"? That someone who makes such idiotic assertions enjoys mainstream attention is a sad commentary on the deteriorating caliber of our public discourse. (It's worth noting that the racist-from-the-womb trope is only ever used BY racists.)

Robin and her acolytes fail to see that collective pride and collective guilt are both dangerous, especially when instantiated along ethnic lines. Whether praising or shaming ENTIRE ethnicities for inborn character traits, one is engaging in the very thing we should all be looking to eradicate.

Robin's theory makes perfect sense if we assume that the world is populated solely with brainwashed zombies; and—shorn of autonomy—homo sapiens were incapable of engaging in any cognition beyond that of Pavlovian dogs.

"Whiteness" is thus put center-stage. Rather than expand the sphere of empathy / inclusion, we are adjured to de-construct ("de-center" in the argot of the practitioners) that ethereal bogeyman, "whiteness". What is "whiteness"? Well, anything any white person happens to feel or think or do, irrespective of motivation. Good will is entirely beside the point; if a non-p.o.c. feels or thinks or does it, there's something suspicious going on. We soon find that "white privilege" is a rather slippery term; as all privilege all the time, everywhere, in every possible context, is understood to be INHERENTLY white.

Hence it is not the privileged non-p.o.c. who are white; it's the privilege ITSELF that is white. So even in the cases where p.o.c. have managed to accrue socio-economic stature, their privilege is STILL ascribed the menacing quality, "whiteness". For whiteness is not an identity, it is an ETHOS; an ethos that permeates (on might say, INFECTS) society-at-large. It is not so much that certain white people happen to

have privilege; it's that privilege PER SE is a reflection of whiteness. And that "whiteness" is an affliction from which nobody can truly escape.

This theory is based on the reification fallacy, according to which an abstraction (in this case, "whiteness") is presumed to take on a material existence (i.e. in the form of non-p.o.c. going about their daily lives). This is not only a one-dimensional heuristic; it is a distorted lens through which to see the world.

By seeing things through this kind of lens, one proceeds as follows: Want to eradicate homophobia? Insist straight, white men be less straight. Want to eradicate racism? Insist straight, white men be less white. Want to eradicate misogyny? Insist straight, white men be less masculine. (Thus the problem with straight white men is that they are straight and white and men.) The logic here should sound disturbingly familiar; as one need only change the qualifiers if one deigns to reprise many of the worst atrocities in human history. * In such cases, it was not the qualifiers that were wrong; it was THE LOGIC. Yet, according to Robin DiAngelo, in looking at instances of tribal conflict, the underlying logic was perfectly fine; the perpetrators needed only adjust the qualifiers, and everything would've been a-okay.

Begrudging people for who they are, rather than how they think and what they do, leads us down a very dark road.

Robin bases her latest book on an earth-shattering revelation: Even people who seem NICE might be racist. In other words, impeccable manners do not preclude bigotry. Robin seems to think that this is a news flash. She then lets us in on her astonishing discovery: Hollow congeniality is not a sign of upright moral character.

Robin pretends that she is somehow offering the world groundbreaking insight when she points out that racism is not about being NOT NICE, or even about being mean. What is truly astonishing, though, is that some people actually buy her books, thinking they are going to be treated to a sumptuous feast of erudition. So they pay exorbitant fees for her seminars—clamoring to treat a disease they are notified can never REALLY go away. (See Roman Catholicism: atonement for original sin.) When white people fess up to their inborn "fragility", they are on the road to redemption; no need to worry about STRUCTURAL inequalities.

This is all based on a familiar gimmick: believe, and you will see. If someone is looking for (what they surmise to be) implicit X, they will tend to find it EVERYWHERE; which is simply to say that what they think they are finding is not something that's worth looking for. Like the quixotic search for aether, one is guaranteed to find X wherever one looks if one is determined to find X wherever one looks. For Robin, X = racism. Look at a kitchen sink for long enough, and one is bound to find some anti-black bias...or misogyny...or whatever one is hell-bent on seeing...hidden beneath the surface of things. Put on purple-tinted goggles; and—lo and behold—the entire world will look purple.

Never mind the pathologically censorious attitudes engendered by Robin's prescriptions. Never mind the enjoiner to be as tetchy as possible. Never mind the breath-taking pettiness of it all. Robin primes people for a tribalistic impulse along ethnic lines. This is rarely a good thing. It's bad enough to gaslight people one by one; but gaslighting an entire race is a surefire recipe for race-based antagonism. That NEVER ends well.

Predictably, Robin's workshops have been shown to do far more harm than good. It's no wonder. The only thing she accomplishes—other than filling her own bank account—is creating lots of pointless racial tension. To what end? To increase [y]our "racial stamina," she explains. (Such cringe-inducing locutions are cause for concern.) Bear in mind that this is from a woman who states that whenever she cries, she only

cries alone in a corner. Why? Because when white women cry openly, she explains, it endangers black people. (!)

When considering the behavioral regime that Robin prescribes, another red flag emerges: The pressure to conform to an assigned choreography. Well-meaning bystanders find themselves having to play along to get along; thereby acquiescing to even the most fatuous demands. They do so out of fear of being tarred and feathered in the public square. (Comply, lest you be ostracized!) Others are just shamed into silence. This is not the m.o. of anyone who has moral principles on their side.

As most of us already know, it is not a scourge of in-artful phrasing that is responsible for the existence of structural inequalities. But in Robin's world, racial injustice can only be remedied by weaponizing etiquette. This invariably leads to an intellectually and artistically stifling environment in which comity is replaced with chronic suspicion. Non-p.o.c. are notified that if they want racial justice, they must forever walk on eggshells.

Robin's strategy is to be excruciatingly patronizing toward p.o.c., and then pass it off as deference. It's as if oleaginous pandering were the primary tool for mitigating socio-economic injustices.

Meanwhile, the raft of frivolous indictments Robin urges us to countenance only serve as a distraction from the (REAL) racism that continues to plague the U.S. agora, and do (REAL) harm both in America and abroad. The most obvious case of this is the support amongst many Democrats for the Judeo-fascist regime presiding over the theocratic ethno-State, Israel—which continues its campaign of brutal occupation in Palestine. Robin would rather highlight a white person failing to laugh at a black person's joke in the break-room than call out those who endorse ethnic cleansing in the Levant.

I don't use this example randomly. Here in the U.S., many who are on board with Robin's program are guilty of a far more malignant racism—as they accuse Palestinian rights activists of anti-Semitism. Such “woke” actors will denounce “implicit racism” at every turn while abiding crimes against humanity in Gaza and the West Bank. That's the problem with virtue signaling: It requires no ACTUAL virtue.

Robin's cloying charade diverts attention away from serious racial problems, furnishing Potemkin Progressives with a way to broadcast their (much-coveted) liberal bona fides. ** It seems to escape them that to be anti-racist is to be against ALL forms of racism. One can no more claim to be against SOME forms of racism (therefore “anti-racist”) than one can refrain from eating only certain kinds of meat and claim to be vegetarian.

This approach to system racism turns civic responsibility into an oleaginous virtue-signaling pageant. Hyper-sensitivity is seen as a kind of empathy. Social media exacerbates the histrionics, as it enables proponents of Robin's approach to be narcissistic while pretending to be philanthropic. (Non-p.o.c. are invited to be proud of their humility, as if simpering was a bold gesture.) Robin's cohort is convinced that being unctuous is somehow a mark of rectitude.

This is wrongheaded. When it comes to promoting good will, we should aspire to empathy, not frangibility; sapience, not peevishness. We might also harken back to the lessons of Critical Theory—something that is worth a brief digression, especially in the wake of a recent mutation: “Critical Race Theory”.

Critical Theory began with the Frankfurt School (M. Horkheimer, T. Adorno, H. Marcuse, et. al.); so it is important to appreciate its contribution to Progressive thought. Regarding the present topic, there are five key things to note about the Frankfurt School. **First:** They recognized the universality of morality. **Second:**

They did not look at everything—or ANYTHING, for that matter—through a racial lens. In other words, they did not consider race to be the most salient feature of any given person. They were, after all, humanists. **Third:** They held that progress involves each person’s realization of his/her (Kantian) autonomy. They contended that freedom is inextricably linked to Pure Practical Reason (in the Kantian sense). **Fourth:** Their theories have no necessary connection to post-modernism or moral relativism. **And fifth:** They championed deliberative—and, above all, participatory—democracy.

The Frankfurt School is best known for addressing the dysfunction of mass-produced pop culture (read: hyper-commercialization, and consumerism run amok); with all of the shallowness (superficiality) and narcissism endemic thereto. In this vein, they aimed to expose false consciousness, and remedy the delusive thinking that has proven to be so deleterious to the commonweal. (This is where Herbert Marcuse’s “One Dimensional Man” is instructive. Lord knows what these thinkers would have thought of more recent developments like social media and Reality TV!)

For the Frankfurt School, freedom was not simply the ability to do what we want. The point was to emancipate ourselves from our socially-imposed subservience to the ever-present “culture machine”. The Frankfurt School enjoined us to liberate ourselves from the intoxicating illusions generated by that machine. This would NOT be accomplished by fixating on social constructs (like racial demarcations); it would be done by tapping into our shared humanity.

While anti-Semitism has certainly played a role in the Right’s contempt for the Frankfurt School, the primary reason for their abiding derision is the contention that capitalism undergirded—nay, lead to—fascism. According to this thesis, the so-called “West” has gone awry due to prizing instrumental reason (read: productivity, and thus material wealth) over Pure Practical Reason (read: moral principles). The problem, then, is that socio-economic status has become the sine qua non of American life. We bask in our false consciousness; and human solidarity (that is: forging genuine human connection) plays almost no role.

In sum: Rationality must be about morality, not just about utility. The fact that Marxian ideals defined the Frankfurt School’s approach to this (contentious) subject has, of course, incensed right-wing expositors to no end. (This continues to be the case to the present day, especially when it comes to Critical Theory.) The Frankfurt School had identified the shortcomings of Capitalism. They were, after all, Marxian thinkers: a virtual guarantee that they would be vilified by those with fascistic (spec. plutocratic / corporatist) proclivities.

That brings us to Critical Theory. Proponents are concerned with elucidating the biases that are hardwired into repressive institutions—legal and social; especially with respect to marginalized groups. So Critical Theory—in its original form—has a lot to say about how we might address structural inequality. NONE of it has to do with identity politics. The upshot of all this is that Robin DiAngelo’s dubious asseverations have nothing whatsoever to do with Critical Theory.

The present author is an avid fan of the Frankfurt School; yet—like anyone familiar with (the original incarnation of) Critical Theory—finds Robin’s schtick to be odious. I harken back to Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse. Surely, had one peddled the fatuous theory of “white fragility” (or the hobgoblin of “white complicity pedagogy”) to those esteemed thinkers, they would have either cringed or chuckled; probably a bit of both.

The dirty little secret of Robin’s grift is that she gives some racists (those who limit themselves to denouncing racism against p.o.c. in the U.S.) a convenient “out”. For she offers a way for them to telegraph their “anti-racist” credentials within a delimited purview. This misguided praxis is designed to

ensure no bystanders are ever “offended” on social media channels...extolling the BLM movement (which seeks to shed light on racism in America’s legal system) even as they denigrate the BDS movement (which exists to combat a kind of racism that causes the death and suffering of millions of innocent people in a far-away land). The inconsistency is glaring.

This Kafka-esque approach to “racism” assures that the forest continues to burn...even as Robin urges us to prune one of the shrubs. Those who participate in this theater-of-the-woke decry racism in one context, and in the very next breath EPITOMIZE it. (“I’m against THIS kind of ethno-State over here; yet perfectly fine with THAT kind of ethno-State over there. But hey! At least I’m honoring the p.c. protocol du jour.”) Unless one is against ALL forms of racism, one forfeits one’s right to fashion oneself as an anti-racist, no matter how impeccable one’s manners happen to be. As Robin asserts in her latest book: Being nice has nothing to do with it.

This hypocrisy is a tell-tale sign of the deficiencies of Robin’s daft approach. In surveying the current political landscape, one wonders how many self-styled “anti-racists” support AIPAC and the DMFI...all the while congratulating themselves for dutifully posting a BLM icon on their social media profiles. Such perfidious actors unabashedly support “Third Way”, the DCCC, the DLC, and Neoliberal economic policy; yet are careful to never say anything that offends the sensibilities of the self-appointed constables of political correctness. Proscribing one kind of fascism (at home), it seems, excuses them from supporting another kind of fascism (abroad). This all seems to pass muster...so long as they mouth the right pieties.

And so those who claim to be “woke” decry racism in their own back yard, even as they abide Revisionist Zionism in Palestine. Such hypocrisy is rarely called out by the aficionados of identity politics. (After all, they attended one of Robin’s “diversity training” workshops; so they MUST be “tuned in” to the travails of the oppressed!) The lack of consistency in the application of moral standards is breathtaking to behold.

One can only speculate as to how many Ohioans who voted for Shontel Brown over Nina Turner on August 3, 2021 had Robin DiAngelo on their bookshelves. It’s likely the same contingent that spent years castigating Bernie Sanders while championing [insert corporate Democrat here]. Suffice to say: Nobody who fails to actively support universal public healthcare (and refuses to vote for the politicians who are serious about making it a reality) REALLY cares about helping marginalized communities.

These faux activists vociferously support even the most corrupt (read: right-wing) Democrats, thereby perpetuating the very (plutocratic) system that is the source of the problems they purport to care about: a system that is far more responsible for socio-economic injustice than “white fragility”. There is nothing remotely Progressive about giving Neo-liberals a free pass in electoral politics. And that goes for those who fashion themselves as “anti-racist” simply because they happen to be mouthing the assigned pieties.

It was not poor etiquette that led to red-lining. And it is not poor etiquette that is responsible for voter disenfranchisement. Want to empower p.o.c.? Get money out of politics, ensure healthcare is treated as a public good, and give every public school in the nation equal funding.

Weaponizing etiquette does nothing to eliminate structural inequalities along racial lines. But one would never know this after reading “Nice Racism”. Robin has capitalized on the (deliberate) conflation of propriety with probity. She has thereby furnished anti-Progressives with a way to masquerade as Progressive. Those of us who actually care about effecting socio-economic justice refuse to play along.

* * *

{ Take Rwanda as a case study. For the Tutsis, the problem with the Hutus is that they were Hutu. For the Hutus, the problem with the Tutsis is that they were Tutsi. In 1962, the perceived problem was Hutu privilege; so guess what happened. In 1994, the perceived problem was Tutsi privilege; so guess what*

happened. In NEITHER case did socio-economic advantage exist along demographic lines; but that's not how the aggrieved saw it. Note: This is not to say that when people think in such terms, genocide is inevitable; it is simply to point out that, with DiAngelo's approach in perceived inequities, a similar logic is at play. Thinking of individuals primarily in terms of their membership in a demographic category is the root of the ensuing resentments / animus. Of course, unearned socio-economic advantage exists in EVERY country; and may exist along various axes of domination / marginalization. But identity politics is NEVER a good idea.}

*{** Unsurprisingly, Potemkin Progressives get salty when they are called out for not being genuine Progressives. They despise genuine Progressives, and support politicians who have nothing but contempt for Progressives (while actively supporting anti-Progressive policies); yet they have an aneurism whenever anyone has the audacity to point out that they are REALLY NOT Progressive. The simple retort to their objection is: One gets to pick one's ideals, but one isn't allowed to dictate what words mean. One can't routinely eat meat and (truthfully) call oneself a vegetarian.}*