

# WHAT ABOUT *Human Values?*

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I was in my car a few weeks ago and I ill-advisedly paused on an NPR program where a group of ladies were discussing how “brave and courageous” it is when homosexual couples display public affection for each other where heterosexuals can see them. The reasoning of one commentator was “this may be the only opportunity that a heterosexual person will encounter a homosexual couple” and therefore it becomes ostensibly a learning opportunity for the former. I listened to the discussion go on in this vein for a few minutes before shutting off my radio in irritation. Then, since I am a naturally reflective sort, I began to process exactly what it was in the commentators’ attitudes and conclusions that made me irritated. I believe that these attitudes reflect a broader “politically correct (PC)” culture that forces our society to grant individuals our respect or at least a public show of respect based on the most superficial truths about an individual, including race, gender, and sexual orientation.

Keep in mind, discrimination based on race is racism; on gender is misogyny; on sexual orientation is prejudice. I am not saying we should discriminate against individuals due to these aspects of their identity. What I am saying is that to *unduly value* an individual because of their race, gender or sexual orientation is just a different kind of belittling. It says that these superficial aspects of their identity really *are* the important aspects of their identity. The PC culture then solidifies this undue valuation as a social more.

What I concluded was this: The reason I should give my respect to an individual is not because of the color of their skin or ethnicity; not because of their gender; not because of their sexual orientation. Rather, I should respect an individual because they display human values. For example, some values we would likely all agree on are being fair-minded and gracious rather than ungracious and petty. We may run into a woman who is ungracious and petty, is it misogyny to not respect this person? I think not. It actually shows *genuine* respect to women to expect them to pursue the same degree of human values as men do. To do otherwise would actual belittle their humanity.

I submit that in an effort to secure a culture-wide, automatic display of superficial respect, the PC culture is damaging our appreciation for basic human values and forcing us to pretend to respect individuals who may or may not deserve it. This is the violation of human conscience that we vaguely sense at the heart of PC culture. Hopefully what we once sensed vaguely is a bit clearer.