

# **The Identity of Today's Youth**

## ***In Community Or Christ?***

J. Thomas Bridges / <https://twitter.com/jthomasbridges/> December 26, 2015

This article is about how youth, especially college students, are unwilling to spend the time growing into a mature sense of self. One shortcut to a sense of both identity and community is to be offended by some pet issue. The protesting of real racist events at the University of Missouri early this Fall semester has spilled over to other campuses across the country. But there is a problem lingering in the neighborhood. I suspect that some students are using the phenomenon of being offended itself as a shortcut to a sense of identity and community.

The issue doesn't matter, in these particular cases the demonstrations are connected to something legitimately immoral: racism; but what does, say, a 20 year old white girl have to do with racism or the civil rights struggle. In fact, there are some demonstrations against racism that have been organized by white college students and this has raised the ire of the black student community.

For example, at the University of Colorado at Boulder, "In a comment posted to Facebook, Paris Ferribee, co-president of the Black Student Alliance, said she felt that the students were only hosting the rally to "be part of a fad."<sup>1</sup>

Our hypothetical white college student gets offended in behalf of "what's right" and this becomes an ephemeral means to identity and community. The problem is that she is so tenuously connected to the issue that her interest is equally transient. It fades, then she picks another issue that raises her ire and the process runs through another cycle of temporary identity and community. This is demonstrated by Ferribee's judgment that hosting these sorts of rallies is simply en vogue at the moment.

Though taking sides on social issues is typical for any college student, protesting issues cannot be a shortcut means to one's personal identity. It takes years to understand one's own strengths and weaknesses. It may take more than a decade to really become established in a career. When I began grad school at the age of 25 I thought, "maybe by the time I am 40 years old I'll have something to contribute to the field," and then I went to work trying to understand the history of Western ideas.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/11/20/black-students-criticize-racism-protests-organized-white-students>. [accessed December 14, 2015]

Finally, the things these college students want in the above artificial way is available in a genuine way by entering a relationship with Jesus Christ. In Christ one finds out who one really is in the Kingdom of God and begins to walk a path that unique to every individual. To be clear, there is only one way to God, through Jesus Christ the Son. But God brings us to Himself in a myriad of individual circumstances and calls us to ministry in ways that are equally unique.

So we see again that there is a way that is real and true found in Christianity and that this is always mirrored by a way that is fictitious and false that comes from the world system. The desires for identity and community are legitimate, but they must be met in equally legitimate ways. Taking offense at certain cultural issues is not a legitimate way to meet these desires. The unspoken solution is for our youth to moor their identity in Christ, and the rest will follow.