

|| WHY SOCIETAL EQUITY WORK IS FAILING

Until we understand that the *mutual exclusivity of values is a fundamental aspect of our diversity*, we will continue to attack each other from opposite sides of the fence. One side points fingers, defining the slander they receive as demonizing, condemning, or maligning, while the other side points fingers back, defining the slander they receive as vilifying, dehumanizing, or stigmatizing.

We exacerbate the situation by appointing individuals with no lived experience of the issues at hand as gatekeepers of the work that directly impacts these societally marginalized groups. As a result, the work is either approached grudgingly, or, at best, "savior mentality privilege assertions" are flaunted, reducing those with genuine experience to mere tokens in these societal equity, or diversity, equity, and inclusivity (DEI), initiatives.

Even if we did have people with lived experience leading this work—though that's rarely the case—simply placing them in these roles isn't enough. We often end up trying to bring people from opposing sides together to *resolve value conflicts by attempting to change deeply ingrained values or attitudes toward one another, creating a perpetual tug-of-war*. Instead, we must recognize that DEI work isn't about forcing value changes on one another but rather about *fostering systemic behaviors that allow differing values to coexist equitably*. This is the key to sustaining diversity in a meaningful way that promotes equity and inclusivity.

Remember, puzzle pieces fit together because of their inherent differences. Let's navigate the connections between the puzzle pieces of our shared humanity with respect and dignity for one another.

By Dr. D-L Y Lang | Founding President P-CoC Inc

| BSc-Med.Sc, M.A., MPhil, Ph.D. [MPhil. & Ph.D. (2nd) - ABD Status]

Writing inspired by the work of John Rawls, Alexandra Kalev, and Frank Dobbin

