

THE THREAT OF IDENTITY POLITICS

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At the core of our liberal democracy is the understanding that we are all equal. The spread of identity politics across Australia and the West, however, directly undermines this by seeking different rules for different groups of people. Rather than advocating classical liberal institutions and norms, identity politics seeks to divide us into our religious, ethnic, and gender group identities.

In practice, this is expressed in movements for differential racial recognition under the law, the suppression of supposedly oppressive speech, and the erasing of parts of our history.

While some examples of identity politics could be overlooked or ignored as isolated political discourse, the underlying philosophy must be forcefully rejected.

Once our lives are subsumed to our membership of different group identities, society and politics becomes a never-ending competition between privileged groups and oppressed groups. In this way, rather than expanding the institutions of liberalism, identity politics can only endlessly divide us, destabilising the footing on which our civilisation is built.

Through the lens of identity politics, the role of government

becomes one of mediating the various power hierarchies in society. The end point can only ever be a more complex and powerful government, particularly because the movement is wrapped up in the idea that the oppressed can never be understood or represented by the privileged.

Rather than laying out the universal institutions that embrace our ability to be individuals, the rights of different groups are traded off against one another. The state is tasked with continuously meddling with our liberties—telling us which groups are granted special privileges while denying the rights of others.



RATHER THAN EXPANDING THE INSTITUTIONS OF LIBERALISM, IDENTITY POLITICS ENDLESSLY DIVIDES US.

The only way to establish a free, prosperous, and truly cohesive society comes from embracing our value as individuals and the institutions that empower us. This is what makes us equal.

One of those institutions that must be defended is formal equality before the law, which holds that we are all treated the same before the law regardless of our specific characteristics.

Equality before the law is a solution to the reality that we all have different identities, exist in different circumstances, and make different decisions—but that we all live by the same

universal rules.

To be sure, formal equality is not a perfect solution, and some will point out situations where the law appears to fall unequally on some groups. But we do not live in a perfect world, and this is no reason to abandon the goal of formal equality. Indeed, the antidote to historical oppression has been access to and expansion of our liberal democratic institutions. The alternative to formal equality is an arbitrary state pushing identity politics—a situation that can only ever walk away from liberty.

As Andrew Bushnell and Daniel Wild write in the cover story of this edition of the *IPA Review*, the solution to identity politics must include defending our institutions in popular culture and in our universities, and ultimately reducing the power of government.

The role of government in our interactions is to maintain a rule of law, enforcing our property rights and our contracts. Its role is to enable us to be individuals and to live our own lives.

Two other pieces in this edition touch on a similar theme of identity. A book review of the *The Color of Law* explores the claim that modern African Americans should receive public compensation for the wrongs perpetrated on past generations.

And don't forget to read our new Ballarat statue walking tour in *Strange Times*—we've corrected the tour to make it politically correct, giving you a window into an identity politics future. 