

“Humans of CIA” recruitment campaign sells youth “identity politics imperialism”

Dominic Gustavo**19 May 2021**

In January of this year the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) launched a new recruitment campaign showcasing the agency's commitment to “racial and gender diversity.”

The ad campaign was originally posted on the CIA's YouTube page in a series of videos titled “Humans of CIA.” The videos have caused immense controversy and backlash from workers, particularly young people, as the campaign made its way through social media platforms.

One of the ads begins with a female CIA agent proudly introducing herself as a “first generation Latina,” a “cisgender millennial” and “intersectional.” In a different video, another female agent states: “It is important to have a diverse workforce within the agency because our mission is international.”

Another ad features a gay CIA librarian who explains that the atmosphere while working at the CIA encourages “the out-of-the-box ideas that drive progress.” The video does not elaborate on what some of those “out of the box” ideas may be ... waterboarding, environmental manipulation, sleep deprivation, etc. The same ad continues: “inclusion is a core value here. Officers from the top down work hard to ensure that every single person, whatever their gender, gender identity, race, disability or sexual orientation, can bring their entire self to work every day.”

In one video, an African-American CIA agent even speaks with pride about the role that African Americans have played in US imperialist violence: “The African-American presence here at CIA is deep and rich. And I would encourage anyone and everyone to know something about that history and the value we have brought to this agency over the past 70+ years.”

The CIA's filthy role in flooding the inner cities of the US with crack-cocaine in the 1980s, leading to the jailing and subsequent disenfranchisement of millions of working people, most of them African American, is presumably not included as part of this “deep and rich” history.

The ad campaign is perhaps best summed up in a video that introduces the CIA's “Hispanic Advisory Council,” the

purpose of which is explained by a CIA agent: “We are all unique. And we're here to provide that accountability and guidance to ensure this organization stays pristine.”

It is not within the scope of this article to go over the long and sordid history of the CIA. Suffice it to say that the CIA's machinations throughout the world—terrorism, sponsoring of coups against democratically elected governments, support for murderous dictatorships and death squads, alliances with criminal elements such as drug traffickers—have led to, at a minimum, hundreds of thousands of deaths, while condemning millions more to untold misery.

The ad campaign is a transparent attempt at rebranding the CIA to appeal to a younger, “more diverse” audience. It has largely drawn a scornful, mocking response on Twitter and other social media platforms. Workers and youth all over the world are familiar with the criminal role that the CIA has played as a bulwark of US imperialism.

The campaign has also drawn criticism from right-wing circles who feel the embrace of pseudo-progressive language by the CIA is somehow a concession to the enemies of US imperialism. This was articulated crudely in a tweet by former CIA director Mike Pompeo, a thuggish representative of the most viciously reactionary sections of the ruling class: “The collection of incredibly talented patriots serving at the CIA is what makes it the best spy agency in the world—and we must continue to recruit the best and brightest. We can't afford to risk our national security to appease some liberal, woke agenda.”

Former CIA official Susan M. Gordon responded to these criticisms in a revealing op-ed in the *Washington Post* headlined, “CIA critics are creating a false choice between diversity and excellence.” She writes, “In reality, the smart move is to choose both. Inclusion and excellence. Diversity and mission.” Referencing the video of the Latina agent walking down what she refers to as the “sacred halls of Langley,” she writes, “For so long, the outside image and the inside leadership of the intelligence community was White, Ivy League, male. The visual of her walking down a

corridor of past directors tells a story that is hard to ignore.” How progressive of Ms. Gordon!

Various so-called “left” proponents of identity politics have been quick to denounce the ad campaign. A *Left Voice* article earlier this month denounced the ad campaign for using “the language of the movement to try to recruit people of color to their organization, a central pillar of U.S. imperialism.” This sentiment was echoed on Twitter with one user nervously commenting: “They are coopting what was supposed to be an emancipatory language to enact mass murder and torture.”

In reality, politics based on race, gender and sexuality has become a fundamental part of the Democratic Party’s efforts to divide workers and enrich a thin layer of the middle class who falsely present themselves as “representational” of the broad masses. But the truth is that workers, regardless of their gender or background, have no representation whatsoever in any branch of government.

As the Democratic Party moves ever more sharply to the right, identity politics is used to give the party a left veneer, however thin it may be. Since the ascension of Democratic President Joe Biden, the corporate media has endlessly celebrated Biden’s incoming cabinet as “the most diverse in US history.” They have proclaimed the appointment of women, African Americans and Latinos to key cabinet positions to be a sign of “tremendous” social progress.

The argument goes something like this: A woman in power, or a Latino in power, or a black person in power, will be more sympathetic to women as a whole, or Latinos as a whole, or blacks as a whole, and thus, more progressive. This “representational” argument has been disproven by decades of black mayors and black police chiefs and black cops overseeing and inflicting the most brutal treatment on black workers and youth. To say nothing of black, Hispanic and female CEOs, and their treatment of the working class of all races and genders. This reality has not deterred either the advocates of identity politics or their imitators in the CIA.

The US ruling class routinely justifies its imperialist interventions by invoking alleged concern for the human rights of this or that group or identity. The neo-colonial wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were often justified as being in the interests of women’s rights and/or the rights of ethnic or religious minorities. The ongoing propaganda war against China over its alleged “genocide” of the Uyghur Muslims is following a well-worn path.

Identity politics serves to divide workers into warring camps based on superficial aspects of their identity. There is no challenge to the existing structure of society, only a shuffling of the deck chairs.

The fact of the matter is that identity politics and

reactionary ideologies such as intersectionality are not merely compatible with the needs of US imperialism and its institutions like the CIA; they are an essential tool utilized by the bourgeoisie to maintain its class domination over the working class by keeping workers divided along racial and gender lines.

The outrage over the CIA’s “appropriation” of these ideologies is really motivated by an extreme nervousness that their right-wing character is being exposed.

These are the politics of a narrow petty-bourgeois layer that seeks not the overthrow of capitalism, but access to greater wealth and influence at the summits of bourgeois society. These elements are invariably hostile to the interests of the working class.

One would not have to peruse the pages of *Jacobin Magazine*, or some other pseudo-left rag for long to find the same language and sentiments as those expressed in the CIA ad. For all of their posturing as rebels, these ideas are thoroughly conformist and pose no threat whatsoever to the establishment. Indeed, it is for that very reason that they have now been embraced wholeheartedly by the Democratic Party; the party of the CIA, militarism and Wall Street.

Being a member of an ethnic or sexual minority, or of the female sex, does not in and of itself determine the progressive character of an individual, much less a group or an organization.

If the international working class—the only truly revolutionary force in capitalist society—is to accomplish the socialist overturn, it must first purge itself of bourgeois ideologies such as intersectionality and critical race theory and throw them where they belong: the rubbish bin of history.



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