

HUMANITY 101: Our Shared Human Genetics, Humanity's Worst, Humanity's Best

Course Proposal

One of my former thesis co-advisor Jack Minker (emeritus) shared a message from his former University President describing several important diversity initiatives and a spectacular progress in the number of minority and underrepresented minorities in the 2017 entering class. In particular their president framed this as a response to Charlottesville events.

I want to share this letter I sent to a small group of people that generally received an enthusiastic response from several faculty including a chair of a diversity committee. By the way Jack received several awards for his Human Rights activities in 1980-s in part focused on release of Russian scientists in USSR. I am taking the liberty of disseminating this further hoping the "small world" links will deliver it to the group who can implement their own vision of this general concept.

Jack

Thanks for sharing this. This is a thoughtful and encouraging email from your president.

I am blown away by these highly inspiring diversity initiatives, and I am impressed with the framing of these initiatives as a partial response to the Charlottesville march by neo-Nazi groups and other deplorable factions with related ideologies.

I would just mention one issue that perhaps can go even further.

While I grew up in Israel and served seven years in the Air Force, I am a child of a holocaust survivor. My grandmother, two uncles, one aunt and one first cousin (age 2) died in the holocaust. My mother suffered immensely (she was 14 when the war started). As a result I often crave to be part of larger than life projects aimed at preventing or reducing human suffering.

The initiatives described in the email do not include one important observation. The people marching in Virginia were saluting to Hitler and professing hatred to Jews. While Jews on average thrive in the US, they also thrived in pre-Reich Germany.

I think universities should help students understand these are not empty slogans aimed at "protecting " the white race. Many young students don't know what happened in the Holocaust and what Hitler tried to do and how it was actually executed.

Admitting a diverse class to a major university is a spectacular progressive step, but we need to consider doing more. We need to educate them about what makes us human.

I personally think that every university should require students to take a Humanity 101 module that contains three components (as a first draft proposal). I am not an expert in social sciences, ethics or legal freedom of speech issues that are needed to carefully design this course.

Humanities 101 Course Proposal

1. Review of evolution and Human genetics: helps students understand how much do we actually have in common and how intermixed the human population is.
The cost of one DNA kit dropped to \$69 recently. Less than most textbooks :)
2. Human atrocities: reviews the relevant unprovoked atrocities committed by human beings.
This part might include slavery, Holocaust, jihad/isis, Daniel Pearl or sheriffs in Arizona.
3. Humanity best: reviews the un-controversially best human activities including recent heroism during Harvey, Judea Pearl Foundation, altruism and its benefits, Oliver Sacks, Billie Jean King.

These topics could be implemented and expanded via independent research done by students and presented in class.

Just a thought to inspire further brainstorming in this area and congratulations on amazing diversity accomplishments by your university!

Simon