

CALUDIE GAY'S SAGA

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“The academic whiz that falters as a political novice,” “The incompetent liberal administrator,” “The death knell of wokeism,” “The victim of the right-wing ideologues,” “A woke agenda short-circuited”, are all possible banners depending on one’s perspective to describe the unfolding of what could have sounded like a fairy tale, “only in America.” The initial narrative detailed the rise to the top of the daughter of two Haitian immigrants who, by the dint of her gray matter, excelled at two of the country’s most elite universities to reach the top of the most storied one in the world, bar none. One would be right to assume that such a meteoric rise, in all likelihood, could only happen in America. It just so happens that, in a dispiriting manner, the opposite scenario can also be true. A well-organized cabal can quickly undo such accomplishment that it considers a menace to the status quo.

What one wouldn’t expect is the convergence of both truths in a seamless segue, so swiftly in this day and age. For sure, historical precedents abound for such a U-turn. One needs only read John Hope Franklin’s *Reconstruction After the Civil War*, Chicago Press, 3rd edition, to understand how seminal achievements of former slaves that benefited all, former masters and slaves, can be turned around and narrated as abject failure. This revisionist interpretation is, to this day, the Gospel about that experience. It should come as no surprise that the same dark forces that aligned to malign that positive endeavor can rekindle to usurp the shine from a budding star. An iconic institution such as Harvard matters. Its symbolism is too powerful to be taken lightly. Too many vested interests become involved to not weigh in. The choice of a candidate that strays too much from the norm was going to raise eyebrows accustomed to the bureaucratic inertia and institutional resistance to social changes, derided as social engineering. Of the 29 previous presidents, only one was a woman, and all were Caucasians. The double jeopardy of African American and woman was a bit much to swallow. That handicap was going to be a problem no matter what. This would be the embers in the background, so to speak, always ready to erupt into a bonfire under the right circumstances. By accepting the nomination, Gay should have known this. The question we need to ask is, what does this all mean? What exactly is at stake?

Let’s dispel in one fell swoop the notion that plagiarism undid her presidency. It certainly became a convenient argument added to the other loaded ones, and the cumulation of bleeding by a thousand cuts became untenable. Her mistake was to allow her opponents to have this type of ammunition to be used against her. Certainly, it amounted to sloppiness in her writings, but she should have known that at her level, and because of her background, she would only have the thinnest margin of error, if any. Nonetheless, it needs to be pointed out that other prominent members of Harvard, when discovered to have committed this infraction, received a [slap](#) on the [wrist](#). Just as important, people living in the glass house seemed to have been throwing stones. A very prominent philanthropist who spearheaded the effort for her [resignation](#) turned out to live with a spouse who committed the same sleight of hand at [MIT](#).

Her subpar performance before that famous Congressional hearing seemed to have sealed her fate. The stated purpose of the hearing was to investigate antisemitism at college campuses. Only a fool will believe that was the true purpose of the hearing. We must remember the same holier-than-thou preachers against antisemitism were notoriously silent in August 2017. Lest we forget, an infamous march by white supremacists carrying tiki torches openly used the Nazi salute

and racial slurs against [Jews](#) in Charlottesville on the [11th](#) of that month. None of these now aggressive and sanctimonious congresspeople raised a hackle when the then-president of the nation failed to condemn such an odious exercise of free speech. So, we are to understand that they have found religion all of a sudden? We are not fools. We will not accept picayune puffery for genuine statesmanship any more than mistake a slapdash bauble for real craftsmanship. Nonetheless, it remained puzzling why Gay didn't jump on this opportunity to turn a staged play acting on its head and deliver a corker to impress even her numerous skeptics. A clever disquisition or a memorable but witty one-liner about freedom of speech versus the expression of hatred would have landed with a thud "heard 'round the world," giving her instant gravitas. By not giving a clear-eyed but simple answer, the seasoned politician caught her in a trap. A nuanced answer suits a graduates' seminar but not a tribune meant to carve binary choices. The hunter gleefully has been savoring that "gotcha" moment of the prey caught off guard and getting a lot of political play out of it. It served the purpose of emboldening Gay's detractors who smelled blood and went for the jugular. They carefully framed it as principles over expediency but are nowhere to be found to take a position that carries a heavy political price, like condemning the rioting of January 6, 3 years ago.

The real issue at stake is a coordinated effort to abrogate wokeism and its enactments under the D.E.I. moniker. **D**iversity, **E**quity, and **I**nclusion have become the bête noire of the right who feel very uncomfortable with members of different backgrounds climbing the ladder of success. Affirmative Action as a socially progressive means to right historical wrongs is no longer the law of the land, thanks to a very conservative majority on the Supreme Court. It was no accident that Harvard was chosen as the test case to repeal the practice of Affirmative Action.

It's a farce to pretend it was solely about her academic record and her initial anemic condemnation of the atrocious killing of civilians by Hamas; incidentally, the atrocious killing of Palestinian civilians doesn't seem to count. She became a victim of hyperpartisan machinations. She had created the office of D.E.I. at Harvard, and that bestowed a target on her back for those who consider such effort as a serious breach and would even condemn it as racist because it's anti-white! Why would any objective mind come to this conclusion is beyond me. Yet such is the charged atmosphere preceding a presidential race where one of the candidates prides himself on being a "woke killer." Fortunately, this is no longer the 19th century when we had no voice, and the narrative was the sole purview of the dominating caste. We do have a say in the narrative, and this is the important factor in the debate. Chances are, many people who form an opinion on Claudie Gay don't take the time to read her pronouncements. Judge for yourself, her inaugural [speech](#) and the recent [Op-Ed](#) written the day after her resignation. Any woke individual will come away shaking the head about what could have been but was aborted by dark forces who are inflexible, and narrow-minded in their assessment of the spokes and wheel of society. The galling part of this verity is the craven attitude, the fawning simultaneously upheld for obviously phony but popular -in rabid fashion in some corners- individuals and concepts. Some would even go so far as to minimize the atrocities associated with slavery but would never dare reenact the role of a slave, victim of random whippings and umpteen humiliations.

D.E.I. makes sense. It serves as a social contract to assure that members of the same polity have equal access to the pie. People who feel threatened use the subterfuge of MLK's "I Have a Dream" to describe a paradigm of a colorblind society when, in fact, the very contentious issues have the underpinning of ethnic/racial connotation and chasm. The notion undergirding D.E.I.'s very existence is to give a vested interest to the largest segment of the populace to coexist in peace. I don't see any downside to this, honestly. The running premise is that talent is color, gender neutral. If one doesn't accept that premise, then D.E.I. is considered the enemy. She admitted to

her mistakes but would not get another mulligan because of who she is. Were I to construct a headline for the Gay saga, my choice would be, "THE VICTIM OF THE RIGHT-WING IDEOLOGUES."