

Op Eds

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Why I'm Not Woke

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April 6, 2018

Get woke.

Any woke person knows what that means. You don't need to look up the [Merriam-Webster](#) or even [Urban Dictionary](#) definitions to know I am not using incorrect grammar to try and get you out of bed in the morning. I'm telling you to open your eyes and become socially engaged. I'm imploring you to educate yourself on current events and political issues. Being woke is being plugged in and being actively aware and involved with the world around you.

However, the word holds a partisan undertone that we usually don't even notice, and if we do, that we probably don't disagree with. The word "woke" implies that to support the liberal viewpoint is to be socially aware. Woke people are heavily informed and actively involved with liberal social issues. If you're leading a Black Lives Matter protest, you're probably woke. If you're calling your congressperson to advocate for Planned Parenthood, you're probably woke. If you're handing out pro-life leaflets, however, you probably will not receive the woke label.

This biased nomenclature is rooted in a belief held by some on the left that people are only conservative because they are uneducated. If only people were smarter, more informed, more woke, then surely they would see the Democratic light and switch sides. Nevertheless, it is crucial to see the fault in this mindset.

Some of the most woke—socially informed and engaged—people I know are woke from the right. I know conservatives who watch the news 24/7 and don't let a single current event slip their notice. I know people who utilize grassroots efforts to engage with their community to raise awareness for an issue that is of the utmost importance to them: anti-abortion legislation. Conservatism is not about being misinformed and being woke is not about liberalism. There are educated, impassioned individuals on all sides of an issue.

I do acknowledge that the origins of the word "woke" [stem](#) from the black community and its fight for equality. I understand that, historically, racial equality has been primarily driven by liberals, and hence the historical connection between the word and partisanship is natural. However, woke is spreading. It is taking on new meaning and new reach. Woke is starting to become an umbrella term for all that is just, thus making justice synonymous with Democratic political platforms.

Such a usage of language is merely one example of rampant political polarization in the United States. We would rather assume that people on the other side are misinformed or downright idiotic than acknowledge the viability of different opinions or priorities.

Furthermore, we have reached a point where we often isolate ourselves from people with differing political opinions. This is harmful in the obvious sense: It diminishes open, enriching political discourse. However, even more harmful is the reduction of individuals with whom we disagree to nothing more than their political beliefs. We allow our own self-image to be defined by our political identification. We fail to realize that people are more than their votes for Hillary Clinton or Donald Trump. People have families, friends, hobbies, passions, thoughts, and priorities. A Trump voter is not necessarily a raving racist, and a Clinton voter is not necessarily trying to leech off your hard-earned money. They are simply people who have different opinions than you. Those opinions do not make them dumb or evil. Those opinions do not have to mean that they are not woke. They are different, but they are not invalid.

If you are shaking your head right now, I implore you to pause for a moment. Can you look at yourself and label one single opinion that comprehensively defines your entire identity? I certainly hope not. We should all acknowledge our complexities as individuals and refuse to be defined by a single term. Then we should extend this same courtesy to others.

So, I don't want to be woke. I don't want to restrict my definition of activism and intelligence to only include those who agree with me politically. I want to be open-minded and engaged. I want to be informed and passionate. I want to be an advocate and a human being beyond political issues. Maybe we can broaden the definition of "woke" to include these characteristics from both sides of the political spectrum, but until then I remain contently un-woke.