

Versione italiana

When consulting *grammarly.com* with a straightforward comma question for editing my novel HUSH LITTLE FIRE, I simply asked, where should I put the comma in my sentence? In answer, Grammarly.com burped forth a passive-aggressive criticism for using the term “elderly” in my sentence. I didn’t ask for a sociological evaluation of my adjectives. I was asking about commas, but AI was programmed to pass judgement that my word elderly could be considered insensitive, disrespectful, and non-inclusive by a certain demographic. Here is my sentence from the novel followed by what AI wrote:

Sentence: “But I knew, and all the elderly women on Cape Cod knew that in the olden days, cabin boys did double-duty sexually pleasuring the sailors.”

Grammarly.com: “The term elderly women may be considered disrespectful. Using terms that those you’re writing about might prefer is key to inclusive communication.”

Huh? Inclusive communication?

First, I am not using the term in a disrespectful way to women. Since when did the word elderly get lumped in with disrespectful words? Second, I cannot be accused of expropriating the pov of “elderly women” because that demographic is mine. I AM *those I am writing about*.

Artificial Intelligence of Grammarly.com suggested I use the term older women instead of elderly women, but the passive-aggressive message wouldn’t allow me to continue my comma search unless I CHOSE to click accept or dismiss. I wanted to ignore the whole thing and get back to commas, but AI demanded an answer if I wanted to continue. If AI were a person, I would have picked up the phone and called them to argue that the word older women would have been criticized by professors in the olden days as too vague and not specific. *How old? Older than which women?*



Image: peoplematters.in

Language matters. The nebulous Politically Correct movement may have started out with good intentions to be fair and inclusive, but some of their cheerleaders have gone off the rails in a dangerous way. And worse, the humans who designed DEI (Diversity Equity Inclusion) have handed the policing over to algorithms that red flag phrases and so-called inappropriate words that set the standard for what writing crosses a line. Lately, this often leads to punishment and the firing of a human being. No trial, no judge, no jury, and not even a hearing.

Veteran nurse Brad McDowell, (16 years on the job) was fired for expressing opinions on a private Facebook page about his concerns about DEI. He deviated from the party line of the Meritus Medical Center where he worked in Maryland. He wrote in the [Wall Street Journal](#), *DEI GOT ME SACKED FROM MY NURSING JOB - I wasn't told what those posts were, though after reviewing my Facebook account, I suspect it was a January post in which I stated that 'corporate healthcare has shifted its focus from patient centered care directives to diversity of the workforce and inclusive excellence training (aka thought reform) for its leaders.'* Nothing in that sentence is false or misleading, and again I didn't mention my employer or a training course. No matter: For openly questioning DEI, instead of keeping my concerns to myself, I was fired.

McDowell never mentioned Meritus Medical Center in his personal posts, which could very well mean that Meritus (Big Brother), was monitoring employee's private FB pages.

In McDowell's case, how did implementing a well-meaning DEI program suddenly turn into a cudgel to demonize people who question authority?

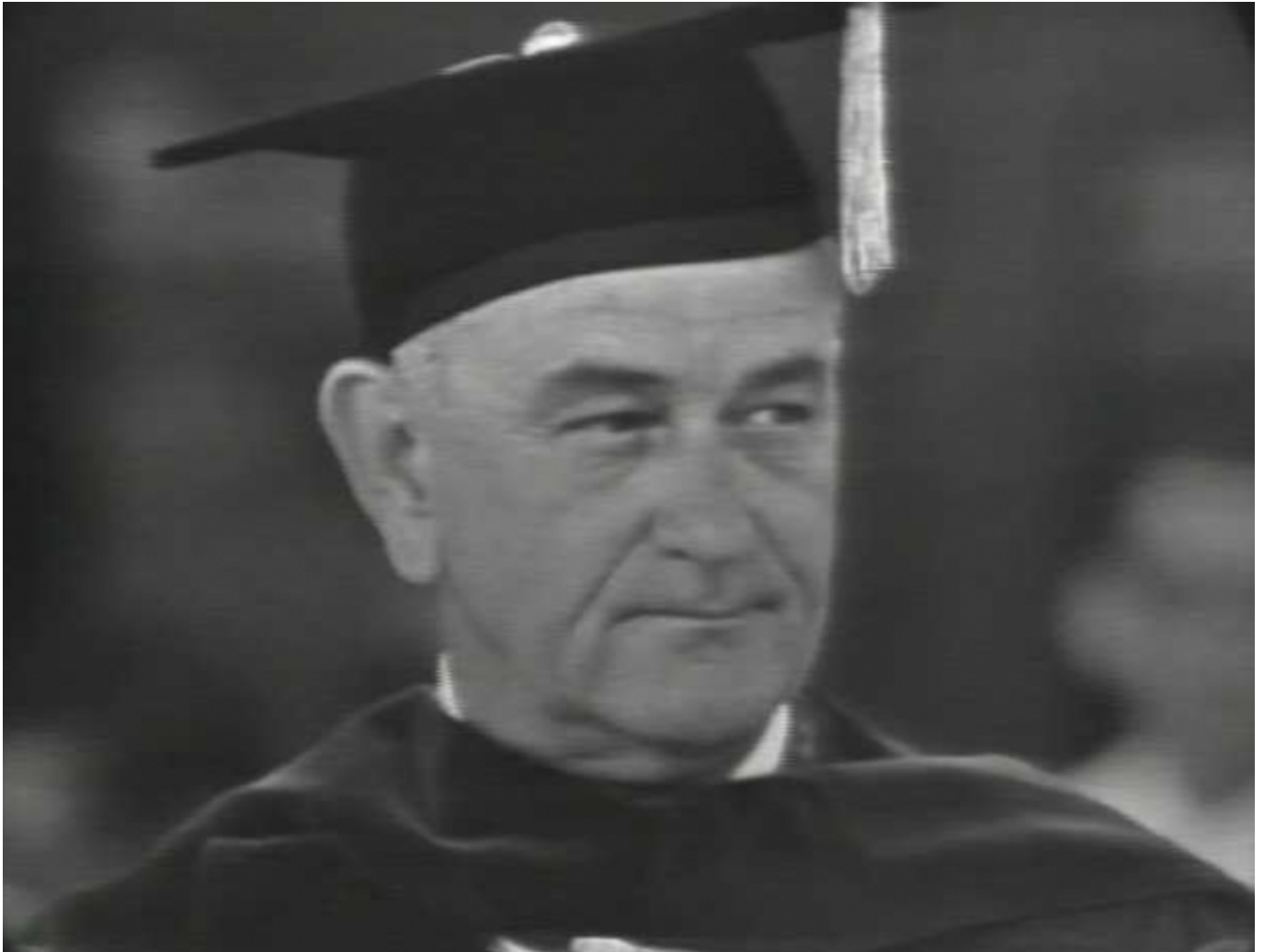
Ask George Orwell. "In a Party member, not even the smallest deviation of opinion on the most unimportant subject can be tolerated."

But what are the original principals of Diversity Equity and Inclusion?

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, DEI, describes policies and initiatives that support and promote the representation and participation of different groups of individuals regardless of age, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. - Business Leadership Today

At a Howard University commencement address, President Lyndon Johnson eloquently explained why we need Affirmative Action programs and DEI when he said,

You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, 'You are free to compete with all the others,' and still justly believe that you have been completely fair. This is the next and the more profound stage of the battle for civil rights. We seek not just freedom but opportunity. We seek not just legal equity but human ability, not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result.



President Lyndon Johnson in 1965

DEI is everywhere: schools, universities, corporations, religious institutions, and it has leapt across the pond all the way to Italy.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion expert Claudio Guffanti, Founder of Unlimited Views in Italy believes,

In Italy, there is a sense that few companies truly appreciate the commercial value brought to the table through investment in D&I. Many organizations continue to consider only the social aspect and not the benefits to their core business. Whatever one's personal views are on the topic of DEI, there is no denying the denying the financial impact DEI can have on an organization. According to a 2012 [McKinsey](#) study, US companies with diverse executive boards had a 95% higher return on equity than those that lacked diversity.

The UPSIDE of DEI -“Organizations that blend people who think differently from each other—analytical workers, conceptual thinkers, creative spirits, or detail-oriented employees—can create energy to drive new ideas and productivity.” -Trish Foster executive director [Center for](#)

Women and Business

The DOWNSIDE OF DEI - When DEI is not institutionalized in a company's Human Resources Department, the company runs the risk of being demonized as bigoted, racist, and backward on social media, and it also runs the risk of being boycotted or cancelled. The cudgel.

Institutionalized DEI has given birth to the business of Sensitivity Readers who professionally review educational textbooks, business documents, fiction, and non-fiction literary works to root out what could be deemed offensive content, such as stereotypes and bias. Hence, the missive from grammarly.com (red-flagged by an AI bot) that the word elderly might be considered offensive to older people. Hmm...Is AI capable of factoring in context, intent, or historical precedent?

In a 2008 speech at the University of Toronto, Christopher Hitchens asked the students prescient questions about censorship that we should be asking in 2024:

Who is going to decide? To whom do you award the right to decide what speech is harmful or who is the harmful speaker? To whom will you award the right to determine in advance what are the harmful consequences going to be? To whom are you going to award the task of being censor?



Christopher Hitchens. Image: Flickr

In George Orwell's book 1984, words are vaporized and eliminated in the name of simplifying the dictionary and promoting *DoubleThink* - when the mind is made to believe two contradictory ideas, done with the purpose of destroying critical thinking in human beings. If we continue to award the task of red-flagging so-called inappropriate words to AI, we could easily slide down the slippery slope to Big Brotherland. Perhaps we are already there.

Cover Image: Flickr

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