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Opinion | The U.S. Government's Woke Training

The Editorial Board

6–8 minutes

Read instructions from the Army, NASA, the VA, and more, obtained via open-records law.



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The Department of Veterans Affairs has a gender gingerbread person. NASA says beware of micro-inequities. And if U.S. Army servicewomen express “discomfort showering with a female who has male genitalia,” what’s the brass’s reply? Talk to your commanding officer, but toughen up.

These are details from hundreds of pages of diversity and inclusion training materials used by the federal government in 2021 and obtained under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Everyone in corporate life knows such training, lampooned in the second episode of the TV show “The Office.” Yet taxpayers might be curious how their money is being spent to instruct the federal workforce these days.

Documents obtained via FOIA often lack context, so it's hard to know the audience for any specific training and whether participation was voluntary or not-so-politely encouraged. With those caveats, press ahead.

Asked for its diversity training, the U.S. Army offered three modules on transgender policy, one [for "Commanders at all levels,"](#) another [for "Special Staff,"](#) and a third [for "Units and Soldiers."](#) Notable is a series of vignettes that cover pronoun usage, urinalysis observation, and a serviceman who wants "to discuss his newly confirmed pregnancy." With respect to showers, schedules can be adjusted or curtains installed. But a soldier's gender in the Army's system governs which facilities are used. Accommodating only a transgender soldier is prohibited.

Also, [stiff upper lip](#): "Anyone may encounter individuals in barracks, bathrooms, or shower facilities with physical characteristics of the opposite sex." Transgender soldiers aren't "required or expected to modify or adjust their behavior based on the fact that they do not 'match' other Soldiers."

The VA's ["Managing Gender Diversity"](#) training has sections on pronouns and embracing "gender-expansiveness." One slide lists terms, including "gender fluid" and "pansexual," while instructing: "List your personal 'biases' in the BIAS box." A game of "PRIVILEGE BINGO" includes such items as "NO CRIMINAL RECORD," "MILITARY EXPERIENCE," and "MARRIED."

A NASA training on ["Allyship for Executives"](#) says that the term "African American" is "utilized heavily in white spaces," and it "can

make Black people feel excluded as the term tends to ‘other.’”

[Another NASA slide series](#) explains that inclusive leaders “are willing to be ‘uncomfortable’” in exploring “race, gender, sexual orientation” and so forth. “We have been taught to act as if we are colorblind and gender-neutral,” [it adds](#), but “these efforts actually limit us.”

A NASA [tip sheet on microaggressions](#) gives examples that include, “Asking an Asian person to help with a Math or Science problem,” as well as saying, “America is a melting pot.” A [slide deck on inclusive language](#) suggests nixing “the poor” and substituting “people dealing with economic hardship.” [A talk to a NASA center](#) by Janice Underwood, then the state of Virginia’s chief diversity officer, urges: “Walk *toward* the discomfort—when patterns of white supremacy are named or questioned, predictable defensive responses will emerge.” Ms. Underwood now leads the diversity bureau at the federal Office of Personnel Management.

A Department of Homeland Security presentation [on “Inclusive Diversity”](#) says that micro-inequities can be fought by micro-affirmations. “Social and Physical Pain Produce Similar Brain Responses,” it argues, using a cartoon rendition of two brain scans.

A National Science Foundation seminar [presents data](#) about the race and gender of the NSF’s workforce, before sending participants to breakout rooms to discuss. A National Endowment for the Arts program offers [definitions for terms](#) such as “White Fragility,” “Heterosexism,” and “Misogynoir.”

Some government bodies refused to release training materials created by outside vendors, citing a FOIA exemption for

“confidential” commercial information. But contracts and lists of courses can shed a little light.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provided [training orders](#) of about \$313,000 for a slew of courses, such as “8 Tactics for Courageous Workplace Conversations About Race,” “Let’s Talk About Systemic Racism, Unconscious Bias and Privilege,” and “Silence is a Statement: Understanding Race in the Workplace.”

The Environmental Protection Agency’s course lists feature “Everyday Anti-Racism” and “Psychological Safety: Building a Culture of Inclusion and Innovation.” The Food and Drug Administration’s menu [offers a two-hour seminar](#), “Checking Your Blindspot: Ways to Find and Fix Unconscious Bias.”

These examples are, well, non-inclusive. Many of the materials are dull recitations of anti-retaliation policies or polite reminders, for example, [not to pet](#) somebody’s service dog. But one lesson is that there is now a conveyor belt from academia to the diversity-industrial complex. The portmanteau “misogynoir” was coined in 2010 on a blog called Crunk Feminist Collective. Eleven years later it’s in a training for government workers.

This type of re-education was accelerated by President Biden’s 2021 executive order [directing agencies](#) to “increase the availability and use of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility training.” It’s a form of political indoctrination intended to impose woke values on the vast federal bureaucracy and U.S. military.

You’d think the agencies would be proud to post all of these materials online, where it doesn’t require a long wait and a records

request to read them. But since they don't, we thought readers might like to see their taxpayer dollars and government values at work.

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