

# The Paralysis of Political Correctness

*Valda Boyd Ford*  
*Founder and CEO*  
*Center for Human Diversity, Inc.*

*Workforce Diversity Conference*  
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UNIVERSITY OF  
**Nebraska**  
Medical Center

NEBRASKA'S HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER



Why are we here?

# Objectives

- Define the paralysis of political correctness
- Discuss strategies to eliminate or lessen the fear of the unknown that keeps us from doing our best in culturally and linguistically awkward situations
- Identify skill sets needed to provide safe, effective care in a diverse environment

# Paralysis

- **Paralysis** is the complete loss of **muscle** function for one or more muscle groups
- Wikipedia

# Political Correctness

**(noun)** the avoidance of terms or behavior considered to be discriminatory or offensive to certain groups of people.

- [Askoxford.com](http://Askoxford.com)

# The Paralysis Of Political Correctness

the fear that keeps us from doing our best in culturally and linguistically awkward situations; that keeps us afraid of the word or phrase that shuts down communication and hurts both the sender and the receiver; that tongue-tied, stomach-churning sensation that makes us avoid those who may need us the most (Valda Ford, 1999)

# The Inevitable Result Of Political Correctness

“By using the excuse of not upsetting anyone, the politically correct are demanding that people behave like the fool who would please everyone; that everyone must become such a fool! All must accept the notions of the Politically Correct as truth, or else! .... Life, in private and public, becomes a meaningless charade where delusion thrives and terror rules.”

- Philip Atkinson  
<http://www.ourcivilisation.com/pc.htm>

# Political Correctness Discussed

“For the first time in our history, Americans have to be fearful of what they say, of what they write, and of what they think. They have to be afraid of using the wrong word, a word denounced as offensive or insensitive, or racist, sexist, or homophobic.

*The Origins of Political Correctness: An Accuracy in Academia Address by Bill Lind*

Available 5/2006

[http://www.economist.com/finance/PrinterFriendly.cfm?Story\\_ID=656347](http://www.economist.com/finance/PrinterFriendly.cfm?Story_ID=656347)



# Expert advice

- Consultation on how to address physician group

# University of Delaware Library

## **On Freedom of Expression and Campus Speech Codes**

*Freedom of thought and expression is essential . . . and political issues. . . arouse the strongest passions. In the process, views will be expressed that may seem to many wrong, distasteful, or offensive. Such is the nature of freedom to sift and winnow ideas.*

*On a campus that is free and open, no idea can be banned or forbidden. No viewpoint or message may be deemed so hateful or disturbing that it may not be expressed.*



# Religious Reflection Room

*(take Elevator to Level 3)*



# Is the calendar safe? Whose calendar?

Educators and historians say schools from North America to Australia have been changing the terms "Before Christ," or B.C., to "Before Common Era," or B.C.E., and "anno Domini" (Latin for "in the year of the Lord") to "Common Era." In short, they're referred to as B.C.E. and C.E.

***P.C. scholars take Christ out of B.C.***

***By Michael Gormley  
ASSOCIATED PRESS***

# What Paralysis Does

- Causes the speaker to be hesitant in moving forward in the conversation
- Causes the listener to wonder about the reasons for the hesitancy and may create even more tension

# Obesity and PC: Just One Example of Bad Outcomes

- A recent survey conducted by the Center for Human Nutrition revealed that Pediatricians are reluctant to tell parents that their kids are fat.
- Center for Human Nutrition, 2003

# In the News

- *The fear to tell parents is especially bad when:*
- Medical News Today, UK -**Obesity in children** is on the increase. Not only is this a health hazard while they are young, but it also sets a pattern for later life. ...
- **Obesity in children may be worse than thought**  
WCNC (subscription), NC - Forty percent of public schoolchildren in Arkansas are overweight, and nearly one in four is obese,
- **German children face obesity remedy**  
BEIJING (Xinhuanet) -- Berlin: The majority of German adults, and one out of every three **children** is overweight --

# Audience Participation

- Have you ever been paralyzed by PC?
- Give examples of PC paralysis.
- Cases:
  - Voice drops
  - Faces reddens or pales
  - Go through a litany of words to be all-inclusive



- *Like most people, I tire of the new trend toward political correctness! People have become so overly-sensitive that we all constantly find ourselves "on guard" so that we don't offend anyone. I recently saw a bumper sticker which said "Political Correctness means always having to say you are sorry."*
- Rick Lavoie, Learning Disabilities Online  
[http://www.ldonline.org/ld\\_indepth/general\\_info/learning\\_differences\\_saved.html](http://www.ldonline.org/ld_indepth/general_info/learning_differences_saved.html)

# PC's Four Fears

- Fear based on lack of knowledge of client needs and expectations;
- Fear from regulatory and administrative reprisal;
- Fear of lack of competence;
- Fear of being “found out”

# From its beginnings

- Political correctness has roots in the university system. However, PC has left the hallowed halls and invaded every aspect of human interaction.
- How is PC affecting behavior in corporations?
- Is PC dominating all communication or just communication that is visible to all (and not the select few)?
- Since PC is about speech and policy and procedures derive from speech how much time and energy is spent on word-smithing and making everything “inclusive”.

# When PC Is out of Control!

The [\*Sacramento Bee\*](#) reports that, in the midst of a multibillion-dollar deficit, the California legislature wrangled over the wording of a resolution honoring Father's Day. Some legislators pushed for language so expansive as to specify ***“single fathers, foster fathers, adoptive fathers, biological fathers, stepfathers, families headed by two fathers, grandfathers raising grandchildren, fathers in blended households, and other non-traditional fathers.”*** 6/13/03

# PC – Not always helpful!

- The phrase "physically challenged" is falling out of favor. A colleague mine who has permanent paralysis in both legs told me, "I hate the phrase! 'Challenged' implies that the obstacle can be overcome if I just try hard enough. That's not reality! I am not challenged . . . I am disabled!"
- [http://www.Idonline.org/Id\\_indepth/general\\_info/earning\\_differences\\_saved.html](http://www.Idonline.org/Id_indepth/general_info/earning_differences_saved.html)

And then  
there's **Common**  
Sense and  
*Home Training*



# Solutions

- Self-assessment
- Organizational assessment
- Understanding that comfort increases with knowledge and exposure to people and things outside our comfort zone
- Understanding the role of vulnerability

# Have we met our objectives

- Define the paralysis of political correctness
- Discuss strategies to eliminate or lessen the fear of the unknown that keeps us from doing our best in culturally and linguistically awkward situations
- Identify skill sets needed to provide safe, effective care in a diverse environment



# Do we understand the Four Fears of PC

- Fear based on lack of knowledge of client needs and expectations;
- Fear from regulatory and administrative reprisal;
- Fear of lack of competence;
- Fear of being “found out”

*Sometimes you just have  
to stick your neck out!!!*





Thanks for Coming!