

Parable of the Sower / Corporate Edi

In both the parable of the sower and Psalm 1, the distinction is not merely between hearing and not hearing, but between hearing and bearing fruit. The seed that thrives is not the one that merely lands, but the one that takes root, endures, and produces something tangible—thirty, sixty, a hundredfold. Likewise, the blessed person in Psalm 1 is “like a tree planted by streams of water” whose leaf does not wither and who “yields fruit in season.”

Scripture doesn’t celebrate the act of drafting good intentions—it calls for real-world transformation. And this is where most EDI policy collapses: not in its language, but in its lack of material consequence. It too often remains a surface commitment, internalised as institutional self-image, rather than something that actually disrupts power, redistributes resources, or makes the workplace just. The difference between policy and practice, like the difference between hearing and doing, is not semantic. It’s material. It’s whether anything grows.

1. What Is a Corporation?

Legally, it’s a person. Practically, it’s an entity driven by the mandate to maximise profits for shareholders. Ethically, it’s a powerful self-justification machine.

Corporations now routinely shape government priorities through lobbying, campaign financing, and policy influence. But this influence extends deeper still—into our universities, our research agendas, even the terms we use to frame justice. Increasingly, corporate partnerships steer institutional ethics, including EDI (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion) policies.

When profit is the bottom line, inclusion becomes a marketing strategy. So the real question isn’t whether corporations support EDI—but what kind of inclusion they’re comfortable with, and who gets left out when the optics shift.

Take Coca-Cola. The company has proudly published its inclusion policies, consulted with diversity experts, and issued glossy reports on its commitment to equity. But this is the same Coca-Cola that holds a stranglehold over local water

supplies in parts of Mexico, leaving communities with so little safe drinking water that residents rely on Coke itself—contributing to an epidemic of diabetes that kills over 3,000 people in Chiapas each year. The disconnect between EDI policy and the real-world consequences of profit-driven activity – it is, in other words, seed that fell on bad soil. – even though the window dressing is great!

And it's not just soft drinks. In 2020, Lockheed Martin—an actual arms manufacturer—sent three of its white male executives on a corporate anti-racism training day. According to the Harvard Business Review, this was a bold move. “By tackling internalised racism and sexism in the boardroom,” gushed a collection of workplace sociologists, “corporations can retain talent and reduce risk to shareholders. Members of underrepresented groups need powerful white male allies too.”

Now I don't know about you, but I wonder whether making billions of dollars from the bombs dropped on civilians in Iraq and Afghanistan might count as a more serious workplace microaggression.

When companies like Lockheed and Coca-Cola are praised as inclusion pioneers, we have to ask what “inclusion” really means. The answer is optics. Corporate EDI isn't about redistributing power—it's about neutralising criticism. It provides cover. And when inclusion is used this way, it doesn't threaten business as usual. It protects it.

2. Lucy: Victimhood

We now live in a time when being recognised as a victim can confer legitimacy, visibility, even cultural authority. But we have to ask—what happens when victimhood becomes the endpoint of a conversation, rather than the beginning of one?

Victimhood and Vulnerability-

3. Material Consequences Excluded from Inclusion

Angela Y. Davis famously critiqued what she called “glass ceiling feminism”—the aspiration of elite women to break into corporate and political spaces built on exclusion, extraction, and domination. The goal, in that model, is to get more women into boardrooms. Davis flips the script: what if the boardroom itself is the problem?

And yet today, corporations boast about their ethical commitments. They want to beef up their EDI credentials—Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion—because it’s good optics. That phrase is crucial. The fact that corporations have adopted EDI structures at all tells you something important: they do not see EDI as a threat to their interests. On the contrary, they see it as a way to preserve those interests while appearing progressive.

Too often, inclusion strategies invite marginalised bodies into toxic structures without altering the logic of those structures.

Inclusion without material redistribution, or structural overhaul, is not progress—it’s PR. We need to ask: when institutions celebrate inclusion, what material realities are they ignoring, neutralising, or absorbing to maintain their own legitimacy?

INTERCESSION

Lord of the harvest,
we praise you for the world you have created,
the food that sustains us,
the relationships that nourish us,
the love that feeds us.

Where corporations use righteous policies to mask systemic injustice,
may your truth expose what is hidden, and your justice roll down like waters.

Where governments and institutions adopt righteous policies without adopting
righteous practices,
may their words be tested by fruit, and their promises made flesh in public life.

Where inclusion is declared but not lived,
may your Spirit stir dissatisfaction, holy unrest, and the courage to rebuild what is
broken.

Show us how to take to heart the genuine concerns raised by policies of Equality,
Diversity and Inclusivity—
not as slogans to endorse, but as lives to be honoured, burdens to be shared, and
systems to be reimagined.

Forgive us when our morals remain external to us, and have no effect on our
ethical lifestyles.

Forgive us when our values and principles do not manifest themselves in our
actual treatment of other people.

Forgive us when we settle for looking good rather than doing good.

You are the God who comes to us as the excluded, the marginalised, the outsider.
You are the God whose greatness is expressed in radical solidarity with those who
are voiceless and invisible—unseen and unheard.

May we meet you there, and bear fruit that lasts.

Amen.