



# The Enigma of Diversity: The Language of Race and the Limits of Racial Justice

*Ellen Berrey*

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## **The Enigma of Diversity: The Language of Race and the Limits of Racial Justice** Ellen Berrey

Diversity these days is a hallowed American value, widely shared and honored. That's a remarkable change from the Civil Rights era—but does this public commitment to diversity constitute a civil rights victory? What does diversity mean in contemporary America, and what are the effects of efforts to support it?

Ellen Berrey digs deep into those questions in *The Enigma of Diversity*. Drawing on six years of fieldwork and historical sources dating back to the 1950s and making extensive use of three case studies from widely varying arenas—housing redevelopment in Chicago's Rogers Park neighborhood, affirmative action in the University of Michigan's admissions program, and the workings of the human resources department at a Fortune 500 company—Berrey explores the complicated, contradictory, and even troubling meanings and uses of diversity as it is invoked by different groups for different, often symbolic ends. In each case, diversity affirms inclusiveness, especially in the most coveted jobs and colleges, yet it resists fundamental change in the practices and cultures that are the foundation of social inequality. Berrey shows how this has led racial progress itself to be reimagined, transformed from a legal fight for fundamental rights to a celebration of the competitive advantages afforded by cultural differences.

Powerfully argued and surprising in its conclusions, *The Enigma of Diversity* reveals the true cost of the public embrace of diversity: the taming of demands for racial justice.

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