

Student's Name

Course

Professor's Name

Date

### Political Correctness

Political correctness is an idea that is regarded with both reverence and disdain in American culture. On one hand, to be politically correct means you are intelligent, sensitive, worldly and appreciative of diversity. On the other hand, to be politically correct means you are likely to be overly sensitive, nitpicking, and a source of amusement and an annoyance. Indeed, political correctness is often regarded as a double edged sword. It is capable of discouraging vocalized prejudice; but it is also capable of stifling productive and honest communication.

Merriam Webster defines political correctness as the practice of: “conforming to a belief that language and practices which could offend political sensibilities (as in matters of sex or race) should be eliminated” (Merriam-Webster). At its heart, political correctness seeks to eliminate words and actions that marginalizes certain groups or treats them insensitively. The culture of political correctness is a radical departure from times past when stereotypes about races, religions, and cultures were not only accepted but widely encouraged. The acceptance of racism and other forms of prejudice in America evolved from its earliest days when the enslavement of African Americans was both common and legal. African Americans were thought to be inferior and suited only for manual labor. These views were not espoused only by uneducated bigots; many of the people considered today to be among history's greatest thinkers harbored politically incorrect beliefs. (Rodriguez 2007).

While it is easy to see the benefits of being politically correct; the detriments are less obvious. Politically correct behavior, by definition, avoids rhetoric that can be viewed as insensitive or marginalizing. However, in avoiding such language altogether, frank discussions about race, class, culture, and gender are also avoided. Those who harbor prejudicial beliefs are encouraged to keep them to themselves. In matters of business, cultural differences can be overlooked in the name of political correctness, leading to misunderstandings and even insults. In this way, political correctness is, indeed, a double-edged sword.

#### Works Cited

Merriam-Webster. *Politically correct*. Available at: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/politically%20correct> [Accessed 1 March 2013].

Rodriguez, J.P., 2007. *Slavery in the United States: A social, political and historical encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO.