

A Badge of Discrimination

by Theodore Dalrymple



The Covid-19 epidemic has cruelly exposed the intellectual, moral and financial frivolity of British public administration. Before the epidemic started its deadly campaign against the old, the fat, the hypertensive, the diabetic, the men, the poor, and the black, certain hospitals in London spent time, effort and money on displaying their political rectitude for every *bien pensant* to see; but just as virtue, when carried to excess, becomes vice, so anti-discrimination becomes discrimination.

I use the word discrimination in its modern political meaning, of course. When I was young—quite a long time ago now—my teachers tried to teach me discrimination, that is to say, the ability to distinguish between the good and the bad in, say, literature or other spheres. They regarded this as perhaps their most important duty as teachers. But the modern political meaning has almost crowded out the older meaning, the semantic shift being an evident symptom of our current obsessions.

In Britain's highly-centralized, almost Soviet-style healthcare system, the National Health Service, staff are being encouraged all over the country to wear little rainbow-coloured metal badges to show that they are homosexual, bisexual, and transsexual-friendly, and do not discriminate against them. The wearing of these badges is voluntary, but about 3,000 of the staff of Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals, for example, now wear them. The self-congratulatory [*Library of Law and Liberty*](#).