

# Life Challenges, Diverse Identities & Creative Solutions

Rosemary Sage<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Abai Kazakh National Pedagogical University

**Funding:** No specific funding was received for this work.

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

## Abstract

This review summarises the main messages of a book *‘Life Challenges, Diverse Identities & Creative Solutions’* (Sage & Matteucci, 2023), with authors contributing from across the world, who have come together to consider life today at a watershed time in history. Technology is rapidly transforming how we live and people movements across the world are changing national lifestyles. Different living approaches are the result of varying climates, landscapes and traditions that have evolved over the centuries worldwide. This means that there are cultural customs not always accepted by nations receiving immigrants, as views, values and routine behaviours conflict. The sections below look at these issues and pose solutions for society to move forward from the tensions and hate presently generated.

## Introduction

This reflection is written at a time of great threat to our civilisation. The Hamas attack on Israeli settlements near Gaza and slaughter at the Nova Peace music festival, with retaliations, have produced unimaginable horrors for people on both sides of the conflict (Oct. 2023). Surely, there are better ways to deal with problems than killing and kidnapping innocent people? We need to reflect on where we have gone wrong as a planet species. Many have avoided condemning the atrocities, oblivious to the fact that this represents a broader conflict of values. Those espousing Left-wing views of freedom, equality, human rights and internationalism, are supporting fanatic groups (*whatever their barbaric crimes*) to signal a contempt of Western democracy. We value free expression but tolerance for the intolerant could easily end our present way of life. Enemies are being treated like allies. The report of the Institute of Economic Affairs (Glendering, 2023) amassed evidence of how UK police “*fail to investigate anti-white hatred*”. Many examples were given, such as a London University Diversity Officer posting the phrase “KillAllWhiteMen” and a Cambridge Academic who called for “*eliminating white people*”. The irony is they can do this because of free speech allowed within the West’s representative system. The book by Francis Fukuyama, the historian, “*The End of History*”(1989) stated that Western values of liberty, equality and human rights were now universally accepted to be implemented worldwide. He claimed that religion and intolerance were now past anomalies. This view was strongly countered by Samuel Huntington in “*The Clash of Civilisations*” (2002), warning that future wars were inevitable and would be fought between *cultures* not *countries*. Today’s multicultural societies have a wide range of international experiences, attitudes and living standards. Challenges include communication barriers, misunderstandings and tensions between various cultural groups who think and behave

differently. Clashes occur because of opposing views, values and traditions, so it is difficult to maintain a shared national identity in communities with many ethnic types.

## Western and Non-Western Lifestyles

Non-Western cultures do not support the Western view that everyone is created equal. In the West, relationships are made by choice. Ability to choose is based on individualism and equality, although when UK television presenters can be paid £1.5 million annual salary with perks and academics with doctoral qualifications less than £50,000 on average, we might question ideas of parity. Thus, in non-Western societies the values of individualism and equality are not trusted. Presently, we witness how wrong Fukuyama's democratic views were for civilisation. The world has not become as he suggested. The rise of the Islamic State (IS), Boko, Haram, Al-Shabaab, Taliban, Jamaat Nusrat Al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), Al Qaeda and now Hamas, among the 60+ terrorist groups identified by the USA, show that these factions pose a threat to all Western values and those supporting them. Russia and China fit Huntington's model in their drive to protect their cultures. The Kremlin presented the Ukraine invasion as vital to save Russia from Western aggression and corruption. China defines its role as restoring the nation to its former greatness. In the USA, politicians position themselves as the power that can subdue enemies through economic and military might.

## Threats from Within Nations

Thus, the reality is that the threat now comes from inside countries. There are divisions amongst the liberal Left – the virtue-signalling elite who spread their views on social media along with the Right wing, whose aim is to protect tradition. The problem is a naïve inability to distinguish between people in power, because they wish to be active, moral citizens for national benefit or ones following a sectarian, extremist approach. Both are evident in political parties, universities and other organisations. Likely to be impending disasters are the constant, unchecked debates over cultural issues like different thinking bases, values, attitudes, religious beliefs, sexuality, self-identification and the alleged racism said to exist in all institutions. This denigrates and repudiates history and civilisation to skew facts and delude the public. Social media is now where science, truth and objectivity are often non-existent. People are reluctant to repudiate this stream of misinformation lest they are out of step with the social influencers. Having been slapped down for asserting that “all lives matter” to be told it is only acceptable to say “black lives matter” was a shock to someone brought up to believe all people are of equal value and should be thus regarded. Considering people within identity groups leads to divisions. Also, in a discussion on why teachers were leaving the profession in droves, the comment made that research showed this resulted from abuse by students and parents, caused horror for disclosing such published data, with huge repercussions. Giving factual evidence is no longer tolerable.

## Speaking the Truth lands People in Trouble

Even-handed, fact-based debate is now impossible, or acceptance of different views by those in power. Talk to anyone, nowadays, and they have terrifying tales to tell. The European Commission initiated a *Continual Professional Development* project to support higher learning levels for jobs, now urgently required with Artificial Intelligence technology taking over many work routines. Pilots of personal evidence in an e-portfolio, structured to international professional standards at top Level 8 for a doctorate, showed that research *within* rather than the traditional *on* practice approach had more impact on workplace development. However, new management in the university implementing this viewed it as “*cannibalising the doctoral system*” and abruptly ended the programme, with abuse and death threats received by the academic who led this new practitioner model. Such stories are common today and demonstrate how the world is losing integrity, morality and respect for knowledge, experience and differing views. Western civilisation, with all its diversity, has embraced freedom to state belief, but now no longer observes this for individuals holding views against those promoted by persons in power positions.

## Authors of “Life Challenges, Diverse Identities & Creative Solutions” Focus on Character

It is against this background that the authors of the text: *‘Life Challenges, Diverse Identities & Creative Solutions’* (Eds. R. Sage & R. Matteucci, 2023) have made the case for a steady, continuous cultivation of tolerance, mutual respect and moral character that must be learnt and transmitted anew to each generation through our institutions and broader culture. Education has a pivotal role here and the Educational Robotics programme, coordinated in Italy, shows how teams of professionals, such as engineers, psychologists, therapists and teachers, are working collaboratively with students on digital projects to solve real community problems. Examples are robots to help the elderly and infirm and provide therapeutic management for students with special educational needs.

The liberal Left has told a morality tale of minorities as powerless, unprotected and marginalised, with welfare only possible through the benevolence of progressives supporting their specific ideas and values. The problem is if you develop communities where incomers are allowed to live under their own regulatory systems these may contravene the laws of the resident country. For example, British law only allows *one* wife, but for Muslims *four* are permitted, with many thousands allowed to live this way in the UK. Herodotus, the Greek Philosopher and Father of History, had much to say on people movements, observing that if there was not strict adherence of *everyone* to a nation’s laws there would be a decline in all standards and unfair treatment of residents. We are witnessing this today.

## The Future

Thus, the future will be shaped by today’s choices and judgements. We are at a cusp of history, with another great leap forward in a technology (Artificial Intelligence – AI) whose outcome is uncertain. In 1924, at the dawn of the nuclear age, the magazine *Punch* ran a cartoon of a professor addressing a crowded theatre: *‘Ladies and Gentlemen, I am about to make an attempt to divide the atom. The experiment, if successful, may be quite harmless. On the other hand, it may blow this building out of existence. I appeal to your sporting instincts to give me your sympathetic attention’*. (British Library

Collection Items). Our sympathetic attention is requested again today. While the West pursues decolonisation and peddles false facts we are likely to face an unending dangerous clash of values and views. Failure to grasp this situation means agreements and freedoms are likely to flee. Whether we have the will and the bravery to stop this trend remains to be seen, but the book acts as a wake-up call for us to take urgent action. Will believers in order, duty, tradition, nationalism and respect for everyone be able to bring balance?

Western politics, promoting individual freedom and personal prosperity, are how most people want to live, with the possibility of self-fulfilment and progress. Now, we need to hold on tightly to this freedom before it flees. Each year it is remembered in Britain, known as Armistice Day, following the two world wars in the 20<sup>th</sup> century fought for freedom. The armistice was agreed at 5.10am on 11 November to come into effect at 11am. The news was conveyed around Europe within the hour. The second Sunday in November is annual Remembrance Day for the millions of soldiers and civilians killed during the World Wars. Every native Briton has tales to tell of relatives who bravely fought for our liberty.

Fortunately, many remarkable people are trying to inspire change for the good of us all, such as the Educational Robotics movement, which demonstrates how people can work together from different backgrounds. In the UK, Dr. Johnson House, in London, is doing much to support integration and moral values. Dr Samuel Johnson, was an English writer who made lasting contributions as a biographer, editor, essayist, lexicographer, literary critic, moralist, playwright and poet. He compiled his great *“Dictionary of the English Language”* in the garret at the top of the house. Now a museum, it provides inspiration and resources to teachers and schools, supporting Johnson’s love of the English language as a vital way to think and communicate, as well as support the values of equality and opportunity. The West now faces a reckoning with reality. We have been overtaken by a multipolar, complex and fragmented world. The rise of the East, led by China and India has reduced the West’s relative power. Those who promote strong values and integrated engagement are to be applauded and are an inspiration to us all.

## Review

We are confronted with extraordinary scientific advances whose consequences can be advantageous, but also might be disastrous, even existential, as there is little agreement on how these should be controlled by state action. Research by Demos and the University of London suggests AI will remove the “bottom rung” of the job ladder (Richard Brown, 2023). Early career tasks like planning, preparing, summarising and communicating content or developing computer code, sound, images and video will be automated within the next ten years. AI could reduce demand for work undertaken by professional services to rethink and transform educational programmes. Governments have less reaction time in our digital world and transnational threats from climate change, pandemics, rapid people movements and wars divide attention. An emphasis on pragmatism is needed to eclipse virtue-signalling tweets, which produce group think. If rational thinking prevails, the world may find a reckoning with reality leads to resolution. If we face up to the truth and honesty about mistakes, with aims not to repeat them, surely there is a way forward? Humans are the latest and youngest species to have appeared on earth and should learn from plants that have occupied more than 80% of the territory for 700 million years (Eberly College of Science, 2001). They communicate and collaborate with one another for the survival and

maintenance of their species more effectively than human beings. Our goal seems to be directed to extermination and extinction. Are we less intelligent than plants? In respect of their *communication, collaboration* and *cooperation* this would seem so. It is time we value these attributes and cultivate them if we are serious on wanting to survive. However, speaking truth to people in power is tough and often rough if they disagree with us. It is made worse when those who run things will not engage and so ignore reality. Let us save ourselves by starting to be sensible! Today, there is expectation that life will give us all what we want and deserve, but reality suggests that this is unlikely. We must accept that anything can be thrown at us, at any time. Working on our thoughts, responses and expectations is key if wanting to live peacefully with one another. Let us work for joy and love not misery and hate.

## About the Author

**Professor Doctor Rosemary Sage** is a qualified speech pathologist, psychologist and teacher; former Dean at the College of Teachers, where she led the first Practitioner Doctorate, sponsored by the European Commission. She was Director of Speech and Language Services in Leicester/Leicestershire; a Teacher in Primary and Secondary schools; Senior Language Advisor to an LEA; an Academic in 4 universities: Head of Department and Professor of Communication at Liverpool and a visiting Professor in Cuba and Japan. Rosemary is on the Queen's Panel for Education and Industry Awards. She sat on the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee as a senior magistrate (*Chairperson & Judicial Mentor*) and is presently on the judicial executive and a member of the *Magistrates in the Community* (MIC) project. She was a founder member of the Children's Legal Panel and expert witness for Educational appeals; on Parliamentary Committees for Medicine and Education, the Teaching of Medical Sciences, Inclusion of Students with Special Needs & Education Advisor to the RCSLT. Rosemary has been a trustee of several charities, a school governor and member of many research boards. She has led international research projects on language, education and employment and medical-educational issues - publishing many books and over 150 refereed papers in journals (*Intercultural Communication Lead on the EU 27 Nation Project on Diversity*). She has gained national/international awards for the *Communication Opportunity Group Strategy* (COGS) and is a winner of the Kenneth Allsop Memorial Prize, Bullard Prize, Gimson Award, International Human Communication Network Medal, The College of Teacher's Research Award & Leverhulme Fellowship amongst others. Rosemary is a Millennium & TCOT Fellow and SEND Director for the Learning for Life Educational Trust, as well as Scientific Advisor at Abai University, Kazakhstan and a Judge for the English Speaking Union. Rosemary has contributed to the Westminster Forum on Diversity and Intercultural Issues in Society.



## References

- Brown, R. (2023) *The AI Generation: How Universities can Prepare Students for the Changing World* [www.creativecommons.org](https://www.creativecommons.org). Published by DEMOS
- Eberly College of Science (2001) Penn State Uni. <https://science.psu.edu/research>
- Fukuyama, F. (1989). *The End of History*, published by the Center for National Interest. USA
- Glendening, M. (2023). *Dictating Words: The Culture-Control Left and the war against free speech*, here: [https://iea.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Perspectives\\_7\\_Dictating-words\\_web.pdf](https://iea.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Perspectives_7_Dictating-words_web.pdf)
- Herodotus (2013 update). *The History of Herodotus*. Translator: G. Macaulay. [EBook #2707]
- Huntington, S. (2002). *The Clash of Civilisations*, published by Simon Schuster, UK
- Punch (1924). Cartoon. British Library Collection Items. <http://www.bl.uk/collection-items>
- Sage, R. & Matteucci, R. (2023) Editors. *Life Challenges, Diverse Identities & Creative Solutions* In Press. Nova Scientific, New York