

When universities admit black students, they use traditional criteria and only give them special consideration when they remember how they were treated in the past.

A third argument used frequently to oppose Affirmative Action is that it condones reverse discrimination. The reverse discrimination position says that discrimination against one race is just as bad as discrimination against another. The reverse discrimination cry has even prompted UNC-CH trustee John Pope to call for race-blind admissions. Pope claims there has been a decrease in the number of white males attending college, and he attributes this to Affirmative Action. From 1987-1990, the number of white males in-state attending UNC dropped from 944 to 846. The number of black males increased by only one-half of one percent. Reverse discrimination is one of the strongest arguments used against Affirmative Action. African Americans were oppressed by Jim Crow laws for decades which called for legal separation of races in all public accommodations. Yet, white America expects the world to believe that Affirmative Action places them at a disadvantage in society.

If colleges and universities use Affirmative Action to admit millions of blacks, the numbers who enter will never catch up with those who historically were denied admission. The reverse discrimination cry is based on white people's fear that they will lose power if black people receive equal treatment. Members of the majority are

support this argument. Both of these reasons also support the arguments for Affirmative Action. First, Affirmative Action is important as long as racism continues to exist in society in covert and overt forms. Institutionalized racism continues to inhibit many qualified African American students from attending college. Research shows that large percentages of whites still hold prejudices against blacks and have negative stereotypes of blacks. The negative stereotypes held by whites reinforce that fact that racism is still alive. The National Opinion Center in Chicago conducted research on racism and prejudice in the U.S. Statistics collected by the center show that 78 percent of whites still think blacks prefer to be on welfare rather than work for a living. In addition, the number of whites who think blacks are more prone to violence than themselves was 56 percent. What is even more disturbing is that in 1991, 53 percent of whites surveyed still believe black people are less intelligent than themselves.

Affirmative Action is an important policy because it is difficult for black students to gain admission to predominantly-white universities as long as whites hold these prejudices. No one can deny that the admissions boards of predominantly-white universities lack a substantial number of blacks. Consequently, it is difficult for black people to gain traditional admission or receive fair consideration as whites. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discriminatory practices in higher education,

black students when they were forced to do so. James Meredith was allowed to enter Ole Miss only after the NAACP Legal Defense Fund fought for him and also with the protection of U.S. Marshals. Until society becomes race-blind, admission boards must also continue to utilize Affirmative Action because without this policy black students will never be able to receive fair consideration in the admission process.

Secondly, admissions cannot ignore race as a factor as long as blacks in general come from economically, educationally and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Some colleges make attempts to include students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds to encourage diversity among their student population. Some universities have acknowledged the fact that all students do not start off at the same level, and what they achieve may depend upon their economic background. Colleges must take into consideration that students come from different backgrounds, which breakdown along racial lines. There are students who must overcome substantial economic and social disadvantages to attend college, and black students are among those.

Statistics show that some blacks are never given a chance to achieve let alone seek a postsecondary education. Born in poverty with

no hope for the future, they fight against odds to "make it." Eighty-seven percent of black children in single-parent households live below the poverty level. Consequently, there are two million poor black families in the U.S., even though they comprise only 13 percent of the population. The average black child can expect to spend 15 years of his life in poverty. Despite obstacles, some 30 percent of black high school graduates from poor families attend college.

Predominantly white universities who attempt to admit students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds cannot deny that race plays a factor because African Americans are disproportionately poor. College admissions boards must look closely at black students who have overcome obstacles in order to ensure that they admit a wide variety of students. Of course, there are students from all races who come from low income families, but the number of poor blacks is disproportionate to their numbers in the population. A poor student and a rich student may have the same motivations and intelligence, but the poor child cannot help the fact that his opportunities are limited by his financial status. As long as blacks in general continue to come from disadvantaged backgrounds, colleges must also continue to consider race in

the admissions process.

Black people are always engaged in a battle to fight against racism in society. Every policy that is designed to help them is scrutinized by those who want to deter the progress of the race. Affirmative Action is only one case where people oppose a policy designed to help blacks. One need only look at the Supreme Court's latest ruling which did away with forced busing to achieve racial integration in schools. The veto of the Civil Rights Act of 1990 and the ruling on minority scholarships also indicate that African Americans have a long road ahead. African Americans are fighting for their total economic, social and political liberation—trying to rewin battles they had already won. African Americans should expect animosity toward Affirmative Action from those who have never been the victims of discrimination. It is obvious that some people just don't understand what it means to be a member of an oppressed minority. Affirmative Action is a policy that attempts to acknowledge the fact that racism is historically rooted in American society. Black people must fight for the enforcement of Affirmative Action to ensure that African American students receive fair consideration in their attempts to receive admissions to top-ranked institutions of higher learning.

*"America owes my people some of the dividends...She can afford to pay, and she may pay. I shall make them understand that there is a debt to the Negro people which they never can repay. At least, then, they must make amends."*

*--Sojourner Truth*

# Reflections

willing to help the minority just enough to relieve their guilty consciences; however, if the minority makes progress, then the majority will fight against all other efforts to help them attain total equality. In other words, Affirmative Action is a good policy as long as it is not enforced because it could increase the number of African Americans who are able to attain a higher education. Affirmative Action does not discriminate against whites—it only gives minorities a chance to enjoy the same opportunities that white people have enjoyed for decades.

College admission boards cannot ignore race in the process, and there are two main reasons that

but officials from the U.S. office of civil rights do not sit on the admissions boards. If large percentages of whites still believe that blacks are not hardworking, then perhaps they will also think they are not qualified to enter a top institution of higher learning. Even in 1991, racist incidents indicate that society has not reached the level of examining each person based on his or her qualifications rather than race. However, under an Affirmative Action policy, colleges are forced to evaluate intelligent black applicants and give them a chance to pursue a higher education. The key word is force because history shows that white universities only admitted

Please indicate your racial/ethnic origin by \_\_\_\_\_

(Optional) The U.S. L

- Asian American
- Black
- Caucasian
- Mexican American (Chicano)
- Puerto Rican

8 ETHNIC DESCRIPTION

(Fill in only one oval)

- Amer. Indian/Alaskan Native
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Black/African-American
- Caucasian/White
- Chicano/Mexican American
- Hispanic
- Puerto Rican
- Consider/Aboriginal
- Other

White (non-Hispanic) or Other

description listed on your Law School Reports?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

You must also describe in your personal statement or in a separate statement if your family's any campus or off-campus activities related to this herit-  
cultural background would be relevant to your law school e-

Minority Admissions Program: Individuals belonging to any of the following fe-  
be considered under this program. If you wish to be so considered, please indi-  
Black/African American  American Indian/Alaska Native  Mexican American (Chicano)   
Puerto Rican  Puerto Rican

us to report on the composition of ou

- Other Hispanic (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Native American (tribe) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_