

Commentary

Opposing Affirmative Action Repeats History

By Kimberle W. Crenshaw
Special to The NorthStar Network

The decision by President Bush to file a brief in the United States Supreme Court opposing the University of Michigan's admissions program illustrates just how superficial the president's repudiation of Senator Trent Lott was during that sordid episode several weeks ago. It's also consistent with a formula that is tried and true for Republicans in our nation's capital: give lip service to outreach, to equal opportunity, and now repudiate segregation from the past, while at the same time, tie the hands of the very institutions that are most effective in dismantling the consequences of that history.

Repudiating segregation requires more than singing "We Shall Overcome." It requires real efforts now to

integrate institutions of higher learning.

The Preference of White Privilege

Affirmative Action is often misunderstood as a preference, while the real preferences that happen every day are virtually ignored in a discourse that uses stereotypes and race baiting to do its work. Consider the experiences of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and George Bush, two names that will certainly come up in the conservative assault on affirmative action.

We know that tests tend to under-predict the performance of certain members of the population, especially people of color.

Dr. King's score on the GRE placed him in the bottom percentile of all test takers, yet he is probably the most gifted orator and one of the most brilliant visionaries

of the 20th century. Think about all the other would be gifted orators, surgeons, lawyers, teachers, and business people whose potential remain tragically wasted by unwarranted reliance on such an artificial benchmark of merit as a test score.

One the other hand, when we think about preferences, let's consider our president, whose SAT score was 150 points below the average Yale matriculate. And who no doubt benefited from his pedigree. This form of privileging constitutes a preference, the kind that is most responsible for excluding the wealth of talent that would otherwise gain access to higher education while maintaining white hegemony.

This simply shows the hypocrisy of the argument against affirmative action; it's

really not about equal opportunity or merit at all. It is largely a racially coded, and delimited diatribe that trains attention on those aspects of educational policy that are least responsible for the current state of educational mis-opportunity.

The Unfinished Business of the Civil Rights Movement

Our society is anxious to get over race, but not anxious to dig down deep, suck it up, and do what it takes to really make a racially egalitarian society.

Equality doesn't come cheap, and it does not come without costs, especially to expectations, and ways of doing business.

At every stage in American history, there has been a major debate about who will pay for equality.

This is just another one of those episodes.

One would have thought that the end of legally sanctioned white supremacy might have brought about a fundamentally different way of doing business, a full review of all the ways that racial exclusion become ingrained in our nation's social order.

And how these practices have influenced the way we do things, the principles that our institutions value, the indicia of merit and desert.

Unfortunately, the primary things that changed were the removal of "whites only" signs.

How these institutions were administered, their core values and missions, and how they determined quality, success and the like never really changed.

And now, modest efforts to ensure some sort of equality have come under a blistering attack.

Are Blacks Their Own Worst Enemy?

By Garrett N. James

Why is it that we are the only race in this country that truly "hates" on each other?

If we make it to the boardrooms and get a little money, we end up thinking that we are better than those below us on the socioeconomic scale, just because we think we have made it into the white man's world. If we never make it out of the "hood," and many of us do not, we are constantly killing each other

and pumping drugs into the streets.

The thing we have to understand is that we live in a society of systematic racism that is set up for our destruction. One hundred and forty years ago, before the end of slavery, Americans had a successful formula for keeping slaves in captivity. They kept the slaves ignorant and fighting amongst themselves.

The harsh reality is that the same formula is being

used to keep us in MENTAL SLAVERY today. They are keeping us ignorant and fighting amongst ourselves. Today, America no longer has to lynch, rape, and degrade us. The system is now set up for us to destroy ourselves.

Black people, we need to rise above this ignorance and realize that every time we decide to deal drugs rather than go to college, take a life rather than raise one, hate on our brothers and sisters for

trying to make it rather than give them the support and encouragement that they need, we are helping America in its plan to destroy us.

We had great leaders in King, X, Douglass, Garvey, and Tubman, who gave their lives so that we would have

the opportunities we need to one day really and truly become free. However, until this point, all we have done is let their deaths go in vain.

Do not get the message wrong. I am not advocating or trying to perpetuate hate in any way. This is not about going

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A March To Save Affirmative Action

It is with a great deal of urgency that I am writing this letter. Almost 50 years ago at Howard University, Thurgood Marshall prepared his arguments for the landmark case *Brown v. The Board of Education*. This monumental victory overturned the "Separate But Equal" clause established by *Plessy v. Ferguson*, overcame segregation and paved the way for Affirmative Action. As a result of Affirmative Action a record number of educational and employment opportunities have opened up for all minorities.

On April 1, 2003, the US Supreme Court heard *Grutter v. Bollinger*: a case questioning Affirmative Action, specifically at the University of Michigan. The decision of the court could ultimately outlaw Affirmative Action throughout the nation and reverse much of the progress of the Civil-Rights Movement.

On January 15, 2003 (the day

we celebrate the Birthday and life accomplishments of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.), in a public announcement President George W. Bush urged the US Supreme Court to outlaw Affirmative Action. We must not and we cannot be silent as the work of the movement is placed in jeopardy.

It is with great anticipation and high expectations that I extend this invitation to all students to continue the fight. We have recently participated in "Black Tuesday". Black Tuesday was a day of unity for all minorities and people in support of Affirmative Action. On April 1 students from HBCU's, Black Student Unions, and other minority organizations across the nation, dressed in all black to signify unity, marched from Howard University to the U.S. Supreme Court, in an attempt to save Affirmative Action.

Deon Winchester, SGA President

The Broncos' Voice Staff

HOW TO REACH US

Aisha Brooks
Akeshia Hudson
Andria L. Harris

The Broncos' Voice
1200 Murchison Road
Fayetteville, NC 28301
(910) 672-1279
(910) 672-2029

Kantrell Shelton
Kenyatta Raeford
LaVontra Porter

Eric Moore, Advisor

Garrett N. James, Editor in Chief

Lisa Augustine, Assistant Editor