

Affirmative Action

MR. RUSSELL ROBINSON

In the spirit of satirist Jonathan Swift, I would like to add another modest proposal in this campus debate on Affirmative Action. Let's abolish Affirmative Action! It's anachronistic and serves as an eyesore on the face of America's unblemished history. In fact, it has failed to provide any realistic solution to the Grand Canyon that divides the "haves and have-nots." Far too many arguments at dinner tables, shattered friendships and worse, a displaced majority representative class are the only true legacies of this governmental malfeasance. Thus, I offer a modest proposal for the 21st century.

As good American citizens, let's work together to make what was once a grievous wrong a resounding right. Let's revisit our past with a new vision of shaping our future. On this day, on this earth, in this society, I hereby proclaim that American slavery be officially reinstated.

All US Citizens and their heirs of majority representative class shall be placed in a state of physical and mental captivity, no less than 100 years, not to exceed 200 years. Understandably, for some, this may be a bit extreme. Therefore, I ask that a grandfather clause be instituted so that everyone shall be treated as equal. Ergo, if your great-great grandfather owned slaves, you and your heirs will have an additional 200 hundred years of indentured servitude. Meanwhile, the former underrepresented classes will have augmented accessibility to economical, educational, social, and governmental reform for the same duration.

As there will now be one large aggregate in the ruling populous, the new slave class will be permanently relocated to under developed subsidized housing where the rent will no less than \$800.00 per month. In this new structure, I also propose an employment stimulation package that will put every servant to work; all will work a mini-

mum of 70 hours per week where your take home pay shall not exceed 100 dollars per week before tax. There will also be a new institutionalized health care plan that will provide a maximum 15,000 dollar per year benefit. The deductible, which you will pay before you receive a tongue depressor, will be 100 dollars per visit until the grand total of the deductible is paid in full, 800 dollars. Lastly, I propose a social welfare system that will promote unity and family values. Any member of the slave class has the opportunity to be sold to any family of the ruling class at market rate. On Wednesdays, there will be a two for one sale and on Martin Luther King's birthday celebration; it will be an all out extravaganza!

Now as insidious as that may sound and much as it may read like an Octavia Butler novel, this isn't science fiction, it's historical fact. Make no mistake; the middle passage was not a ride on "the good ship lollypop" nor "the Love Boat" promising some-

thing exciting and new. Many of the historical texts we read discuss the German Holocaust with vivid, stark detail, but rarely do we talk of the African Holocaust, in which by best historical data, 24 million plus people drowned in the abyss of the Atlantic Ocean. Morbidity and mortality rates were astronomical due to disease and at best poor sanitary systems. Of the fortunate ones who made it to dry dock, they were stolen from their family, stripped of their culture, lashed because of their language, ripped from their religion and forced at gunpoint to assimilate into an alien culture, a government that legislatively dehumanized them at every turn.

You see, once the African was abducted from his homeland, no longer was he a human being in America; he was chattel and his sole purpose was cheap labor. Only because of economic necessity were Africans freed in the United States but after two hundred years of captivity, the physical shackles may

be removed but governmental and socially one is forever locked out. From anti-lynching laws, to Plessy vs. Ferguson to Brown vs. Board to today, we still have systems that are separate and unequal. Here is a challenge: two people go to a track to run the 100 yard dash. One has on running cleats and is in fair to good condition. The other has a backpack of 50 pounds and street shoes. Ray Charles can see who would win the race. But you remove the back pack and give the other runner legitimate training and good running cleats, the contest will be pretty equal. So, should the great great grand children of slave owners be accountable for the actions of their ancestors? Until the great great grandchildren are cognizant of the past and work to reshape the future, my answer is unequivocally yes.

Please note:

The opinions expressed do not reflect those of any organizations of which I am affiliated.

Keeping Diversity

BRYAN BUTLER

[Reprint: Point in point/counterpoint article "Affirmative Action: yes or no?" in Volume IV (June 13, 2003) of The Rush at UNC-CH NCSMA Journalism Institute, updated]

Affirmative action moved to the forefront of the national consciousness when the Center for Individual Rights filed *Gratz vs. Bollinger* and *Grutter vs. Bollinger*. The lawsuits were filed on behalf of white students who were denied entrance to the University of Michigan, stating that minority applicants took their spots based on a points system used there. The Supreme Court's decisions, which came in the summer of 2003, upheld affirmative action practices in the University of Michigan law school (in a 5-4 vote) but struck down affirmative action in undergraduate admissions.

These two cases before the Supreme Court re-ignited the debate over affirmative action. Though the use of affirmative action was largely supported in the Supreme Court decision, admissions policies around the nation concerning minority representation are still somewhat in danger. Vocal opponents wish to rid the educational (and professional) world of affirmative action.

The abolition of affirmative action policies in college

admissions in particular threatens the diversity of this nation and the economic stability of minorities while failing to aid academic excellence.

This threat is clear in the bans of affirmative action that California and Texas have adopted. At the University of Texas Law School, Hispanic student admissions fell 64 percent, and African-American student admissions dropped 88 percent after one year. At the University of California's Berkeley campus, admissions of Hispanic, Native American and African-American students fell by more than half.

Did these bans improve academics at the affected schools? The average grade-point average of students at Berkeley's law school only rose from 3.72 to 3.74. Law School Admission Test scores rose only one point. With these insignificant changes came significant ones: a 46 percent drop in admissions of Hispanics and a 76 percent drop in admissions of African-Americans.

Affirmative action in college admissions attempts to respond to the basic failure of high schools in urban areas. Trying to establish admissions processes that do not consider race ignores inequalities that exist in America.

Despite assertions that all races in the United States are treated equally and that affirmative action is no longer necessary, racial inequalities

remain. The unemployment rate for African-Americans remains twice that for whites. Compared with college-educated white men, their African-American counterparts earn 24 percent less. In 2000, only 14 percent of African-Americans were college graduates, compared with 28 percent of whites.

Affirmative action has helped to correct these inequalities. According to the US Labor Department, affirmative action has helped five million minorities advances in the workforce.

Corporate America demands diversity. Many companies have voiced support for the University of Michigan, including 3M, American Express Company and Coca-Cola Company. Companies offer financial support to schools that supply them with Hispanic, Native American and African-American employees.

How can a university offer productive ethnic studies classes or hold discussions on racial profiling with a population that is not racially diverse?

If opponents of affirmative action succeed in abolishing these policies in higher education, decades of effort to make America more inclusive will be undermined, and the cycle of economic inequality that surrounds underrepresented minorities will continue.



Students performing in Asia Fest

Logan Couce

Letter to the Editors

AMENA ROSS

I was appalled at your decision to print the article, "My Take On Affirmative Action" by Kristoph Kleiner. The article was a grossly biased myriad of incorrect opinions and faulty references. If you want to be taken seriously as a truly journalistic venue, you need to print articles that are unbiased and give the people an uncorrupted view of the topic. It's perfectly acceptable for your writers to have opinions about the topics they write about, but if they decide to present their view in their articles, they NEED TO HAVE REFERENCES AND FACTUAL INFORMATION TO BACK IT UP. Did your writer interview anyone to find

the real process for choosing minority students? Did he look at why affirmative action was instituted in the first place? Or did he find the information about WHITE WOMEN benefiting the most from affirmative action? And to have the audacity to run this article, during February, Black History Month, is a true stab in the back by a newspaper claiming to support the views of all groups on campus. I would like to request a retraction of this article from you, the Stentorian editors, or at the very least, an apology to the students on campus for running an article that atrociously contradicts the idea of diversity that is embraced by the NCSSM community.