

Affirmative Action

by David Johnson

During the 1963 March on Washington Martin Luther King gave one of the most memorable speeches of all time. The line most often quoted is 'I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.'

I would like to pose a simple question: do affirmative action programs help to make Dr. King's dream a reality? At first it may appear that they do, because such programs are an advantage for minorities, but I would argue that affirmative action is actually a hindrance to realizing Martin Luther King's dream.

I know someone who applied for admission to a university in California. He was confident that he could get in, and knew that was where he wanted to go, so that was the only place he applied. Apparently he was a little overconfident, though, because he was not accepted. The next year he applied to several colleges and universities. As an experiment he decided to reapply to the same place, keeping everything about his application exactly the same as it had been the year before except that this time he indicated that he was of Hispanic descent whereas the first time he had marked 'choose not to respond'. Well, you guessed it, this time he was accepted. He decided not to attend, however, feeling like they only wanted him to help fulfill a quota.

Whether it helps or hinders them, obviously we are still judging people based upon race and gender rather than who they are as a person. Now I admit that it would probably be difficult to judge the content of a person's character merely by looking at an application, but I would guess that the closest we could come to that would be to judge them based upon relevant qualifications.

We all know that sometimes the opportunities that we seek are highly competitive. Losing out to a candidate who is more qualified than you is disappointing, but it is difficult to argue that you have been dealt with unjustly. When candidates are favored because of factors that are not relevant to the job, however, it is unfair. In fact, it is a form of discrimination. People who are opposed to affirmative action often call it 'reverse discrimination' but I feel that this term is too imprecise: technically speaking, the reverse of discrimination would be equality. What they mean, though, of course, is that it is discrimination in reverse, or in other words, it discriminates against whites, particularly white males. I prefer to simply keep calling it racial and/or gender discrimination, for that is indeed what it is.

Some contend that the purpose of affirmative action is to level the playing field in order to get rid of all the unearned built-in advantages that whites have, so-called 'white privilege'. I am so tired of everyone telling me how privileged I am! It certainly does seem that way to me. As a matter of fact, I often feel very disadvantaged. Whenever I apply for a job my qualifications have to not

just be better, but significantly better than any of the minority applicants to even have a chance, and most likely I still will not get it even then.

Sometimes people repeat something so many times that it becomes overstated. As an example, sometimes analysts and reporters will talk about a professional athlete being underrated so much that eventually he actually becomes overrated. I feel like that is what has happened with the perception that white males have so many advantages over other groups. The perception of that is so strong, so pervasive, and so overdone, that white males have actually become disadvantaged because of it.

There are white men who are wealthy and privileged, it is true, but it is only a small percentage of them. Being white does not automatically mean that you in the club by any means. I would guess that probably only about 3% of the white population is actually privileged. The vast majority are in a position that is not that much different than most minorities.

The truth is, it has sucked to be a white man since the 1990s. It is so old-fashioned . . . the 1700s called, they want their skin color back. It feels like I have to wear a beaver skin hat around all the time, and I cannot update my wardrobe; the white guys who try usually just come across as wannabes, and actually, they are. They have developed a complex about it; they really wish that they were not white, but unfortunately there is no help for it. The only thing worse than not being cool is trying extremely hard to be cool and failing miserably at it. Attractive white women who date black guys (and let's be honest, most of them do) can kind of pull it off, because then they are sort of cool by association, but even they cannot do it perfectly. White men have no chance. We are the butt of every joke, the only group that it is socially acceptable for others to make fun of even if they are not members of our group; it is not like that for anyone else.

It could be worse, I guess: I could have been a red head. But still. We are always Public Enemy No. 1, whether it be in movies and television shows, or in real life. You cannot say or do much of anything without someone getting pissed off about it. Every other group constantly criticizes you, but you cannot even return fire without being labeled a racist or a sexist. You are just supposed to take it, because there are a different set of rules for you.

Everybody hates white men now, even white men. I think most of them do it to fit in. The only way it is socially acceptable to be a white man these days is if you rage against other white men, who are, of course, far less intelligent and open-minded than you, you little progressive thinker, you. Those who validate the criticism by joining in with the chorus against white men and willingly accept their new subordinate status in society are accepted; if not, they are the enemy. Apparently it is some kind of moral failing to have been born with a white penis. If I had known how much trouble it would cause me I might have asked for something different, but I really did not have a choice in the matter.

A lot of this white male hate stems from a distorted view of history. It is not necessarily inaccurate, but it is incomplete. Why single out one group as the source of all evil? You know

that the Moors had white slaves, right? You know that the way the Europeans got their slaves was often through rival African tribes raiding their enemies, taking captives, and then selling them to the European slave traders don't you? Going back farther in history, slavery was relatively common in the ancient world.

Do you really think that the Native Americans would not have invaded Europe and taken it as their own if they had been powerful enough to do it? Native Americans were doing terrible things to rival tribes and taking their land long before the Europeans ever got here. Indian scouts from rival tribes often fought with the US army in an attempt to wipe the other tribe out. Why is it that history gives them a free pass? Many tribes committed horrific acts of torture, rape, and massacre, both towards members of other tribes, and to the Europeans. It is not like they were inherently more ethical than the Europeans. Has there ever been a dominant military force in all of world history that did not ultimately take what they wanted? If they could, they did. Those white Europeans were no different than anyone else.

None of this justifies slavery or taking the land from the Indians. But it is wrong, and in fact racist, to single out only one group while ignoring the moral failings of others. There needs to be a more balanced story told. The lack of balance comes from the fact that so many people are biased against white men already, and then failing to tell the whole story causes even more misconceptions and resentment, and the white male hate spirals onward.

Even if one does despise the white men of the past, I should not necessarily be lumped in with them just because I happen to look like them. Maybe I would have been an abolitionist if I had lived in the 1850s. None of us truly knows what we would have done if we had been born into different circumstances, but I think I would have been. So why should I feel guilty if I would have tried to stop it? Why do others want to blame me simply because of the color of my skin? I had nothing to do with it.

There are some who argue that whites of today owe reparations because of slavery. Are you really going to make descendants of Abraham Lincoln and the people who helped with the Underground Railroad pay reparations, just because they are white? Even if someone's ancestors were slave owners, they owe the reparations, not their descendants. We should not have to pay for the sins of our fathers. Whites of today did not commit these harms, and blacks of today were not the ones who suffered them. There does seem to be an element of this kind of thinking, the idea of making up for past wrongs, and that whites owe it to minorities, that is sometimes used to justify affirmative action. But you are getting even with the wrong people.

Affirmative action is like a driver that overcorrects: you were going off the road on one side, so then you turned so sharply that you ended up driving off on the other side. The contrary of racial and gender discrimination is not what is needed; what we should be seeking is the contradiction of it, which is equality.

Organizations try so hard to make sure that they are not perceived to be discriminating that they actually go way overboard. Blacks make up about 13% of the U.S. population, but the top colleges and universities, for example, do not set quotas for 13%, they want more like 20-25%. They have to give preferences in order to meet that quota. If we are really going to do this fairly, then blacks should make up exactly 13% of the student body, no more, no less. Preferences may still be needed even to do that, but it would not be as extreme.

If there is a television show with 6 main characters and none of them are black, activists go crazy. They think it is discriminatory. Why? No one would be making a fuss if all six of them were black. There are, in fact, several shows on the main networks that do have nearly all black actors, and many movies as well. There is an entire TV network, BET, dedicated exclusively to black entertainers. No one ever complains about the 'lack of diversity' in those cases. I would be willing to bet that the total number of black actors working in Hollywood is far greater than 13%. I would guess that it is probably closer to 30%. If anything, blacks are probably significantly overrepresented in the entertainment industry (including music) and Hispanics are significantly underrepresented in comparison to actual demographics.

If affirmative action were being applied evenly then it would be done strictly in accordance with demographics so that there is exactly equal representation for all groups. For professional sports, this would mean that each team would need to have whites, blacks, females, Hispanics, Asians, etc., all represented in the correct proportion.¹ There is intense pressure in professional sports to have more black head coaches. It is true that there have been racist attitudes in the past which suggested that black people were not intelligent enough to be successful coaches (or quarterbacks) at the highest levels. This is an ugly part of our history, and perhaps some of the reason that there is so much scrutiny on the issue, but if you look at the way things are today, I do not actually think that blacks are underrepresented, or if they are, it is not by much. Suppose that there are thirty teams in the league and four black head coaches. That is almost exactly 13%. The reason that there is such a strong perception that black coaches are underrepresented is because the players are probably around 80 to 90% black. But that just means that blacks are vastly overrepresented as players, not that coaches are underrepresented.

Suppose that they were holding tryouts for a basketball team that needed to select 12 players. If it was based upon demographics that means that no more than two of them could be black, as that would be 16.6%, which is already an overrepresentation. Making the selections this way would be a huge benefit to some players because they would only have to compete with members of their own group; they would not need to be the best overall, they would only need to be the best Asian, or Hispanic, female, etc. In some ways, it would be fair, because no group could say that they were being discriminated against. But of course it means that there would have to be

¹ Perhaps for some jobs it could be applied more locally. A business could use the census data and if 40% of the population in a city was of a certain race then roughly 40% of their employees in that area would need to be of that race.

different standards for each group. Imagine that you were only the third best black male to try out, but you were actually significantly better than any of the white, Asian, or Hispanic players. Do you think that you would be upset if those players made the team and you did not? If you were, it would probably be because you had outperformed them in the tryout, and perhaps in other ways as well. Maybe comparing your game film to theirs shows that you are the better player, and this might even be openly acknowledged by the coaching staff, and yet those players are still chosen instead of you. Do you think you would feel some resentment over that? Welcome to the world of the white male.

My older brother was second in his class in law school. Class rank is extremely important. Usually one's job prospects are determined almost solely by class rank. At graduation, the valedictorian got her pick of jobs, and took the one that she wanted with a big law firm. My brother applied for a clerkship for one of the judges in the State Supreme Court. He was competing with another candidate from his class. In every way his qualifications were just slightly better than hers. She was ranked third, he was second. She had worked on the law review, he was the editor of the law review. She had published articles, but he had published more. Yet when they both applied for the same job, she got it. Now you might say that perhaps she just did a better job in the interview, or maybe there was some other reason why the judge picked her. But that is not really how it works in law school. Everything is based upon class rank. Consider what would have happened if the situation had been reversed. Let us suppose that she had finished second, and he was third, but he got the job anyway. Can you imagine the outrage (and probably litigation) that would have caused? No one would have accepted the claim that he had simply interviewed better, or any other excuse for that matter. Clearly she got the job because she was a woman and he was a white man. It is obvious. You really expect my brother not to be upset by that? I bet you would be, if something similar had happened to you. Now he did not starve, it is true. He did get a pretty good job eventually, but not as good as the one that she got. He was denied an opportunity that, quite frankly, he had earned in open and fair competition, all because of gender favoritism. How could that not cause some resentment?

The only thing that matters in sports is how well you can play. We want to see the best going against the best. It could be organized differently, say the way that it is outlined above, but personally I have no problem with it being based upon merit. The team should make decisions based only upon relevant differences in ability. If it works out that a majority of the athletes are black, so be it. I do not care. As long as other athletes have an equal opportunity to compete with them in fair and open competition, and the evaluation process is not biased, no one is being discriminated against. If those are the best players, then they should get the spot, regardless of their race. I think most would agree with that when it comes to sports.

But the thing is, you cannot have it both ways. Why should athletic competition be based upon merit but academics should not? It is hypocritical to say that it should be based upon merit only when it suits your interests. We have to be consistent.

I do acknowledge, though, that sometimes these things are not based upon merit. George W. Bush got into Yale with a C average. To be honest, I am a little surprised that he even did that well. He does not exactly seem like Ivy League material to me. It is obvious that he got in because his grandfather was a wealthy and powerful alumnus, along with his father, who was the head of the CIA, Vice President, and eventually the President of the United States. He was from a family that had good connections, and they probably made a significant financial contribution to the school. He most definitely did not get in based upon his own merits, and that is clearly unjust. If you want to talk about privilege, there it is. Often it is still more about who you know than what you know. But the injustice of nepotism in no way justifies the racial and gender favoritism of affirmative action.

Another example of this overcorrection is feminism. Feminism is the female manifestation of misogyny. The name itself shows this: imagine if there was a movement known as 'masculinism' and how that would be perceived. I should qualify this statement a little by acknowledging that sometimes people (both men and women) will call themselves feminists if they are simply advocating for women to have equal treatment. I cannot object to true equality, as that is only fair, but of course what one person thinks is equal may not be the same as how another perceives it. I feel that what most feminists call 'equality' is really preferential treatment. Many of them think that these special advantages are deserved because there was unequal treatment in the past. The really militant feminists despise men, especially white men, and they are intent upon getting back at us, even though we were not the ones who did any of it, and they were not the ones who suffered it. These are some of the most intolerant people that I know of. If you do not go along with their agenda they try to destroy you. The message is clear, you had better get on board if you want to keep your job and avoid getting run out of town at the business end of a pitchfork.

This intolerance can be seen with a number of issues, but here is one primary example. In many states, whenever the police are called to a domestic dispute, and there is probable cause of domestic violence (according to the criteria used, there nearly always would be) it is mandatory that they make an arrest. I do not necessarily have a problem with the police arresting someone; it may be helpful just to separate them from each other and let them cool off for a day or two, and then after interviewing them both about what happened, it could be determined from there how to proceed. But the problem is that there is tremendous gender bias on this issue, and it is nearly always the man who is arrested and charged with a felony. Technically, both parties can be charged, and in some cases that is what happens, but it is rare. Feminists fight bitterly against it. It is more infrequent still for the woman only to be charged. That almost never happens.

I admit that often the man is the aggressor, but not always. Many times both parties share some of the blame, particularly when they are both drunk or high. But we rarely acknowledge that as a society. The perception is that it is always the man's fault, and a lot of the reason for that is because of the feminists. They only look at the issue from the female perspective, rather than more holistically, and if anyone, especially a man, dares to even question their viewpoint his career is in serious jeopardy. As a result, women are basically the only ones researching and

writing about the issue, which determines law and policy regarding it, and this creates a very gender-biased outlook.

No one really cares if a woman commits domestic violence (any more than if a white person was assaulted by the police). The media hardly even bothers to cover it. Violence by women against men is considered no big deal, even funny, and in some cases, it is celebrated. This is one of my biggest pet peeves. In many TV shows and movies the guy will say something that makes the girl angry, so she will haul off and slap him, and then later on *he* goes and apologizes to *her*. Are you kidding me? Most people would say that it is never justifiable for a man to hit a woman: it does not matter how rude, vulgar, or insulting she was, or even if she had cheated on him, it would never be okay for him to hit her. Why shouldn't women be expected to exercise some self-control as well, and keep their temper in check the way that men have to do? Instead of 'Don't ever hit a woman' the standard should be 'Don't hit anyone'. I am not referring to instances of self-defense, of course, or if he tries to grope her; if that happens go ahead and let him have it. But other than that, she should have to exercise self-control too, no matter what is said.

It is really a no-win situation for men. They are not allowed to hit back - if they do, they are blamed for the entire thing - but if they do not, then instead of being applauded for their self-control, they are mocked and no one takes the problem seriously. What is a man supposed to do, exactly? An acquaintance of mine grew up in a home where his mother would frequently hit his father when they would get into a fight. Ironically, the dad was a police officer, but he did not even try to stop her from hitting him because he said that he had been on enough calls for domestic violence to know that if the police were called the man is always the one who is blamed. He did not want his fellow cops to find out, and he knew the law would not be on his side anyway, so he just tried to keep her from calling them and when she hit him he would just stand there and take it. **THIS IS NOT EQUALITY!** Violence against women by men may be more common, and sometimes of greater concern because the injuries tend to be more severe, but there needs to be some recognition that there are cases in which the female is at fault, and they need to be held to the same standard of accountability.

One time when I went into a gas station the two attendants were talking about an incident that one of them had with his girlfriend. He said that she had spit right in his face while they were arguing nose to nose. The other guy interjected that he would have smacked her if it had been him, and asked me what I would have done. I told them that honestly I do not know what I would have done, but I hope that I would have had enough restraint to keep from hitting her. I would have gotten out of the situation as soon as possible. But I told them that one thing I do know for sure is that relationship would be over. It does not matter what kind of apology she gave me later, or the tears that were shed, or promises to never do it again, if she spit on me, or hit me, we are done. There is no coming back from that. A man has to have some self-respect too. I had just met this guy, but from what he described, it sounded like a pretty toxic relationship that he probably would have been better off without. I suggested that he might ought to at least consider walking away and not having anything more to do with her. That can be a really difficult thing to do, but

for his sake, I hope that he did. A crazy unstable girlfriend would most likely end up getting him into trouble eventually, either with the law or some other way.

One of the most common feminist critiques is that men objectify women. And they are right, men do. But women do the same to men. Or are you going to try to tell me that they like Tom Cruise for his *intellect*, since, after all, he is known for that; and Matthew McConaughey takes off his shirt in every movie that he has ever been in so that women can appreciate his *personality*, I am sure; Fabio must have been on the cover of all those romance novels because women could tell that he was beautiful on the inside. Let's cut the crap, could we please?

Sometimes the female objectification of men is manifested in a different way than just looks and maybe that is why it is sometimes missed. From a biological standpoint men are drawn to younger women because they are the most fertile. Men are physically attracted to women based almost exclusively on appearance. For women it is more about status. Looks are a factor in establishing a man's social status, but not an exclusive factor. If a man has high status but happens to be ugly as hell, and/or old as hell, he may still be able to attract a beautiful young woman, particularly if he is the lead singer in a well-known rock band, or a U.S. Senator. To a lesser extent, this may also be true if he rides a motorcycle, is a doctor, or a billionaire. Is it really less superficial to value a man for his money or fame than it is to value a woman for her looks? A woman's attraction may be more complex, and multi-faceted, but it is still based upon superficial qualities.

I am not suggesting that because we are genetically inclined towards certain behavior that we should give in to those impulses. My point is that human nature is pretty much the same whether you are male or female. Ultimately it is selfishness that we all must contend with. The impulse to use others for our own personal gain, to value them only for what they can do for us, to care about our own pleasure more than their well-being, that is a universal temptation that is not confined to only one gender.

White men need to stand up for themselves a little bit more. If all the other groups are very vocal in standing up for their interests then the one that does not is going to get trampled on. We do not need to do anything extreme. I am not calling for any white male marches on Washington, or jockstrap burnings, we just need to have the courage to speak up if we are being dealt with unjustly. Most white men are so afraid of being labeled a racist and/or a sexist that they just give in whenever there is any controversy. One is not a racist or a sexist simply for wanting *exactly equal treatment*. However, their worries are not necessarily unfounded. That is a strategy that is often used to crush any opposition. It is usually just an *ad hominem* attack, or in some cases, a *straw man* of the person's true position, but unfortunately it often works very well. I am concerned that today one cannot really express dissent, at least not on these issues. Political correctness may be our biggest threat to free speech. We should not try to offend anyone, but we cannot be intellectual cowards either. If there are negative consequences for us as a result, so be it. We have to be willing to respectfully point out why we feel that certain things are unfair, or it will just keep happening.

Admittedly, the unfairness that white men face today is not on the same level that minorities and women have faced in the past. I have never had anyone tell me that I cannot use the same water fountain, or bathroom, or eat in the same place as they do; I have never had anyone try to prevent me from voting or keep me out of certain professions. White men do have to keep things in perspective. Still, any injustice, even a lesser one, should not be tolerated. As Martin Luther King said, 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere'. You may not think it is that big of a deal, but you probably would if it was happening to you. It may not be the same degree of injustice as the discrimination of the past, but it is not trivial either.

But is it possible that affirmative action results in less injustice than not having it would? Robert Fullinwider argues that because of the inherent biases that exist in our society, some level of unfairness is unavoidable. He acknowledges that racial and gender preferences are unfair to white men, but he believes that this is less of an injustice than the discrimination against minorities that would occur without such programs. We have no choice except to impose one unfairness or allow another to persist. Affirmative action is justifiable, in Fullinwider's view, because it is the lesser of two evils: the injustice that it causes is less than the injustice that would result from not having it. This is a very interesting argument, and in my opinion, the best case for affirmative action. Nevertheless, there are a few ways in which I think that it goes wrong. Fullinwider wrote this essay in 1991. I am not sure whether he would feel the same way today, roughly 25 years later. Perhaps he would. But it seems like even under his view society would eventually be modified to accommodate minorities enough so that preferences were no longer needed, although I have no idea how one would make the determination of when it was time to stop, or even what criteria one would use to decide.

In any case, I feel that it is wrong to say that some type of unfairness is unavoidable. It is possible to not be unfair to anybody, it really is. The objective should be to stop all unfairness wherever we find it. We may not be able to do it completely, because as long as people are flawed, there will be injustice, but we have to set justice as the ideal to strive for, not just a lesser injustice. Surely we can do better than that.

Another aspect of Fullinwider's argument that I reject is that, like most utilitarian-based arguments, it sacrifices individual interests for the sake of an overall outcome. As a white male I am just supposed to accept the injustices against me because supposedly it serves the greater good. My rights apparently do not matter. But as John Rawls said:

Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust. Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override. For this reason justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others. It does not allow that the sacrifices imposed on a few are outweighed by the larger sum of advantages enjoyed by many. Therefore in a just society the liberties of

equal citizenship are taken as settled; the rights secured by justice are not subject to political bargaining or to the calculus of social interests.²

If a society is not just at the individual level then it is not just at all. People have rights that should not be violated to forward some utilitarian agenda. It is easy to say that someone should sacrifice their personal interests for the greater good (if it even is the greater good, which is by no means a settled question), but if you were the one who was asked to do it you would probably feel differently.

Now if individuals want to give special scholarships or do other things to help individuals who are in minority groups, I do not have a problem with that. Some may see it as unfair even for a benefactor to give special assistance to minorities simply because of their race or gender, but I think that is their right if that is what they want to do. To assist someone in being able to compete more effectively is different than giving preferential treatment in competition. A friend of mine is a retired lawyer and he volunteers every school year to help tutor young black boys to learn how to read. He says that he came across some statistics during his career that show a large number of black prison inmates have a very low reading proficiency. He believes there is a correlation. He says that if a young black male does not know how to read he has no chance. So, he wants to do something to help. What drives this white ex-lawyer in his 70s to want to help? I am not sure. He has 13 children of his own, so he is a father and grandfather, and he is very active in the community with interfaith activities and that seems to have allowed to him to get to know a lot of different people in the area. I guess the bottom line is just that he cares. Well, if that is something that he feels strongly about, I cannot say 'You should be tutoring white kids' or even 'It shouldn't matter what race they are'. If that is where he chooses to help out, then I have no problem with it. And if he decided to give them a scholarship or something of that nature later on, then that is up to him. It would not be appropriate for the government to give scholarships or aid to one race over others, but if a private individual chooses to do so with his own money then he has that right. I think what he is doing is a good example for all of us.

We do need to continue working on the social problems that affirmative action was meant to remedy, but it is a crude instrument at best for dealing with them. Barack Obama has said that affirmative action should not benefit his daughters, but it does. Intelligent, well-educated, upper-middle class, or wealthy blacks who can perform well on standardized tests and have attended good schools are the ones who receive the greatest benefit from it, which is ironic because they are more than capable of competing very well on their own. It does not do nearly as much for many inner city blacks, or Hispanics, etc. from poor neighborhoods that have a lot of violent

² One could possibly interpret Rawls' argument for the two principles of justice as actually supporting affirmative action programs because they help what could be considered the least advantaged members of society. Although, that is only one part of the second principle, the other part says that social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are 'attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity'. That would seem to be at odds with using preferences. So, I am not entirely sure where Rawls would be on this issue. It is not really relevant though because I am only expressing agreement with the point made above concerning utilitarianism.

crime, and who may have only finished high school, if that. These are the people who need help. I do think that as a society we need to try and improve these communities so that they are safer and the quality of life there is better.

The biggest problem that needs to be addressed is economic. The mother of the third grader that my friend is tutoring works two full-time minimum wage jobs just to make ends meet. That is why she has a hard time helping him learn how to read. She usually does not have the time, and even when she does, she is exhausted. It is very tough to make it on minimum wage, and because of the situation that the parents are in, the next generation usually does not do very well in school, and then they do not have the education or training to get a good job themselves, and the cycle repeats. Or even worse, some of them turn to crime.

Most people believe that education is the solution to all of this, but a better solution would be to fix the economic system. Job training is important in some cases, but you do not necessarily have to be highly educated to successfully run a shop in your neighborhood. What is needed is more organic economic growth, not just to escape from that community, but to build it up so that living there is just as good as living anywhere else. If we could fix the economy so that people had a more realistic opportunity to open small businesses that serve their local community, and that provided them with enough income to live comfortably, it would solve or at least mitigate a lot of the social problems right there.

Where there is racial or gender bias we need to work hard as a society to identify it and eliminate it. We can still do that without affirmative action, and in my opinion, do it better. You do not need to give preferences to eliminate discrimination; in fact, it would strengthen your argument for equality and fairness if no one receives preferential treatment.

What we have today is not equality. True equality is at odds with giving 'preferences' to certain groups, whatever the justification. Favoritism is not fairness. One should not have any advantages or disadvantages because of something that is entirely out of their control.

As a society it seems like we are obsessed with race and gender. At colleges and universities they hardly want to talk about anything else. The media is constantly harping on it too. We need to get to the point where it just does not matter. Of course we are aware of the differences, but no one is treated differently because of it. It should not give you more opportunities, or less, it just should not make any difference at all. That is true racial equality. We do not need to be color blind, but we should be color indifferent. When we can finally do that Martin Luther King's dream will be realized.

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