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Op-Ed

Affirmative Action: The New Racism

Equal treatment of all citizens under the law is a core American value, the just presence of which is often taken for granted. Yet this basic right is being destroyed daily, ironically under the guise of “creating equality.”

The name of this destroyer is *affirmative action*, a policy widely employed by public institutions to preferentially admit and promote women and ethnic minorities. Its advocates declare that minorities are under-represented in academia and professional fields. As compensation for this alleged lack of diversity, they seek to implement quotas by awarding preferential treatment to minorities.

Affirmative action has been touted as an equal opportunity policy. Yet nothing could be less equal than giving special consideration to individuals based on their race or gender.

Affirmative action’s primary disgrace is its underlying contention that race defines one’s essence. It ignores man’s unique identity as a volitional, autonomous being, by categorizing individuals as hapless hostages of their ethnic backgrounds. Rather than recognizing individual achievements, this collective mentality implies that individuals obtain worth only as appendages of a tribe. One’s race or gender is thus granted the same status as one’s qualifications in gaining positions rightfully based on merit. Far from promoting equality, affirmative action is explicitly racist: it ignores individuals’ credentials and segregates them in to racial categories.

A particularly malicious argument attempts to capitalize on past injustice by claiming that affirmative action compensates for slavery. Yet historical racism can not be overcome by a policy that perpetuates classifications based on race.

The fundamental belief uniting racist policies, from slavery to “separate but equal” schools, is the idea that race is the defining factor of the individual. And this is precisely what affirmative action endorses: replacing individual qualifications with race in determining one’s value and opportunities.

Historical discrimination and modern affirmative action are two sides of the same race-based coin. One prohibited minorities from basic human rights; the other extends additional privileges to minorities (thus infringing upon the rights of other individuals). Both are racist, discriminatory, and unjust.

Proponents of affirmative action have also tried to market the practice by suggesting that diversity is a value in itself. But consider the absurdity (and danger!) of teaching a future neurosurgeon that “exposure” to various cultures is as important as mastering the structures of complex brain regions. Universities must teach methodology and

information if students are to come away with knowledge and competence in their chosen fields of study.

As a woman in science, I have been told that I, too, benefit from affirmative action. This suggestion is itself demeaning: it implies that a woman's skills and qualifications are not good enough, and that special assistance is required by nature of possessing two X chromosomes.

The outcome of affirmative action clearly is not equality or justice.

Michigan citizens have the rare opportunity to ensure that discrimination play no further role in public enrollment and hiring practices. The Michigan Civil Rights Initiative will outlaw any form of racial or gender discrimination in the public sector. A vote for the MCRI is a vote for equality and ultimately a vote for humanity, honoring people for their accomplishments and values rather than treating them as victims of their birth.