

Affirmative Action Under Fire

BY JOHN P. LUJAN

A review of our country's history from the beginning reveals that minorities and women have been systematically discriminated against because of their race or gender.

Additionally, nowhere in this history is there compelling evidence to support the oft-voiced contention that our society has freely or willingly accomplished anything positive to remedy this history of racism and prejudice. The abolishment of slavery, citizenship, voting rights for women, and the rights to quality education were not created through the "good will" of our society.

Sadly, they had to be legislated by Congress. Legislation such as the Equal Pay Act of 1963 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 have proved to be the only way to make even modest progress towards eliminating race and gender discrimination and that has been only grudgingly won.

Until the creation of civil rights legislation in the 1960s, the only way for these disenfranchised individuals to participate and "play" in society's long odds game was to melt into the majority culture and learn to ignore the pain and anguish of applied racism and discrimination.

Yes, we were discriminated against because of our race, gender, religion, national origin, disability, age and other personal characteristics and beliefs. The need to take these ethnic and personal characteristics into account was not an imaginary need nor was it the result of some sort of baseless conspiracy designed to create chaos and division in employment and access to higher education.

Civil rights legislation, engineered mainly by white males, was certainly not a plot to discriminate against white males. It was intended to level the playing field.

If this is the real intent of Affirmative Action, why then

has it come under such fire at this time? Have racism and discrimination been wiped out? Have the "good old boy" hiring and promoting practices been eradicated from employment?

Is Gov. Pete Wilson of California right? A review of the racial and gender makeup of our country's political, education, and economic leadership quickly answers these questions and demonstrates that, for the most part, women and minorities still have a long way to go in attaining the dream of full participation in education and employment.

Regrettably, racism and discrimination are still alive and well. In fact, many would argue that they are prospering. Full and equal participation is still a dream for most of society because preferential treatment for white males is still the way to do business; in politics, in education and in employment.

I know this to be true because I have been directly involved in affirmative action and equal employment opportunity for the past 12 years as the director of affirmative action at UNLV.

Are "unqualified" women and minorities being hired and promoted into professional staff and faculty positions at UNLV at the expense of more qualified white males? Apparently not.

The Affirmative Action Report to the UCCSN Board of Regents (June 1995) reveals that women make up 30 percent of the full-time faculty workforce, and minorities only 7 percent. Additionally, women compose 38 percent of the work force and minorities 8 percent in executive/administrative/managerial positions. Disparagingly, these percentages are generally in line with those of other universities.

The University and Community College System of Nevada chancellor's executive/administrative/managerial work force is made up of 40 employees. In that group, three are African America (8

percent), 12 are women (30 percent), and 28 are white males (70 percent).

Could there be angry white men who were not hired nor promoted into this unit because of affirmative action practices? Clearly, these statistics do not support that contention. However, one can imagine the existence of angry minorities and white women because of these statistics. But in these times neither minorities nor women have the political support needed to overcome the prejudices that stand in the way of their progress.

Does the abolishment of affirmative action abolish unfairness in the hiring and admissions processes of this and other institutions? Certainly not. It only reiterates the belief in the minds of minorities who are certain that in "white" America, Justice means "just us." It also fosters disbelief in the supposed egalitarianism of democracy and provides proof that in this country, true opportunity is inexorably linked to the social nepotism that sees only the color white when assessing the contributions and potential of its citizenry.

At a time when minority groups are quickly becoming the majority in many regions of the country, and at a time when women make up more than 50 percent of the population and available work force, it is strange, if not bizarre, that there is a movement to quash the policies and practices put in place to create fairness and equality in employment and education.

Closing off these avenues of opportunity will cause great harm to the social and moral fiber of the country. Surely this country does not want to turn back the clock and obviate the few gains minorities and women have made in the past few decades. Surely we are better than that.

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Welcome, well met, well, maybe...

The semester breaks and you've cracked open the first edition of *The Rebel Yell*.

Welcome back to UNLV!

A new edition, under a new editor, with a new look for the paper.

Much of the staff this year is writing for you for the first time, myself included, though

we've all considered ourselves writers in one capacity or another for varying amounts of time. Some write as journalists, some as artists, but together we envision great things for this academic year at the *Yell*. All have toiled valiantly to deliver this first issue on time to the newsstands, so enjoy it. Please!

It's been a labor of ambivalence from top to bottom. From Editor Teresa Hinds, our new "Captain," all the way through the production staff and everyone in between, the sweat should show. I have to give my fellow staff members credit: From what I've seen just in putting together this premiere issue, all are dedicated and committed to bringing you the best of their talents and abilities.

I remember the parting words of Scott Gulbransen, the Opinion editor of last year's *Yell*, whose shoes I now humbly walk in, "Next year a whole new staff will once again fire up the outdated computers and learn a little bit about journalism and its responsibilities."

Truer words were never printed. The week before school started was nothing but learning experience for us. While some of you were finishing summer jobs, registering for late classes, or sipping beach-side margaritas on last minute hiatus to Cancun, we've been here, tippy-tapping our fingers to the bone on articles and rewrites, cursing those out-

dated computers, and otherwise learning to work as a team. Like I said, I have a growing admiration for the various young professionals, inexperienced and experienced alike, who will bring you the paper this year. Already, we're achieving cohesion at the *Yell*.

The Opinion page this year will be just that. Unadulterated opinion. We may range in one issue of the paper to the next from the ridiculous to the sublime, but through it all we intend to stir your thoughts. We intend to amuse, enlighten and entertain you. Not necessarily in that order or in those exact proportions, but we mean for you to know we are here. We want to convey to you through these words and pages the excitement we feel at the challenges and pitfalls ahead.

And we invite, no, thrive on, your feedback. We need to hear from you. Write letters to the editor. Place phone calls. Pound angrily on the office door if you like. We want it all. How else can we know what issues concern you? What compels you to action? What makes you tick? Without your participation as educated, active consumers, we need not exist as a paper.

I said that some of us write as journalists, others as artists. Which am I? Though I suspect both, I know only this: To the paper, I commit my talent. Through the paper I trust my growth as a writer. To the reader, I submit my weekly brainchild. Through the reader, I derive the spark that keeps me going.

Scott T. Sutherland is the opinion editor at *The Rebel Yell*.

Compliments of a Thief

BY WALTER M. BRASCH

They won't tell you their names, but they'll sell you a genuine knock-off Rolex for only \$50. Too high? How about \$40? Thirty-five? But they can't go any lower; why it's almost a steal at that price.

Don't want a watch? They have pretend 14-karat gold necklaces and rings. Something nice for that special lady. Still not interested? Wait! Don't go! Nice jeans? A bandanna?

It's the street vendors. They're in almost all major cities, trying to make a buck. Most don't make a lot of money, just enough to survive, enough for a seedy but overpriced walk-up; some clothes; a decent meal once a day. Many are immigrants, here in urban America to find the "good life." Most don't know, at least not "for sure" know, if their merchandise, provided by middlemen, is stolen or just purchased in large quantities at fantastic wholesale prices.

Like the street vendors, a few "needy" college professors also have something to sell. However, they're the amateurs, and their buyers are the pros. At the end of every semester, book buyers descend upon the college campuses to buy books from the pros. Not the used books that students sell back to the bookstore the day after their finals, but new books. Complimentary ones. Books supplied by publishers, often at the professor's request. The purpose of complimentary copies, sometimes as many as 5,000 per press run, is to entice the nation's professors to adopt the books for a course. No one knows how many of the nation's 600,000 professors sell comp copies, although good estimates are that of more than 100 million college texts published a year, as many as half of the estimated one million complimentary copies may make it into paid distribution.

Almost everyone benefits. The pros make out well since they can sometimes make \$300-400 in undeclared income merely for opening mail-

ing bags a few times a semester and occasionally thumbing through the merchandise.

The agents make out well since they buy \$40 books for, maybe, \$5. And the wholesalers and bookstores make out well since they buy books at far less than half the cost of new books.

Not making out so well are the publishers and authors. In 1986, the last time the Book Industry Study Group checked, authors were losing \$10 million a year in royalties, and publishers were losing \$80 million a year in sales to the comp book racket.

A few years ago, Karl J. Smith, a math professor at Santa Rosa (California) Junior College, quickly learned how bad the problem was; more than half the students in his class had "used books"—although the book he wrote had just been released three weeks earlier.

Professors, in rebuttal, say that many of the copies are unsolicited, so it's their right to sell them. They say even books they asked for may not,

after inspection, be appropriate for the courses they teach. The publishers suggest sending back the unused books, and often include postage-paid coupons and mailers; they suggest the professor may place the books on department library shelves or even donate the books to charitable agencies. But, the comp copies are still being sold for "spare change."

To stop the sale of complimentary copies, publishers have begun embossing "Complimentary—Not for Sale" on the covers; many are also stamping the same message on the end of the pages. But, wholesalers have placed non-removable "USED" stickers on the covers, and sanded off the message on the pages. Many wholesalers even rebind some titles.

"Many colleges have written policies that forbid the professors to sell their comp copies," says Jerry Buchs of the 3,000-member National Association of College Stores. But, the association can only recommend since it has no enforcement powers in its code of ethics. Nevertheless, says Buchs, "We keep addressing the issue."

Except for authors and publishers not receiving money for writing and producing books, and some ethical considerations swirling around professors making money from books they had no part in creating, students wonder what the problem is. After all, they're getting new books at "used" prices. "The problem is that the sale of complimentary textbooks to agents—not the sale of legitimately purchased used books the students sell back, but which also yield no income to authors and publishers—directly leads to higher list prices for all textbooks," says James Lichtenberg, vice-president of the Association of American Publishers (AAP).

It's rare that a student doesn't complain about the high price of textbooks; they should be complaining about their greedy, unethical professors.

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