

THE REBEL YELL

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Affirmative action: a losing battle

By Angie Cecchini
Staff Opinion Writer

Affirmative action as practiced today is a social experiment gone awry and it's time for it to end.

For those who don't already know, affirmative action is granting preferential treatment because of race or sex. In other words, it's legalized discrimination.

I have a friend, Carol, who graduated valedictorian of her California high school. She was involved in various student activities and organizations and maintained a 4.0 all four years of high school.

I also have a Mexican-American friend who graduated from the same high school. He was an ordinary student who managed to secure a "B" average.

Both students applied to UCLA, a university which employs an affirmative action program as part of its admission process. Guess which student was accepted?

Carol, who was obviously qualified to attend UCLA, was overlooked and not admitted, while the average minority student was admitted without any qualms. Is this fair?

Why should Carol be denied certain opportunities when she is plainly more deserving?

Of course there are forms of affirmative action that do not deny people opportunities on the basis of sex or race. In employment, these often include recruitment or training programs or outreach available to all.

The affirmative action my friend Carol experienced, however, is the kind that is uprooting America. We've spent phenomenal amounts of time and money trying to make discrimination a non-issue. We're only fueling the flames of discontent by practicing affirmative action.

Whoever created the horrible

euphemism "affirmative action" anyway?

It's almost as bad as calling blood-sucking terrorists "freedom fighters." The name is way too pretty for such an ugly thing.

Affirmative action wasn't so hideous in the beginning. Originally, it was designed to remedy the ill effects of past discrimination against blacks. It was supposed to establish an even field for persons who had been treated unfairly.

Affirmative action in its early phase can best be explained with a simple analogy. Picture a foot-race in which one of the runners has been shackled for the entire time. We couldn't just remove his chains and let the race continue. We would need to propel the last place runner back into contention.

This scenario can be applied to affirmative action. The only problem is, this race has been going on for over 30 years. Hasn't there been ample time for the shackled runner to catch up?

The "repayment of debt" theory avoids the sticky issue of the correspondence between color and need.

If there is to be any assistance for those behind in the race through no fault of their own, it should be based on need and not race. There are plenty of white

people who could use assistance. Should they be overlooked even if they have just as much or more need than a minority person?

The whole intention of affirmative action has gone sour. Not only has the policy brought discrimination, it has also guaranteed a national spotlight on race and ethnicity. The very problem the civil rights movement once criticized, judging people in terms of their racial and

ethnic groups, is impossible to conquer with affirmative action.

If this country is guided by principles such as "all men are created equal" and are "endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights," among them "life liberty and the pursuit of happiness," then affirmative action calls for serious amendment of our founding charter.

Under affirmative action we can still live by these fundamentals, but we need to add a few exceptions to the constitution. For example, if you happen to be white, your pursuit of happiness and a few of your rights may be swept aside so someone less qualified can snatch up your opportunities. It's clear that affirmative action makes a mockery of the ideals this country purportedly holds dear.



Smaller job market hurts college students

By Stephen Slivinski
Guest Columnist

Generation X is facing issues our parents didn't.

But there is a problem we face that even our fellow Generation Xers who graduated from college 10 years ago didn't — a rapidly shrinking job market.

According to a Collegiate Employment Research Institute report, in every annual study from 1990 to 1995 there have been fewer job opportunities for new college graduates than at any point in the 1980s.

Why is this so? Just listen to Michael Kinsley, columnist and former editor of *The New Republic*. Kinsley intended to hire an assistant in the Fall of 1993 only to be greeted by the painful reality of regulations run amuck. By his count, and "it takes a minimum of 37 different forms and 50 separate checks to hire a single employee for a year, even if he agrees to be paid only once a month. Kinsley eventually retired the position under the duress of regulation. "Having an assistant simply takes too

much time," he said.

With so many regulations to adhere to, it's no wonder that fewer jobs are created. Estimates of the total cost of regulation last year range from \$668 billion to \$1 trillion. Even the Clinton administration's Department of Labor claims that regulation increases per-worker costs by at least 30 percent. This should worry the many Generation Xers about to enter the workforce. With people in their 20s and 30s creating new businesses faster than any other demographic cohort, regulatory costs adds another hurdle to the potential entrepreneur.

In addition, the economy lost 40,000 jobs in August. The slow growth in the economy — well below historical averages — means that nearly one in every four college graduates will have to settle for a job that does not require a college degree. Most analysts state that the economic uncertainty of the slow growth, high taxes, and excessive regulation has forced more and more businesses to hire temporary labor rather than full-

time workers.

The sorry state of the workforce is due to a behemoth bureaucracy and the tax structure that supports it, feeding on the paychecks of not only the uneducated laborer but, to a much harsher extent, on the educated worker. Real disposable income is only growing a fraction of the rate it was when many current college students' brothers and sisters graduated 10 years ago.

Total taxes reached their highest level in U.S. history in 1995. The summation of federal, local, and state taxes is between 32 to 40 percent of GDP. Since 1992, taxes have risen 60 percent faster than national income, with virtually all of the growth coming in the federal take.

When you take into account the amount of expected job creation, the picture doesn't get any rosier. The number of college graduates expected to join the workforce from 1992 to 2005 will hit 17.5 million, while only 13.7 million college-level jobs are opening up. That's 3.8 college graduates without job prospects requiring a de-

I've been in a workplace where the boss wanted to recruit minority workers to even out the environment in terms of employee skin color. That is so asinine! Minorities can apply just as easily as any white person. Why should we have to recruit them?

If I received aid through an affirmative action program, I would be a little embarrassed. How proud could I be knowing I was given assistance not based on my own merit and skill, but because I belonged to a certain minority group?

If we really want to show minority groups respect, let's treat them as equals and stop giving them our crutch to make it in the world. They are intelligent enough to compete with all people and don't need our special favors to make them stand out in a crowd.

Certainly affirmative action can be a useful tool in fixing some of society's ills, but basing aid on color or sex rather than need is wrong. Doing so officially treats minorities as unable to compete on an equal basis for the good in question.

The time has come when a majority of the people have equal access to opportunity. Those who don't should certainly be given aid, but not because they are minorities. They should be helped because they are in need.

Affirmative action is giving aid to some minorities who don't need it and skipping over other non-minorities who do. The system is being abused and is ruining the purpose of this program.

I give the creators of affirmative action credit for having a good idea. Nice try boys, but it's not serving the purpose for which it was created. Let's just admit it's not working and end it before more racial tension is created.

Affirmative action should aim to cure past discrimination, not to create more.

gree!

However, let's consider the potential job growth of the economy. If the growth trend of the low-tax, low-regulatory Reagan years had continued until this day, there would be 5.1 million more Americans working, and the average American household would have an additional \$4000 a year in income. This increase in job opportunities overcomes the present estimated job deficit and then some! The increase in take-home pay would restore the value of a college degree.

That's why Generation X needs a tax cut — to spur economic growth and to ensure a strong job market. The realities of graduating from college hint at the possibility and the potential that a thriving marketplace can unleash. That's enough to instill recent college graduates with the lessons taught by the treacherous history of high tax rates and overbearing regulation.

—Stephen Slivinski, Leadership Fellow, Young America's Foundation.