

Point of View

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TO BE EQUAL

Affirmative Action-Inclusive

By Hugh B. Price

Affirmative action arouses such emotion these days that it's not uncommon even for people on the same side of the debate to misconstrue one another's position. I recently fell victim to that phenomenon when a columnist charged that I think blacks aren't the intellectual equal of whites. Nothing could be further from what I believe, or have said.



HUGH B. PRICE

Critics say it's time to move beyond affirmative action as a remedy for racial discrimination to an era of equal opportunity in which the chips fall where they may according to ability and qualifications. The problem is that talk of equal opportunity can be empty rhetoric mainstream. The recent report of the Glass Ceiling Commission confirms that the job of overcoming discrimination and promoting full inclusion isn't remotely done.

While psychologists debate the significance of so-called

"intelligence" tests, I know of no respectable experts who believe that any one race is inherently brighter than another. Nor do I.

In the real world of work, African Americans perform on par with everyone else when given the chance. Affirmative action isn't about catapulting unqualified minorities into positions for which we're patently ill-equipped. The question isn't whether we can compete, but whether we're even allowed to play in the first place.

A key stumbling block in the debate over affirmative action is the myth perpetrated by opponents about what it even means to be "qualified."

Critics tout the virtues of IQ tests and entrance exams as supposedly unbiased arbiters of ability.

However, the predictive power of gatekeeping examinations like the Scholastic Aptitude Test is extremely limited. To my knowledge, there's no proven correlation between one's score on these exams and, say, one's annual earnings a decade or two later, much less one's contribution to the well being of humankind.

In fact, David Shipler, writing recently in the New York Times, reported that "a study of three classes of Harvard alumni over three

decades found a high correlation between 'success'—defined by income, community involvement and professional satisfaction—and...low S.A.T..... scores and a blue-collar background."

Of course test scores—and whatever they reliably tell us—matter. But so do ambition, industriousness, leadership, curiosity and other job-relevant attributes that aren't readily detected on tests. Folk with the highest test scores aren't always the top performers in the real world. For instance, what employer in her right mind would hire a salesperson who's a summa cum laude, but also painfully shy?

Institutions and employers should establish threshold admissions and hiring criteria which correlate reliably with the ability to function competently. That would free them to place some higher risk, longer term bets on which people of all ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds may blossom later on and serve their professions and society with distinctions.

If and when the institutions that comprise society's opportunity structure become deeply, instinctively and irreversibly inclusive, then the need the affirmative action will recede.

ALONG THE COLOR LINE

REVIVING THE YOUTH PROTEST MOVEMENT

By Dr. Manning Marable

When I was eighteen years old, I arrived at Earlham College, a small, Quaker private school in Richmond, Indiana, filled with fascination and expectations. It was the fall of 1968, in the middle of a controversial presidential campaign, a three-way contest between the Republican Richard Nixon, Democrat Hubery Humphrey and racial segregationist George Wallace. The disturbing events of that year — the "The Offensive" by the North Vietnamese which destroyed the myth of American military supremacy in southeast

Asia, the tragic assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy, the police riot against demonstrators at the Democratic Party's national convention in Chicago that summer, and the growing worldwide tide of political and moral opposition to the U.S. war in Vietnam — all formed the turbulent cultural and social background to our times.

My generation of students had experienced a political lifetime in the shortspan of several years. We had been inspired by the patriotism and idealism of John F. Kennedy,

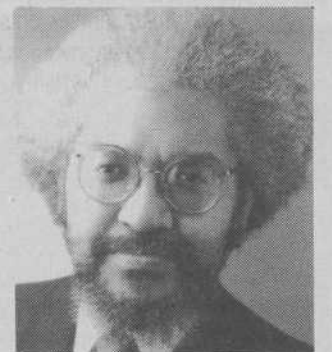
who had challenged us with the declaration: "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." WE stood in the hot summer sun before the Lincoln Memorial, and were moved to tears as we listened to Martin's magnificent "I Have A Dream" speech. We marched in solidarity with our sisters and brothers who stood against racial injustice and segregation in Birmingham, Montgomery and Jackson, and we cheered as the authoritarian system on Jim Crow collapsed.

The charismatic figure of Malcolm X made us aware of the

intricate network of hypocrisy and oppression which perpetuated black inequality and white power. And as we witnessed the rich parade of alternative voices and protest visions — Fannie Lou Hamer, Huey P. Newton, Cesar Chavez, Fred Hampton, Frantz Fanon, Amiri Baraka, Sonia Sanchez, and the "Last Poets" — we moved rapidly into new and unanticipated directions. America would never be the same again.

My college at Earlham was just another phase of that process of cultural change and

self-discovery. The pace of change was occurring so rapidly by this time, that the rules, regulations and values generated by the early sixties now seemed, at the end of the decade, hopelessly and backward to us. For example, upperclass students forced us to accept "freshman beanies", small, round, colorful little caps which symbolized one's school spirit. The African-American students were probably the first to raise objections, on practical grounds. Freshmen beanies were designed for white boys with crew cuts, not sisters and brothers with bushy afros. So when we declared our beanies as "obnoxious symbols of the white man's power structure", our long-haired, beaded and



DR. MANNING MARABLE

bearded hippy friends followed suit.

We challenged a series of ridiculous rules which were designed to segregate women from men on the campus. Freshman women had a curfew of 10:30 p.m., when meant that they had to run frantically out of (See Along Color Line, Pg 21)

CIVIL RIGHTS JOURNAL

CODE WORDS, MIXED MESSAGES AND HEARTLESS CUTS

By Bernice Powell Jackson

The Children's Defense Fund is now estimating that one in three children in the United States, the world's richest country, is poor. Look around you. One in every three children you see is poor.

Our nation's children are under attack in Washington right now. They are the ones who will suffer the most from the Contract with America, as various parts of the Personal Responsibility Act take effect. If our children are our future, then fully one third of our future is under attack in Washington right now.

But in order to really understand what is being said in Washington right now, you need

a translator grounded in history. You need someone who knows how code words have been used in the past in order to translate the code words being used in the present.

Part of the fear felt in the hearts of most African Americans today comes from the use of the current term "state block grants." It's just a little too close to the old code words "states' rights" used by southern states in particular to buttress their right to keep African Americans from fully participating in government or from receiving benefits. Just as some states discriminated against blacks then, many of us are fearful that once again states will hide behind this veil to deny

services and rights to poor people of color. We're afraid of the inequity of benefits which even now means that welfare payments range from \$120 to \$703 depending on what state you live in. We're afraid that as states face increasing budget problems, it is the poor who will be cut first and hunger and homelessness will only increase.

Part of the distrust of the Contract with America felt by people of color comes from the mixed messages which this country is now sending. We say to mothers on welfare you must work even in menial jobs with little opportunity for training and without health benefits or child care while we pay farmers to do

nothing-not to grow crops which our country does not need. We say to mothers on welfare that poor people are lazy freeloaders while we bail out savings and loan institutions which were used like private bank accounts. We say we still believe in the Haratio Alger story when the number of poor people in this country is growing by leaps and bounds every decade while we lose jobs to other countries.

Part of the lament heard in communities of color across this nation comes from the heartless cuts which now threaten the social fabric of this nation. As the Republicans move not only to reform welfare, but to dismantle

(See Civil Rights, Page 10)

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