

Exclusion

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Some lawyers and law professors have said much the same thing.

It almost sounds rational—until you come back to the recommendation that blacks be excluded *because they are black*.

The astonishing element in this controversy is not the revelation of the ingrained, widespread systemic bias in jury selection—or other parts of the criminal justice system. Blacks have known of and protested against that for decades.

No, the astonishing part of this has been the widespread acknowledgment that it exists—followed by a figurative shrugging it off as just “the reality.”

But this must not be shrugged off. This is an abuse of power. This is a denial of the rights of law-abiding African-Americans to play a proper role in the safe-guarding of the community. And it is a denial of the rights of the accused—who are assumed to be innocent until proven guilty to a properly-constituted jury. This further evidence that African-Americans and others are right to distrust the criminal justice system has to be remedied, not only in Philadelphia, but everywhere else.

It can start with prosecutors and others realizing that—yes, obviously we do have to say it—African-Americans, just like other Americans, are more than just a reflection of their economic class or the neighborhood in which they live.

Perhaps a good training exercise for fledgling prosecutors and defense lawyers alike would be a mock trial in which they're subjected to the same kind of exclusionary practices they now so readily practice.

Perhaps then, they'll be better equipped to resist the lure of old-fashion racist practices and concentrate on seeking justice.

Hilton

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Our two main sources of this information came from *Bear's Guide to Nontraditional College Degrees and Black Collegian* magazine, two excellent publications that we encourage students to have in their personal libraries.

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