

POINT OF VIEW

Our View

No props for Prop 209

Right-wing conservatives across the country shouted "hallelujah" when the Supreme Court recently upheld California's voter-approved ban on affirmative action.

Score another victory for real Americans, they said. But their victory is shallow because thousands of qualified, deserving Americans won't get the chance to show their wares as a result of their race, sex, or handicap.

As enamored with the American ideal of "pulling yourself up by the bootstraps" as Californians (and other Americans) may be, they must realize that America isn't a land of milk and honey. It's kind of hard to pull yourself up if the rope keeps getting cut.

Had racism and discrimination never been etched in the American psyche, there would not have been a need for civil rights protests, marches, court battles or affirmative action.

Affirmative action seeks only to inculcate all minorities - including women and the disabled - into America's economic mainstream, giving them an equal opportunity to pursue the American dream. Affirmative action was not intended to deny the privileged, only to empower the oppressed and overlooked.

If affirmative action has jipped some whites out of jobs, government contracts or colleges, then fix the system, don't scrap it. Affirmative action is needed, not to right past wrongs, but to ensure that the those wrongs aren't repeated. Even proponents of the system acknowledge that it could use a little tweaking.

Outlawing affirmative action will have serious repercussions. Already, the banning of race-based admissions and preferences has led to scant minority enrollment at law schools at the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Texas at Austin. This only adds to the dearth of minority lawyers.

A Supreme Court ruling that struck down racially gerrymandered districts in the South has had similar a effect. Louisiana lost a vibrant, young congressman in Cleo Fields when his L-shaped 4th Congressional District was ruled unconstitutional. Blacks in Georgia and North Carolina and Hispanics in Texas also lost their only "true" voice when gerrymandered districts in their states were struck down.

If Nevada decides to piggyback on the political lightning rod known as California, it could mean that minorities will have even less of a chance to key into the valley's tremendous economic growth. Blacks could be able to shut out of the revitalization of West Las Vegas because the powers-that-be would give contracts to their friends. Other minorities, women and the disabled would also find it tougher to maneuver in the economic gaugmire.

Our society is far from colorblind. And affirmative action is the best safeguard we have to make sure minorities aren't overlooked by those blinded by race.

POINTS
TO
PONDER
BY
PROFESSOR
#HARRIS#

WHEN WILL WE STOP USING THE BEAUTY STANDARDS OF OTHER RACES AS OUR OWN?

GIRLFRIEND... YOU SHOULD USE SOME SKIN BLEACH

HONEY... I'M GLAD MY LIPS AINT AS BIG AS YOURS...

BABY... IT'S TIME TO HIDE THAT BAD HAIR AND GET A HAIR WEAVE

HARRIS
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TRUE OR FALSE?

IN THE 1990's ONE OF THE LARGEST INCREASES IN NEW HOUSING IN AMERICA WAS CAUSED BY THE GROWTH OF U.S. PRISONS!!

HEY, LOOK AT IT THIS WAY... LESS HOMELESS PEOPLE!!

#HARRIS#
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The only apology that counts is economic

By John William Templeton
Special to Sentinel-Voice

You have to give a well-meaning Ohio congressman credit when he proposed a one-sentence apology to black Americans for slavery.

How could he have known that the steel curtain of white denial would fall on his head?

The benefit of this incident is that it brings attention to the real resolution that Congress must confront — Rep. John Conyers' 15-year-old effort to impanel a commission to investigate the feasibility of reparations for African-Americans.

Conyers' resolution has never been brought to the floor for a vote under Democratic or Republican Congresses.

The root cause of the denial can be summed up in a quote from Thomas Jefferson said while he contemplated the hypocrisy of slavery in a democracy: "I shudder to think of the thought that there is a just God."

No white American wants to face the equivalent of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and account for 236 years of legal slavery. In fact, an ABC poll shows that 88 percent of whites are opposed to reparations. Had the resolution not been offered, the usual media blackout of discussing the topic would not have been pierced.

A false sense of history is at the root of white denial.



African-Americans were free in the territory of the United States from 1528 to 1619, meaning that slavery disrupted their normal progress.

Expanding slave territories into the Deep South actually required the forcible removal of Maroons and Native Americans from Florida, Alabama and Mississippi. Just addressing slavery does not factor the loss of land and economic opportunity in those areas. Spanish-speaking blacks in the Southwest from Texas to California were moved off millions of acres of land.

The real issue is one of restoring wealth, not making apologies. In "Black Wealth,

White Wealth," Melvin Oliver and Thomas Shapiro point out that strategies only maintain economic inequity.

When Edgar Bronfman confronted the Swiss government about the holdings of Holocaust victims, he did not settle for an apology. The Swiss are prepared to pay more than \$5 billion to resolve this claim.

There is a simple way to quantify the impact of not just slavery, but racism — the gap between black and white household wealth, \$3,000 compared to \$81,000. A \$75,000 payment to every African-American family would put practically all in

position to pursue any of their life goals from housing to education to entrepreneurship.

Let's face it, white America does not want equality, particularly economically. Our quest for reparations has to be combined with an international effort on the part of all African countries. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission would not exist but for international pressure. It is time to extend such efforts wherever black people have been held in bondage.

John William Templeton is executive editor of Griot, the African-American, African and Caribbean business daily, and author of "Our Roots Run Deep: the Black Experience in California," Vol. 1, 2, and 3.



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