

Could Obama impact quotas?

WASHINGTON (AP) — Barack Obama's political success might claim an unintended victim: affirmative action, a much-debated policy he supports.

Already weakened by several court rulings and state referendums, affirmative action now confronts a challenge to its very reason for existing. If Americans make a Black person the leading contender for president, as nationwide polls suggest, how can racial prejudice be so prevalent and potent that it justifies special efforts to place minorities in coveted jobs and schools?

"The primary rationale for affirmative action is that America is institutionally racist and institutionally sexist," said Ward Connerly, the leader of state-by-state efforts to end what he and others consider policies of reverse discrimination.

"That rationale is undercut in a major way when you look at the success of Sen. Clinton and Sen. Obama," Sen. Hillary Clinton of New York battled Obama to the end of the Democratic primary process.

Other critics of affirmative action agree. "Obama is further evidence that the great majority of Americans reject discrimination, reject prejudice," said Todd F. Gaziano, a scholar at the conservative Heritage Foundation and a member of the U.S. Commission on Civil

Rights.

Not so fast, say supporters of affirmative action. Just because Barack Obama, Oprah Winfrey and other minorities have reached the top of their professions does not mean that ordinary Blacks, Latinos or women are free from day-to-day biases that deny them equal access to top schools or jobs, they say.

As affirmative action's power has diminished, minority enrollment has fallen at many prominent colleges, said Gary Orfield, an authority on the subject at the University of California, Los Angeles.

"If people get the impression from Obama's success that the racial problems of this country have been solved, that would be very sad," Orfield said. "In some ways we have moved backwards" in recent years, he said.

Wade Henderson, head of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, said, "Exceptions don't make the rule. By any measure, Obama and Clinton are clearly exceptional individuals," he said. "When you really examine the masses of Americans, especially women and people of color, you still find incredible disparities," which justify the continuation of affirmative action programs.

Obama, who asks voters neither to support nor oppose him on the basis of his race,

has dealt gently with affirmative action. He says his two young daughters have enjoyed great advantages and, therefore, should not receive special consideration because of their race.

"On the other hand," he said in an April debate, "if there's a young White person who has been working hard, struggling and has overcome great odds, that's something that should be taken into account" by people such as college admission officers.

"So I still believe in affirmative action as a means of overcoming both historic and potentially current discrimination," Obama said. "But I think that it can't be a quota system and it can't be something that is simply applied without looking at the whole person, whether that person is Black, or White, or Hispanic, male or female."

Tucker Bounds, spokesman for Republican presidential candidate John McCain, said McCain's commitment to equal opportunity "means aggressively enforcing our nation's anti-discrimination laws."

"It also means rejecting affirmative action plans and quotas that give weight to one group of Americans at the expense of another," Bounds said. "Plans that result in quotas, where such plans have not been judicially created to remedy a specific, proven act of discrimination, only result in

more discrimination."

Affirmative action, a term coined in the early 1960s, is a loosely defined set of policies meant to help rectify discrimination based on race, religion, sex or national origin. It quickly proved controversial, especially in the public arena, as some White males alleged they were losing government jobs and public university admissions to less qualified minorities and women.

The Supreme Court ruled 30 years ago that universities could use race as one factor in choosing applicants, but it banned quotas. Subsequent court decisions placed more restrictions on affirmative action, and Connerly and others launched ballot initiatives that virtually crippled it in some states.

In 1996, California voters passed Proposition 209, pushed by Connerly. It bars all government institutions from giving preferential treatment to people based on race or gender, and particularly affects college admissions and government contracts.

Similar measures passed in Michigan and Washington state. Connerly hopes to have versions on the ballots this fall in Colorado, Nebraska and Arizona.

The erosion of affirmative action is forcing colleges and other institutions to seek new ways of pursuing diversity, with mixed results.

Blacks made fun of in LA yearbook

COVINA, Calif. (AP) — Phony "ghetto" names were printed under a yearbook photo of Black Student Union members at a suburban Los Angeles high school, leaving some angry students and parents calling for an apology and a reprint.

"Tay Tay Shaniqua," "Crisphy Nanos" and "Laquan White" were among the nine names placed next to the club's photo in Charter Oak High School's yearbook, Charter Oak Unified School District Superintendent Clint Harwick said.

"A yearbook is very significant and something you always hold on to," said Toi Jackson, whose daughter, Evanne, is a BSU member at the school in Covina. "When she shows it to her kids she will have to explain why she has the name Crisphy."

School ended about two weeks ago, and authorities said the names were discovered only after the yearbooks were handed out.

"Someone was just trying to be funny, but it's not funny," said Jordan Smith, a BSU member. "It's upsetting. It's a mistake that should not have been overlooked."

The district office and the school were closed Friday. Joseph M. Probst, the school board's president, called the incident "atrocious" in an interview with the *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*.

"I am sure the students will be spoken to and given an apology if they haven't been already," he said.

Probst said the student responsible for the names will be a senior next year. He did not know the student's race or gender but said that "appropriate actions will be taken."

Students were given printed stickers with the correct names to put into the yearbook.

"What else can you do?" Probst said. "It would be nice to snap a magic finger, but I think it was incredibly well done."

Some of the BSU members and their parents disagree and want the books recalled and reprinted. Toi Jackson told the *Tribune* that on the last day of school, her daughter was given a handful of stickers and told to pass them out to her friends.

"How humiliating," she said. "The school is responsible, and they ask the victim to pass out the stickers."

Officials at the 2,000-student school about 30 miles east of downtown Los Angeles say the student body is about 4.5 percent Black, 45 percent Hispanic and 30 percent White.

Judge: NAACP can access police files

BALTIMORE (AP) — The NAACP can review Maryland State Police documents that contain allegations of racial profiling, a judge has ruled, granting a victory to the civil rights organization in a drawn-out legal fight.

Baltimore County Circuit Judge Timothy J. Martin decided that a panel of three lawyers chosen by the NAACP's Maryland conference will have 120 days to review the documents and select those they want copied. The names of the officers and the people who filed complaints against them will be redacted.

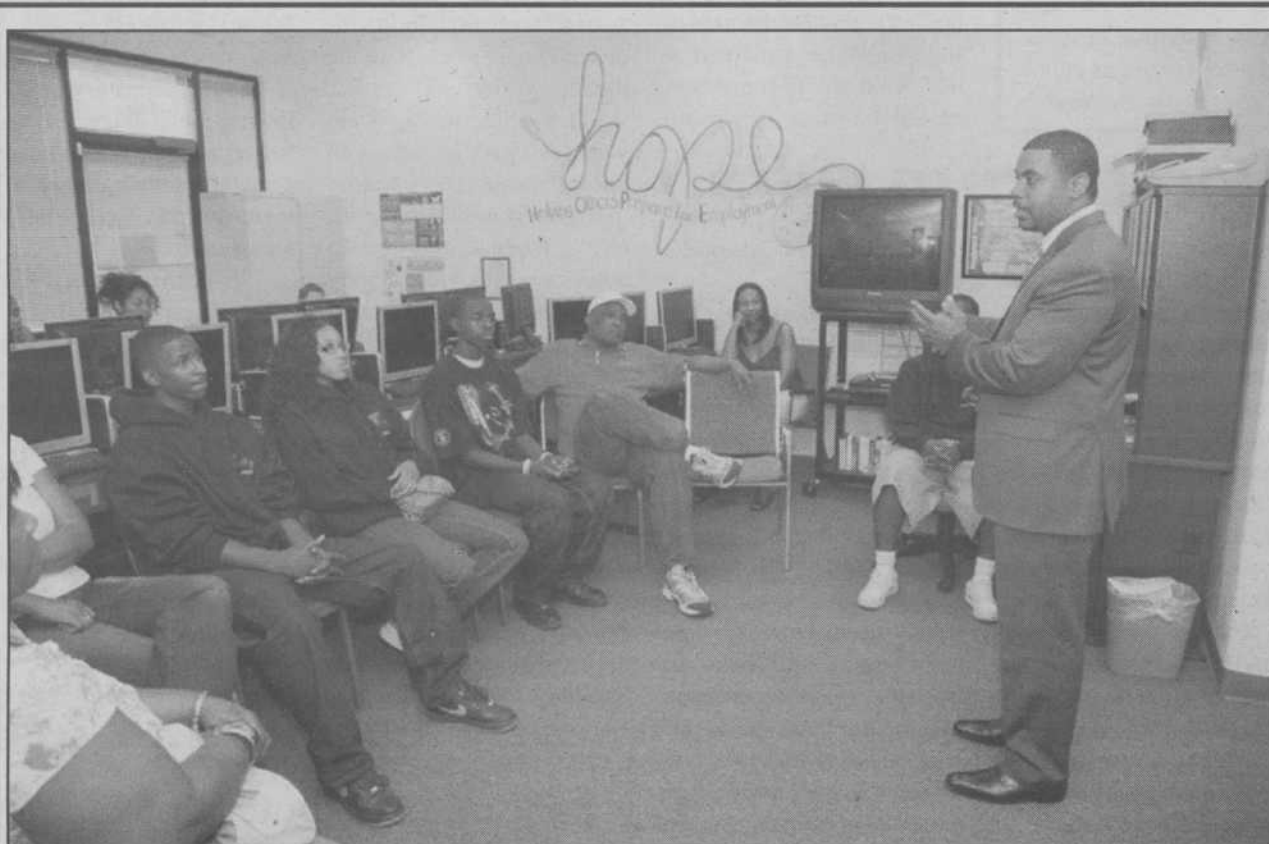
"I believe the fair approach is to find a middle ground," Martin told *The (Baltimore) Sun*. "I know state police fear a precedent, but I believe the NAACP is entitled to disclosure of these documents."

The Maryland conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the American Civil Liberties Union alleged in a lawsuit last year that state police had withheld information about how complaints of racial profiling are investigated.

Betty A. Stemley, an assistant attorney general representing state police, had argued that the documents should be considered private personnel records. But she said the agency would comply with the judge's decision.

Brian L. Schwab, lead attorney for the NAACP and ACLU, said he was pleased with the decision.

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LEARNING TO BE LEADERS

Steven Horsford, state senator and president/CEO of the Nevada Partners/Culinary Training Academy, speaks to participants in GNJ's Family Life Center. As part of the center's summer opportunities project, eight youth were sent to Washington, D.C., to visit that historic city's famous landmarks. The trip included stops at The White House, the Capitol, the Smithsonian Museum and Howard and Georgetown universities. Youth talked with congressional officials and were interviewed on "Good Morning America." Horsford sponsored two of the eight youth. The trip is but one of the activities of the Frontline Leadership Academy, which focuses on leadership and developing solid character.

Sentinel-Voice photos by Marty Frierson