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## RACISM IN HIGHER EDUCATION

*Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons\**

Once I had a mentor at Temple University, Dr. John Raines, who gave a talk titled “A Classroom is Aptly Named.”<sup>1</sup> In his talk, he explained how “class”-rooms in universities during the early years of this republic, were reserved for upper-class White American males only. All other groups who have gained entry since then — White American women, African-American men, Native American men, Latino men, and lastly minority women — have had to literally fight their way into these college and university classrooms. They used all types of protest weapons at their disposal to end this discrimination, including lawsuits, picketing, sit-ins, sleep-ins, and hunger strikes to gain entry to these vaunted halls of learning. Education in America was reserved for the upper-class White American male, as was participation in the democratic system first envisioned by this country’s forefathers. Of course, exclusion and discrimination in the educational system in the United States is but another manifestation of the deeply embedded white racism found in all aspects of this society. In the United States, “white”<sup>2</sup> racism is a centuries-old system intentionally designed to exclude Americans of color from full participation in the economy, politics, and society.<sup>3</sup>

Preventing enslaved Africans from attaining any form of education was a cornerstone of the systematic oppression and dehumanization of these captured people. During their slavery sojourn, African-Americans were prohibited from learning to read and write, lest they prove their humanness, as only human beings can read and write. Many an enslaved African caught reading or writing was severely beaten with a whip, mutilated or, in the case of repeat offenders, killed for teaching themselves

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1. John Raines, *A Classroom is Aptly Named*, Lecture at Temple University, circa 1993. The author attended the lecture at which Dr. Raines provided the included explanation.

2. Feagin, Vera, and Batur, authors of *White Racism*, put the term “white” as it relates to people of European descent in quotation marks because as they note: Those called “whites” in the United States and across the globe are not really white in skin color but rather are some shade of brown, tan, pink, or mixture thereof. These truer to life skin colors, however, are not generally associated with the qualities — such as purity, innocence, and privilege — to which “white skin” is often linked. “White people do not really exist in the flesh; they are a social construction.” JOE R. FEAGIN ET AL., *WHITE RACISM 2* (2001).

3. *Id.* at 2.

or others their letters and numbers. The attainment of any kind of education, from the earliest times, has been extremely difficult for the African-American.

One of the results of the civil-rights movement was the national acknowledgement that African-Americans (and subsequently all minorities of color) had been denied their civil, and many of their human, rights over several centuries. This, of course, included the lack of equal access to quality education at the primary and secondary levels, as well as the lack of access to equal higher education for most of the members of these groups. In spite of this grudging acknowledgement and the commitment on paper to remedy this long standing policy and practice of denial of rights in the economic, political and social realms, including education, the United States has never even been close to the realization of equality for all Americans in any area. As Randall Robinson has written:

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, African Americans lag the American mainstream in virtually every area of statistical measure. . . . No race, no ethnic or religious group, has suffered so much over so long a span as blacks have, and do still at the hands of those who benefited, with the connivance of the United States government, from slavery and the century of legalized American racial hostility that followed it.<sup>4</sup>

As early as 1968, (four years after the passage of the historic Civil Rights Bill) the government-sponsored Kerner Commission, in its report, stated clearly that America was moving toward two societies: one black and one white, separate, and unequal.<sup>5</sup> By the mid-seventies, efforts to negate or reduce many of the gains won from the American conscience by the civil-rights movement, at an appalling cost, were both organized and unremitting.

The white power structure, with the acquiescence of the White American majority in this country, creates and defends with vigor the very systems that produce and perpetuate poverty and discrimination against African-Americans and other minority ethnic groups. Feagin, Vera, and

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4. RANDALL ROBINSON, *THE DEBT: WHAT AMERICA OWES TO BLACKS* 7-8 (2000).

5. *Affirmative Action*, CALL TO A FAITHFUL DECISION ISSUE PAPER NUMBER THREE (THE INTERFAITH ALLIANCE FOUNDATION, WASHINGTON, D.C.), available at <http://www.interfaithalliance.org/initiatives/papers/aa.pdf> (last visited Jan. 22, 2003). The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders was commissioned by President Lyndon Johnson in 1967 to investigate the civil disturbance of that summer and the summer before (1966), which left 300 dead and 8000 wounded. *Id.*

Batur say that one of the great ironies of U.S. history is the fact that “freedom and liberty were developed for white Americans on the backs of African Americans and other Americans of color,”<sup>6</sup> yet this fact is largely lost on White Americans, as are the “implications and consequences of this long-term racial oppression of African and Native Americans, . . . [which is] largely denied or brushed aside today by most white Americans.”<sup>7</sup> For the most part, White Americans are in denial of the reality of white racism, with its deep roots in the past, and its continued grip on the present.

The attack on affirmative action in higher education is a classic example of this nation reneging on the gains made by the civil-rights movement and the promises made to African-Americans and other racially stigmatized groups. It is important to note that in 1955, one year after the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* suit was won by long-suffering African-Americans,<sup>8</sup> less than 5% of college students aged 18-24 were African-American.<sup>9</sup> Affirmative action<sup>10</sup> was intended to mitigate the general exclusion of disadvantaged minority Americans (and White American women) from a broad range of opportunities, from employment opportunities to admission to formerly all-white universities and professional schools.<sup>11</sup> But, affirmative action has been interpreted by its

6. FEAGIN ET AL., *supra* note 2, at ix.

7. *Id.*

8. *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 482 (1954).

9. *Affirmative Action*, ACLU POSITION PAPER (ACLU, New York, NY), Fall 2000, at 3, available at [http://archive.aclu.org/library/affirmative\\_action99.pdf](http://archive.aclu.org/library/affirmative_action99.pdf) (last visited Jan. 22, 2003).

10. James V. Fenlon and Rodney L. Brod in their “Ideologies of Reverse Discrimination: Race, Gender, Class, Age Analysis” define affirmative action as “public or private actions or programs which provide or see to provide opportunities or other benefits to persons on the basis of, among other things, their membership in a specified group or groups.” They explain further that the effort focuses on “opportunity structures and on group position.” By and large, affirmative action efforts have fallen into three categories, they say. They are: 1. Educational programs to increase enrollment of women and minorities, 2. Set-asides as a percentage of government subcontracting, and 3. Employment target and goals. James V. Fenlon & Rodney L. Brod, *Ideologies of Reverse Discrimination: Race, Gender, Class, Age Analysis*, 7 RACE, GENDER & CLASS 149 (2000).

11. Robinson in *The DEBT* has low expectations for what affirmative action can even accomplish given the huge debt owed to African-Americans by the United States. It is not that he is against affirmative action per se. He simply sees it as much too little too late. He states:

It is again, not that affirmative action concepts are wrongheaded. They indeed are not. They should remain in place. But such programs are not *solutions* to our problems. They are palliatives that help people like *me*, who are poised to succeed when given half a chance. They do little for the millions of African Americans bottom-mired in urban hells by the savage time-release social debilitations of American slavery. They do little for those Americans, disproportionately black,

enemies as “reverse discrimination,”<sup>12</sup> or even more insidiously, as a covert means of qualifying otherwise unqualified African-Americans for college admissions or jobs. Other opponents of affirmative action object to the implications of a quota system they believe is inherent in a system that reserves limited percentages or set-asides for minorities and women in specific employment and college and university admissions policies.<sup>13</sup>

The original intent of the program, which was to stimulate entry-level opportunities for a very limited number of minorities who had been seriously maimed and disadvantaged by historical U.S. oppression and exclusion of major racial groups, was lost in the right-wing backlash. Some individual White American males (and their families) felt their skin-privilege opportunities, which whites have enjoyed since the founding of this republic, were being assailed and sacrificed in favor of a social policy that began to even the playing field just a small bit. This group and their allies have, from early on, fought against affirmative action in a continuing series of lawsuits and political strategies. Unfortunately, the American public seems to have forgotten the intent of affirmative action is to correct and to remedy historic wrongs and seems to believe the right-wing rhetoric

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who inherit grinding poverty, poor nutrition, bad schools, unsafe neighborhoods, low expectation, and overburdened mothers.

ROBINSON, *supra* note 4, at 8.

12. For more on these charges, see Stanley Fish, *Reverse Racism, or How the Pot Got to Call the Kettle Black*, ATLANTIC MONTHLY, Nov. 1993; AFFIRMATIVE ACTION (OPPOSING VIEWPOINTS) (A.E. Sadler ed., 1996); Kit Lively, *U. of California's Professional Schools Face New Era*, CHRON. HIGHER EDUC., Mar. 22, 1966, at A26-30.

13. In spite of the white hysteria over “reverse discrimination” and the cries of “inherent unfairness and un-Americanism,” William Bowden, the former President of Princeton and Derek Bok the former President of Harvard in their 1998 book, *The Shape of the River: Long-Term Consequences of Considering Race in College and University Admissions*, say that such hysteria and criticism is “unwarranted and undesirable” for two major reasons: The first, which is pointed right at group-oriented claims arising from “reverse discrimination” accusations is that, “If white students filled all the places created by reducing black enrollment, the overall white probability of admission would rise by only 1.5% points.” Yet for abolishing affirmative action, note these authors,

there would be a decrease of black enrollment at the nation's best universities by more than half resulting not only in incalculable harm to thousands of individuals, all students of color, but also to society itself, which would see the black leadership cadre decimated and the dream of a fully integrated society recede.

WILLIAM BOWDEN & DEREK BOK, *THE SHAPE OF THE RIVER: LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF CONSIDERING RACE IN COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS* 276-90 (1998) (emphasis added).

against the policies and is supporting a return to the pre-civil-rights status quo, which upholds white skin privilege.<sup>14</sup>

The deluge of lawsuits against affirmative action filed over the last two decades reveal a lot about the resistance of white America to paying a bill which is long overdue.<sup>15</sup> In 1978, in the *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* suit, the U.S. Supreme Court set the parameters of educational affirmative action, saying that quotas are unconstitutional, but race or minority status could still be a factor used in admissions.<sup>16</sup> In the 1990s, when affirmative action began to produce significant gains for African-American college enrollment (in 1990, thirty-six years after *Brown*, African-Americans made up 11.3% of college enrollment),<sup>17</sup> the backlash against affirmative action swung into high gear. In *Richmond v. J.A. Croson Co.*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that set-aside programs are

14. Fenelon & Brod in their study based on Barbara F. Reskin's work the *Realities of Affirmative Action in Employment*, (Washington D.C., American Sociological Association, 1998) found "that nearly all parties that subscribe to or oppose Affirmative Action policies have a limited or sometimes incorrect understanding of their legality, objectives, goals and operations underlying these programs and practices." Reskin reports, Fenelon & Brod found, that "most people learn whatever they know about affirmative action from the media, [which] frequently contains misconceptions and misinformation." BARBARA F. RESKIN, REALITIES OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN EMPLOYMENT 148 (1998). They also quote from an article by James E. Jones, "The Rise and Fall of Affirmative Action." James E. Jones, *The Rise and Fall of Affirmative Action in RACE IN AMERICA: THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY*, (Herbert Hill & James E. Jones eds., 1993). Jones describes the "misconceived debate as occupying the United States for over 25 years without achieving resolution of the underlying issues or contributing to a clarification of what divides the nation." *Id.* at 150.

15. Fenelon & Brod state that, according to Reskin, while affirmative action was "originally designed to be a corrective for both historical and contemporary forms of institutional discrimination, a primary battleground over continued policy practices is now focused around issues of individual discrimination when perceived victims are members of the majority group." As ridiculous as it may seem to aggrieved African-Americans and other excluded racial minorities,

members of dominant groups literally feel that they are discriminated against, even though all the observable social reality is that they are both in the dominant position in their environment, demographically and in terms of authoritative power, and that they control the dominant ideologies. Race [and] gender . . . can be . . . manipulated to appear as if . . . minority and subordinated groups are discriminating against majority group members or all white males, by not including them in "preferential" programs that usually have little or no authority to force discriminatory action, prejudicial ideologies, or major changes in the demographic environment.

RESKIN, *supra* note 14, at 151.

16. *Regents of the Univ. of Cal. v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 265, 318-20 (1978).

17. *Affirmative Action*, *supra* note 9, at 4.

unconstitutional unless industrywide discrimination can be proven.<sup>18</sup> In 1995, in *Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Pena*, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a strict scrutiny standard for proving race-based discrimination,<sup>19</sup> a ruling that critically undermined affirmative action. In 1996, the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, in *Hopwood v. Texas*, ruled that race could no longer be used as an admissions factor.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to anti-affirmative action lawsuits, there have been ballot initiatives directed against the remedial policies in both California and Washington. Proposition 209 narrowly passed in California in 1997, and Initiative 1-200 passed in Washington State in 1998. The effects of these rulings and ballot initiatives have been drastic and immediate. The University of Texas Law School, prior to *Hopwood*, enrolled up to forty African-Americans and up to sixty Mexican-Americans each year, almost all of whom went on to graduate and pass the bar.<sup>21</sup> University of Texas Law School Dean Sharlot stated in his letter to alumni that "the immediate impact of Hopwood was devastating."<sup>22</sup> He reported that in 1997, the first full year in which the law school was forced to operate under these restrictions, it enrolled only four African-Americans and twenty-six Mexican-Americans, a huge drop.<sup>23</sup> In 1998, Sharlot said, there was slight improvement, with eight African-Americans and thirty Mexican-Americans admitted.<sup>24</sup>

In California, Proposition 209's effect on minority enrollment at first- and second-tier universities in the state was similar to that at the

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18. *Richmond v. J.A. Croson Co.*, 488 U.S. 469, 509-11 (1989).

19. *Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Pena*, 515 U.S. 200, 235-37 (1995).

20. 78 F.3d 932, 962 (5th Cir. 1996). In *Hopwood*, four White American plaintiffs who did not gain admission to the University of Texas Law School in the 1992 entering class challenged the law school's affirmative action program. *Id.* at 938. In August of 1994, the judge in the case, District Judge Sparks issued an opinion which upheld race-conscious affirmative action. *Id.* In a far-reaching opinion on March 18, 1996, two judges of a Fifth Circuit panel ruled that neither race nor ethnicity could constitutionally be considered in the admissions process. *Id.* at 962. The then Texas Attorney General Morales extended the decision to the operation of University programs aimed at recruit, retention and financial aid. Letter from M. Michael Sharlot, Dean, John Jeffers Research Chair in Law, University of Texas Law School, to Alumni (Sept. 7, 1999) (on file with author) [hereinafter Sharlot Letter]. That opinion was rescinded by Attorney General Cornyn on September 3, 1999, but he advised public higher education institutions not to change their policy regarding financial aid until the issue had been judicially resolved. *Id.* The U.S. Supreme Court denied certiorari and the case was returned to District Judge Sparks. At that point, Judge Sparks enjoined the University from considering race or ethnicity in admissions. *Id.*

21. Sharlot Letter, *supra* note 20.

22. *Id.*

23. *Id.*

24. *Id.*

University of Texas Law School. According to the ACLU, admissions of African-American, Chicano American, Latino American, and Native American students plunged more than half, with the lowest totals for each group in at least fifteen years admitted to the University of California, Berkeley.<sup>25</sup> The ACLU also reported that minority admissions at the three law schools of the University of California plummeted from 1996 to 1997.<sup>26</sup> African-American admissions dropped 71.6%, and Chicano and Latino admissions dropped 35%.<sup>27</sup> Applications from underrepresented students to the University of California medical schools fell 21.5% from 1996 to 1997.<sup>28</sup>

These cases illustrate the ease and cynicism with which issues of civil rights, human rights, and justice get lost as white America runs away from even a tentative commitment to justice and equality for all its citizens. It is so easily forgotten that affirmative action was designed to remedy 346 years of slavery and overt discrimination, something White Americans and some African-Americans seek to sweep under the rug. "*Forget about it,*" this Nation says to African-Americans; "*let bygones be bygones,*" "*that was then and this is now.*"

Affirmative action was to have been the belated recognition by this country that it has a problem which it was willing to acknowledge and address. Shockingly, Wardell Connerly, an African-American University of California Regent, championed Proposition 209 and has been the frontman of the effort to export similar initiatives to other states.

Here in Florida, Governor Jeb Bush introduced his One Florida Initiative which strips state institutions of higher learning of their affirmative action programs. Many Floridians, African-Americans and White Americans, objected to the One Florida Initiative. I joined a large

25. *In Congress*, (ACLU Newsletter) (Jan. 28, 2000), available at <http://www.aclu.org/congress/affaxedu.html> (last visited Nov. 18, 2002).

26. *Id.*

27. *Id.*

28. In the ACLU Newsletter of January 28, 2000, they note: "While elimination of affirmative action has radically changed the composition of the student body, it has not increased the academic caliber of admitted students." They also state:

At the Berkeley School of Law, since the elimination of affirmative action the average grade point average of those admitted rose only two one hundredths of a percent — from 3.72 to 3.74. The new students averaged only one point higher on the LSAT than the students admitted in 1996. The cost of one LSAT point was a 76% drop in admissions of African Americans and a 46% drop in admissions of Chicanos and Latinos. . . .

ACLU, *supra* note 25 (emphasis added).

delegation of citizens from Alachua County, who joined with thousands of citizens from across the State, to protest Governor Bush's retreat from the promises of the civil-rights movement. There were numerous anti-One-Florida-Initiative demonstrations and sit-ins. There were also hearings on the plan, in which large numbers of individuals and organizational representatives spoke out against One Florida. Following are excerpts from some of the written objections raised about the plan, which will illuminate the concerns of Floridians and others across the nation who support affirmative action. Comments from the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights.<sup>29</sup>

If implemented, this proposal by Governor Bush will end all consideration of race and gender in admissions decisions and will result in compounding the already formidable challenges confronted by minority and female students in Florida. Our concern is that, at a minimum, this proposal will result in the following unacceptable conditions:

- a. Resegregation in Florida of the institutions of higher education and exclusion of minorities and women from the best funded educational opportunities of the state;
- b. Denial of opportunities for minorities and women seeking graduate degrees in Florida and a reduction in the diversity at the state-funded graduate schools;
- c. Abandonment of decades of efforts to remedy the vestiges of racial and gender discrimination in Florida;
- d. Acceptance and reinforcement of existing patterns of school and housing segregation;
- e. Denial of opportunities for students who are qualified for admission in Florida to the State University System but not included in the top twenty percent of their class; and

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29. The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights is a respected civil rights group composed of representatives from all of the major civil rights groups in the United States. These include: The American Association of University Women, the National Congress of American Indians, the NAACP, the National Urban League, the National Organization for Women (NOW), the National Council of La Raza, and many others. The organizational headquarters are in Washington, D.C. Letter from the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, to the Honorable Jack Latvala, Co-Chairman, and the Honorable Jerry Maygarden, Co-Chairman of the Joint Select Committee on the One Florida Initiative (Feb. 10, 2000) (on file with author) [hereinafter Leadership Conference Letter].

- f. Perceptions among minorities and women, their parents, and their advocates that their views and input are neither valued nor wanted.<sup>30</sup>

The Leadership Conference further noted that a study released by the University of Florida Provost predicted that the state's most elite university would lose half of its minority freshmen enrollment, or about seven hundred students, under the One Florida Initiative.<sup>31</sup> They also noted their concern about the negative impact that the One Florida Initiative would have on graduate enrollment for African-Americans and other Americans who are minorities of color.<sup>32</sup> In their opinion, this was the most serious of the problems that would be caused if the plan was implemented.<sup>33</sup> They noted that in a 1998 Survey of Earned Doctorates in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, African-Americans received only 5.1% of all doctorate degrees awarded, while Hispanics received only 4.2%, and Native Americans only 0.6% of such degrees.<sup>34</sup> The results were even worse in the sciences, said the Leadership Conference; African-Americans received only 2.2% of doctorate degrees in the physical sciences and, Hispanics and Native Americans received only 2.6% and 0.5% respectively of such degrees.<sup>35</sup>

Statistics published in the *1997-1998 Fact Book*, published by Florida's State University System, show that the situation in Florida is similar to that described by the Leadership Conference.<sup>36</sup> In 1998, African-Americans received less than six percent of all doctoral degrees awarded within the state university system and Hispanics received less than five percent.<sup>37</sup> The doctoral degree rate in the physical sciences in Florida was similar to the national rate, with African-Americans receiving 2.24% and Hispanic

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30. *Id.* All the representatives of the Conference's Organizational Members signed the letter. The signatories included: Dr. Dorothy I. Height Chairperson of the Conference, Barbara Arnwine of the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, Kweisi Mfume of the NAACP, Hugh B. Price of the National Urban League, Patricia Ireland of NOW, Ann K. Chase of the National Congress of American Indians, Rabbi David Saperstein of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, Raul Yzaguirre of the National Council of La Raza, and Richard Womack of the American Federation of Labor — Congress of Industrial Organizations, amongst others. *Id.*

31. *Id.*

32. *Id.*

33. *Id.*

34. Leadership Conference Letter, *supra* note 29.

35. *Id.*

36. Division of Colleges & Universities, Florida Board of Education, *State University System Fact Book*, (1997-1998), available at <http://www.Fldcu.org/Factbook/Factindex.asp> (last visited Nov. 18, 2002).

37. *Id.*

Americans only 3.73%.<sup>38</sup> The Florida rates in Engineering were even more dismal, with African-Americans receiving less than 1% of doctorates and Hispanic Americans only 2.8% of doctoral degrees in Engineering.<sup>39</sup>

The Leadership Conference and numerous others pointed to the glaring hole in the plan with regard to graduate education for racial minorities. The Leadership Conference stated it well:

. . . The Governor's plan completely fails to address the need for equal access for minorities and women to Florida's graduate and professional schools. This feature of the Governor's proposal will exacerbate an already serious shortfall in the number of women and minorities who become doctors, lawyers, college and university professors and research scientists.<sup>40</sup>

Written testimony from Mr. Terrence A. Taylor, chairperson of the Commission on Racism, Justice and Reconciliation of the Episcopal Diocese of Southeast Florida also expressed grave reservations about the One Florida Initiative.<sup>41</sup> Taylor wrote that "one of Florida's greatest assets is its diversity [but that] this diversity is only beneficial when it is evident in education and employment at all levels."<sup>42</sup> Remarking further on the problem facing the state if it abandons affirmative action, Taylor stated:

Since the majority of voters, who happen to be white, have decided it is they [who] no longer wish to address the past and current racism that so besets our society, they have the power to end affirmative action without working with those for whom the program was designed to help. . . . Sure African Americans are doing better today in many respects than in previous generations. Yet we have not begun to scratch the surface of the damage caused by over 300 years of slavery and nearly a century of Jim Crow. . . . Stating that race does not matter does not make it true.<sup>43</sup>

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38. *Id.*

39. *Id.* at 3-4.

40. Leadership Conference Letter, *supra* note 29.

41. Comments extracted from Mr. Taylor's February 3, 2000 letter to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and members of the One Florida Select Committee.

42. *Id.*

43. *Id.*

A third group that sent in written objections to Governor Bush's One Florida Initiative was the Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition, Inc. of Miami, Florida. In their objection to the plan they wrote:

Mr. Governor, Florida One Initiative is risky business for minorities. Most sociologists list race as an important socio-economic factor in achieving success. Everyday life experience and observation clearly demonstrates that race is a critical factor whether in getting jobs, loans, renting a house, catching a taxi or even driving I-95 or [in] Miami Beach without being stopped by White officers. Florida One initiative assumes that close to two decades of Affirmative Action are enough to repair wrongs committed against African descendant for 300 years.

There is a myth that white males are being hurt and displaced by Affirmative Action programs. Current statistics show that white males constitute only 33% of the U.S. population but yet they represent 80% of tenured professors in the Nation. They represent 80% of the U.S. House of Representatives and 90% of the Senate. 92% of the Forbes 500 Corporations are controlled by them.<sup>44</sup>

There are literally scores of letters from individuals and organizations who, like the three quoted from above, saw the Florida Governor's grave error in destroying Florida's affirmative action programs. There were also numerous newspaper editorials and columns that also condemned the Governor's actions. One column, which ran in the *Tallahassee Democrat* on October 2, 1999, reminded its readers that race continues to play a powerful role in the chances for success in America, from job opportunities to education to housing.<sup>45</sup> The column reported on a five-year study conducted in Boston, Atlanta, Detroit, and Los Angeles, the Multi-City Study of Urban Inequality, which found that racial stereotypes and attitudes heavily influence the labor market, with African-Americans landing at the bottom.<sup>46</sup> The fifty researchers in the study found that race is deeply entrenched in the cultural landscape of this country — perhaps more than many Americans are willing to admit.<sup>47</sup>

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44. Letter from the Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition, Inc., to the One Florida Legislative Committee (Feb. 4, 2000) (on file with author).

45. Robin Estrin, *Race a Big Factor in U.S.*, TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT, Oct. 2, 1999, at B1.

46. *Id.*

47. *Id.* at 3.

In spite of all the protestations and demonstrations against the plan, Governor Bush went ahead with his plan in the face of widespread opposition. This occurred despite the predictions made by University of Florida President Charles Young who, according to U.S. Representative Carrie Meek, “found that the plan would likely cause a 50% decline in freshman minority enrollment at UF.”<sup>48</sup> College admissions for both African-Americans and Latino Americans saw a sizeable drop in the first year that the One Florida Initiative was in force. Over the next few years, we will truly see the damage done to the college admissions of African-Americans and Latino Americans as a result of Governor Bush’s assault on affirmative action.

In addition to the assault on affirmative action, African-Americans and other minority Americans are also beset with racial hate crimes and harassment on numerous college and university campuses. An article in the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* says that these phenomena are occurring at some of the nation’s most prestigious colleges and universities.<sup>49</sup> While, in general, it is believed that racial prejudice is a product of Archie Bunker-type ignorance, in reality the numbers and locations of racially motivated incidents on college campuses demonstrates that racism is by no means confined to skinheads or the uneducated. According to the article, racism is not confined to a few students on the radical right.<sup>50</sup> Frequently these racial incidents occur at the highest ranked universities of the nation — Harvard, Brown, Berkeley, the University of Pennsylvania and here at the University of Florida.<sup>51</sup> All of these schools have had blatant cases of racism exhibited on their campuses.

Another problem on university and college campuses is the lack of African-American, Latino American, and Native American faculty at most historically White American schools. In my few years at the University of Florida, I have certainly seen and felt the effects of this phenomena. Unless a concerted effort is begun to attract and hire faculty members of diverse racial backgrounds, there will never be a reduction in the racist attitudes and practices that one finds in higher education. I have been shocked to have participated in several search and hiring procedures, in

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48. Florida U.S. Representative Carrie P. Meek, Statement at the Public Hearing on the One Florida Plan (Feb. 3, 2000).

49. *News and Views: Racism on Campus: Are the Strongest Institutions the Most Vulnerable?*, J. BLACKS HIGHER EDUC., Spring 1995, available at <http://enw.softlineweb.com> (last visited Jan. 22, 2003).

50. *Id.*

51. *Id.*

three different departments at the University of Florida, where the words affirmative action were never mentioned. Nor did there appear to be any concern about it. I cannot imagine how this huge gap in the number of ethnic minority faculty as compared to White American faculty will be closed unless there is a concerted effort from the top, as well as at the departmental levels, to recruit qualified racial minority faculty. From talking to my African-American, and other racial minority, faculty friends who work at historically White American colleges, it seems that racially diversifying the faculty is not on the drawing board in most departments. Those few of us who are in place, especially non-tenured faculty, are often afraid to even raise the issue, for fear of being seen as a troublemaker who will be punished when coming up for tenure. It is a very precarious situation to be in, even when you are on the inside.

It makes no sense to talk about diversifying the student body if there are no minority faculty role models and mentors. I have had most of the racial minority students whom I have taught and mentored so far tell me how isolated they feel on this campus, and how much they need to have teachers who look like them and who can relate to the problems they face as minority students on a predominately White American campus. These problems are often just as much social as they are academic. African-American students at the University of Florida say that there is no culturally affirming place for them to go socially in Gainesville. I was so hurt when a student told me that most of the clubs in town do not want too many blacks coming to their clubs. This student said that one place, which formerly played black music, stopped when too many blacks started frequenting the establishment. These are the kinds of problems that a student feels comfortable talking about to a member of their own racial group as, more often than not, the same-race faculty member will understand how the student feels, since the faculty are also experiencing the same kind of cultural alienation and isolation.

Most of the students I have taught here at the University of Florida, both white and minority, say that I am the first African-American teacher they have had during their college experience. Many never had a minority teacher throughout their entire years of schooling. I can see the discomfort my presence at the head of the classroom on the first day of class often causes some of the students, as well as the eager anticipation of others. Talk, even when sincere, at the top administrative levels will not alter the numbers unless the faculty in the departments can be encouraged to see the benefit in diversifying their individual departments. Much more needs to be done about this serious problem. I question the commitment. We seem to be retreating in this area from any real commitment to equality for all.

Another problem concerns the curriculum in our institutions of higher learning. I teach a course titled, "Race, Religion and Rebellion." This course covers the role of religion in the struggle for justice, from slavery to the U.S. civil-rights movement. The students in this class, especially the White American students, constantly ask why they have never heard or read anything about the information covered in the class. For the most part, our students have little or no knowledge of the real history of the United States, especially with regard to its treatment of African-Americans, Native Americans, other minority Americans, and the poor. Sadly, most White American students have no real knowledge of slavery, the Middle Passage, or the millions lost in those hellish voyages. Nor have they ever been taught about the rigors, hardships, and dehumanization of the slavery experience — the deprivations, the brutal punishments, the rapes of women and children, the forced separation of families, the brutality of it all. Most White Americans, and sadly many racial minority students, know nothing of the true history of this country when they enter the university, and they will know nothing of it when they leave. They have never heard of Frederick Douglas, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Ida Wells Barnett, the Grimke Sisters, Henry Lloyd Garrison, Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey, and on, and on, and on.

As Randall Robinson said in his speech that kicked off this conference, "what has been taught and what our children have learned is an American lie — not American History."<sup>52</sup> What are the solutions to this? I am sure there are many. One program that I know of and participated in, that begins to remedy this huge void in the education of college students, is a program at Temple University, my alma mater. In 1993, Temple began a new "Studies in Race" requirement for all undergraduate students.<sup>53</sup> A small step in the right direction, it is designed to engage students in a critical examination of race and racism in America and worldwide. Freshmen entering Temple are required to take one of a number of three credit courses from varied disciplines that fulfill the "Studies in Race" requirement.<sup>54</sup> Dr. Ione Vargis, former Vice-Provost at Temple, and an African-American, said this about the requirement: "While other institutions may offer courses that address multi-culturalism and diversity, at Temple we have firmly put the focus on racism and race. . . . You can't

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52. Author's personal notes from Randall Robinson's talk at the Third Annual Conference of the Center for the Study of Race and Race Relations, Mar. 21, 2002, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

53. *New Course Requirement at Temple Gets to the Heart of Racism*, PHILA. TRIB., Aug. 10, 1993, at 1D.

54. *Id.*

talk about ethnicity and multi-culturalism without teaching about oppression and powerlessness.”<sup>55</sup>

I cannot agree with Vargis more. I taught one such course in the Religion Department at Temple for several years. There were race-related courses in History, Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology, English, Journalism, etc., that met the “Studies in Race” requirement. It is just a beginning, but a much needed one.

W.E.B. Du Bois was speaking of the Twentieth Century when he said that race or the color-line was to be its central issue.<sup>56</sup> It is still thus in the beginning of the Twenty-First Century.

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55. *Id.*

56. W.E.B. DUBOIS, *THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK* xi (1969).

