

Argument Analysis 1: Affirmative Action

There are 2 arguments here, be sure to read both and decide who has the better argument.

Argument 1:

Nancy Cantor defending Affirmative Action

Integration takes hard work, especially when we have little other than collective fear, stereotypes and sins upon which to build. It is time America sees affirmative action on college campuses for what it is: a way to enrich the educational and intellectual lives of white students as well as students of color. We must not abandon race as a consideration in admissions.

The debate now before the U.S. Supreme Court over admissions at the [University of Michigan](#) is about the relative advantages people are getting, and it is a debate that misses the point. College admission has always been about relative advantage because a college education is a scarce resource, and the stakes are high.

In this era of emphasis on standardized tests, it may be easy to forget that colleges and universities have always taken into account many other aspects of students' experiences, including the geographic region from which they come, their families' relationship to the institution and their leadership experiences.

It is appropriate, and indeed critical, for the best institutions in the world to create the broadest possible mix of life experiences. Race is a fundamental feature of life in America, and it has an enormous impact on what a person has to contribute on campus. College admissions should be race-conscious to take the cultural and historical experiences of all students--Native American, African-American, Hispanic, Asian-American and white--and build on these in an educational setting. President Bush was wrong when he labeled the affirmative-action programs at the University of Michigan "quota systems." In announcing his decision to oppose the Michigan programs before the Supreme Court, he made remarks that are damaging in their potential to mislead the public.

There are no quotas at Michigan. All students compete for all seats. Race is used as a plus factor, along with other life experiences and talents, just as the president has suggested should happen. The percentages of students of color at Michigan vary annually.

Bush says he believes college admissions should be "race neutral," and he says he supports the principles of *Regents of the University of California vs. Bakke*. He cannot have it both ways. Race is not neutral in the *Bakke* decision; it is front and center, just as it was nearly 50 years ago in *Brown vs. Board of Education*. In both cases, the Supreme Court urged our nation to boldly and straightforwardly take on the issue of race. The president wants to walk away from it.

The Bush administration seems to believe in "affirmative access"--bringing students of color to the table--although the president is not clear how this is to be achieved.

But the decision by Justice Lewis F. Powell in *Bakke* brought more than students of color to the table. It brought race in America to the table, urging educators to join hands in creating a truly integrated society of learners.

How are we to fulfill the dream of Brown and Bakke, to build a positive story of race in America, if we are told to ignore race—to concoct systems constructed around proxies for race such as class rank in racially segregated public school districts or euphemisms such as "cultural traditions" that both avoid our past and fail to value the possibility that race can play a constructive role in our nation's future?

President Bush's moral sidestepping, his desire to have us walk away from the subject of race, will not work to create the inclusive and interactive society he claims to want to achieve.

We want to include, not exclude. We want to use race as a positive category, as one of many aspects of a life we consider when we sit down to decide which students to invite to our table.

Argument 2:

Ward Connerly attacking Affirmative Action

John F. Kennedy [said]: "Race has no place in American life."

I want just to talk with you a little bit about where we are and where we are going. About thirteen years ago I was attending a meeting of the University of California board of regents, of which I was a member, during which I announced to my colleagues that I was soon going to bring before them a resolution to end the consideration of race, gender, and ethnicity at the University of California.

The rest, as you know, is history. The state of California indeed voted to end the consideration of race preferences based on race, color, sex, ethnicity, and national origin in the three sectors of public employment, public education, and public contracting—by a decisive margin.

At that stage there still were many who felt that the use of racial preference was so deeply entrenched in American life that we were not likely to have any success ever in changing it. But I never doubted that the cause needed pursuing, and never doubted that if we persisted hard enough that we could in fact succeed.

Now I think we are poised to witness the end of an era. The era of explicit race preferences is, I think, deader than a doornail. It is up to us, however, to bury it. And that's not going to be easy to do.

But, as the debate has gone on, we find we no longer have to run and hide from the use of the term "affirmative action." The press is no longer hiding behind that swaddling cloth of diversity and affirmative action. They say what it is: race preferences. That's a remarkable change in our culture, and as you know politics is always fought on the ground of language. We have won that battle.

And we have won not because of anything we have done, but because the American people fundamentally believe in the principle of fairness. They just know that when you treat people differently on the basis of something over which they have no control—their skin color or how they spell their last name or whatever the characteristic is—most Americans realize that that's unfair, That it's wrong. . . We are against preferences because they despoil all that is good about our country. Merit works. It's not perfect, but there is a reason why we are what we are as a people. It's because we've allowed talent to flourish. We've allowed *people* who came here from all around the globe to exercise their abilities to make America a better place for all of us.

When we squelch merit we harm not only the body politic, we harm the whole country. We affect the economy. We make goods and services more costly by awarding contracts to those who are not capable of doing

the job, who bid more. We hurt fire departments and police departments when we force them to hire by quota. We hurt our academic institutions. And we make people resentful of their neighbors because of the perception of unfairness.

There is something else that is in play here that we have no control over, but thanks to the Lord, has happened. And that's the story of Barack Obama. When I was a senior in college I was a reader for a very liberal professor, John Livingston. He belonged to the ACLU and to the NAACP. And Professor Livingston ended just about every lecture by saying, "We shall overcome." And I once asked, "Dr. Livingston, when will we know that we have overcome?" And he had a three-way test. Number one: when a white girl can bring her black boyfriend home and say, "This is my fiancé, Dad. We're getting married," and not have him die on the spot. Number two: whenever a white person would be willing to change places with a black person—any black person. And number three: when the American people take a black candidate for president seriously. "Doesn't have to win," Dr. Livingston said, "doesn't have to win, but if he's taken seriously as a candidate for president and given essentially the same chance as any other candidate.

That is where we have to take all of this far, far down the road, after Pm gone. But, as you look at the whole issue of race preferences, it's really not about preferences; it's about classifying people and saying that this human family has to be officially subdivided into these five distinct subdivisions. I understand the pragmatic feature of all of this and why there is resistance among the Left and among the Right to going down that path. But deep in my soul I say to you that if we want to complete the journey of making this a better place for the American people, it has to end with the elimination of race classifications. That's really the story of Barack Obama. That's the story of all of us as Americans.

And when we can come together and understand why the government should not be doing that, then we vindicate the ideal that in America is the relationship between the citizen and the government, not groups and government, that counts. As we eliminate preferences *that* is really the undercurrent of all that we are doing. All of the other stuff has to be cast aside.