

PART VII

RACIAL ISSUES

Older Budweiser

Back in the days of the Hapsburg Empire, there was a town in Bohemia called Budweis. The people in that town were called Budweisers and the town had a brewery which produced beer with the same name—but different from the American Budweiser.

Like many communities in Bohemia during that era, Budweis had people of both Czech and German ancestries, speaking different languages, though many were also bilingual. They got along pretty well and most people there thought of themselves as Budweisers, rather than as Czechs or Germans. But that would later change—for the worse—not only in Budweis, but throughout Bohemia.

The mayor of Budweis spoke both Czech and German but refused to be classified as a member of either group. His point was that we are all Budweisers.

As with virtually all groups in virtually all countries and in virtually all eras, there were differences between the Germans and the Czechs in Budweis. Germans were more educated, more prosperous, and more prominent in business and the professions.

The German language at that point had a much wider and richer literature, the Slavic languages having acquired written versions centuries later than the languages of Western Europe. Educated Bohemians of whatever ethnicity were usually educated in German.

Those Czechs who wished to rise into the upper echelons, whether in business, the military, or the

professions, had to master the German language and culture, in order to fit in with those already at the higher levels.

People on both sides learned to live with this situation and Czechs were welcomed into the German cultural enclaves in Bohemia when they mastered that culture. In Budweis, they could all be Budweisers.

As in so many other countries and in so many other times, the rise of a newly educated intellectual class in the 19th century polarized the society with ethnic identity politics. All over Bohemia, the new Czech intelligentsia urged Czechs to think of themselves as Czechs, not Bohemians or Budweisers or anything else that would transcend their ethnic identity.

Demands were made that street signs in Prague, which had been in both Czech and German before, now be exclusively in Czech. Quotas were demanded for a certain percentage of Czech music to be played by the Budweiser orchestra.

If such demands seem petty, their consequences were not small. People of German ancestry resisted ethnic classifications but the Czech intelligentsia insisted and Czech politicians went along with the trend on many issues, large and small.

Eventually, Germans as well began in self-defense to think of themselves as Germans, rather than as Bohemians or Budweisers, and to defend their interests as Germans. This ethnic polarization in the 19th century was a fateful step whose full consequences have not yet ended completely, even in the 21st century.

A crucial turning point was the creation of the new nation of Czechoslovakia when the Hapsburg Empire was broken up after the First World War. Czech leaders declared

the new nation's mission to include a correction of "social injustice" so as to "put right the historic wrongs of the seventeenth century."

What were those wrongs? Czech nobles who revolted against the Hapsburg Empire back in the 17th century were defeated and had their lands confiscated and turned over to Germans. Presumably no one from the 17th century was still alive when Czechoslovakia was created in the 20th century, but Czech nationalists kept the grievance alive—as ethnic identity ideologues have done in countries around the world.

Government policies designed to undo history with preferential treatment for Czechs polarized the existing generation of Germans and Czechs. Bitter German reactions led eventually to demands that the part of the country where they lived be united with neighboring Germany. From this came the Munich crisis of 1938 that dismembered Czechoslovakia on the eve of World War II.

When the Nazis conquered the whole country, the Germans now lorded it over the Czechs. After the war, the Czech reaction led to mass expulsions of Germans under brutal conditions that cost many lives. Today refugees in Germany are still demanding restitution.

If only the grievances of past centuries had been left in the past! If only they had all remained Budweisers or Bohemians.

Rosa Parks and History

The death of Rosa Parks has reminded us of her place in history, as the black woman whose refusal to give up her seat on a bus to a white man, in accordance with the Jim Crow laws of Alabama, became the spark that ignited the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

Most people do not know the rest of the story, however. Why was there racially segregated seating on public transportation in the first place? “Racism” some will say—and there was certainly plenty of racism in the South, going back for centuries. But racially segregated seating on streetcars and buses in the South did not go back for centuries.

Far from existing from time immemorial, as many have assumed, racially segregated seating in public transportation began in the South in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Those who see government as the solution to social problems may be surprised to learn that it was government which created this problem. Many, if not most, municipal transit systems were privately owned in the 19th century and the private owners of these systems had no incentive to segregate the races.

These owners may have been racists themselves but they were in business to make a profit—and you don’t make a profit by alienating a lot of your customers. There was not enough market demand for Jim Crow seating on municipal transit to bring it about.

It was politics that segregated the races because the

incentives of the political process are different from the incentives of the economic process. Both blacks and whites spent money to ride the buses but, after the disenfranchisement of black voters in the late 19th and early 20th century, only whites counted in the political process.

It was not necessary for an overwhelming majority of the white voters to demand racial segregation. If some did and the others didn't care, that was sufficient politically, because what blacks wanted did not count politically after they lost the vote.

The incentives of the economic system and the incentives of the political system were not only different, they clashed.

Private owners of streetcar, bus, and railroad companies in the South lobbied against the Jim Crow laws while these laws were being written, challenged them in the courts after the laws were passed, and then dragged their feet in enforcing those laws after they were upheld by the courts.

These tactics delayed the enforcement of Jim Crow seating laws for years in some places. Then company employees began to be arrested for not enforcing such laws and at least one president of a streetcar company was threatened with jail if he didn't comply.

None of this resistance was based on a desire for civil rights for blacks. It was based on a fear of losing money if racial segregation caused black customers to use public transportation less often than they would have in the absence of this affront.

Just as it was not necessary for an overwhelming majority of whites to demand racial segregation through the political system to bring it about, so it was not necessary for an overwhelming majority of blacks to stop riding the streetcars, buses and trains in order to provide incentives for

the owners of these transportation systems to feel the loss of money if some blacks used public transportation less than they would have otherwise.

People who decry the fact that businesses are in business “just to make money” seldom understand the implications of what they are saying. You make money by doing what other people want, not what you want.

Black people’s money was just as good as white people’s money, even though that was not the case when it came to votes.

Initially, segregation meant that whites could not sit in the black section of a bus any more than blacks could sit in the white section. But whites who were forced to stand when there were still empty seats in the black section objected. That’s when the rule was imposed that blacks had to give up their seats to whites.

Legal sophistries by judges “interpreted” the 14th Amendment’s requirement of equal treatment out of existence. Judicial activism can go in any direction.

That’s when Rosa Parks came in, after more than half a century of political chicanery and judicial fraud.

Those who think that politicians and judges are the answer to our racial problems, and who regard free markets or a strict construction of the Constitution as antithetical to progress, have profoundly misunderstood both history and the country they live in today.

A free market was antithetical to Jim Crow seating and a strict construction of the 14th Amendment would never have permitted laws that asked black women to give up their seats to white men.

“Friends” of Blacks

Who was it who said, “if the Negro cannot stand on his own legs, let him fall”?

Ronald Reagan? Newt Gingrich? Charles Murray?

Not even close. It was Frederick Douglass!

This was part of a speech in which Douglass also said: “Everybody has asked the question, . . . ‘What shall we do with the Negro?’ I have had but one answer from the beginning. Do nothing with us! Your doing with us has already played the mischief with us. Do nothing with us!”

Frederick Douglass had achieved a deeper understanding in the 19th century than any of the black “leaders” of today. Those whites who feel a need to do something with blacks and for blacks have been some of the most dangerous “friends” of blacks.

Academia is the home of many such “friends,” which is why there are not only double standards of admissions to colleges but also in some places double standards in grading. The late David Riesman called it “affirmative grading.”

A professor at one of California’s state universities where black students are allowed to graduate on the basis of easier standards put it bluntly: “We are just lying to these black students when we give them degrees.” That lie is particularly deadly when the degree is a medical degree, authorizing someone to treat sick people or perform surgery on children.

For years, Dr. Patrick Chavis was held up as a shining

example of the success of affirmative action, for he was admitted to medical school as a result of minority preferences and went back to the black community to practice medicine. In fact, he was publicly praised by the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights—just two weeks before his license was suspended, after his patients died under conditions that brought the matter to the attention of the Medical Board of California.

An administrative law judge referred to Chavis' "inability to perform some of the most basic duties required of a physician." A year later, after a fuller investigation, his license was revoked.

Those who had for years been using Chavis as a shining example of the success of affirmative action suddenly changed tactics and claimed that an isolated example of failure proved nothing. Sadly, Chavis was not an isolated example.

When a professor at the Harvard Medical School declared publicly, back in the 1970s, that black students were being allowed to graduate from that institution without meeting the same standards as others, he was denounced as a "racist" for saying that it was cruel to "allow trusting patients to pay for our irresponsibility"—trusting black patients, in many cases.

Why do supposedly responsible people create such dangerous double standards? Some imagine that they are being friends to blacks by lowering the standards for them. Some don't think that blacks have what it takes to meet real standards, and that colleges and universities will lose their "diversity"—and perhaps federal money with it—if they don't lower the standards, in order to get an acceptable racial body count.

My own experience as a teacher was that black students

would meet higher standards if you refused to lower the standards for them. This was not the royal road to popularity, either with the students themselves or with the “friends” of blacks on the faculty and in the administration. But, when the dust finally settled, the students met the standards.

We have gotten so used to abysmal performances from black students, beginning in failing ghetto schools, that it is hard for some to believe that black students once did a lot better than they do today, at least in places and times with good schools. As far back as the First World War, black soldiers from New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Ohio scored higher on mental tests than white soldiers from Georgia, Arkansas, Kentucky, and Mississippi.

During the 1940s, black students in Harlem schools had test scores very similar to those of white working class students on the lower east side of New York. Sometimes the Harlem scores were a little higher or a little lower, but they were never miles behind, the way they are today in many ghetto schools.

If blacks could do better back when their opportunities were worse, why can't today's ghetto students do better? Perhaps blacks have too many “friends” today.

“Friends” of Blacks: Part II

In a commercial that ran during the Christmas-New Year’s holidays a few years ago, the husband was trying to keep an old car patched up, while the wife wanted him to get a new one. At the end, the wife asked: “Should old acquaintance be forgot?” And she answered emphatically: “Yes!”

No group is more in need of forgetting old political ties and making some new ones than blacks. The black vote has been almost an automatic monopoly of the Democratic Party for years. Yet the dominant forces among the Democrats have agendas that are directly contrary to the interests of blacks.

This is not due to racism but to the fact that single-issue zealots have more clout within the Democratic Party than blacks do. These single-issue groups will vote for whoever serves their purposes, so the Democrats have to earn their votes, while blacks vote for Democrats automatically.

Nothing is more important to the future advancement of blacks than the quality of their children’s education. But any attempt to give black parents real options as to where they can send their children to school runs into a brick wall because the teachers’ unions are the 800-pound gorillas of the Democratic Party.

Controlling millions of votes and millions of dollars in campaign contributions, the teachers’ unions’ interests prevail, even when that sacrifices the future of a whole generation of young blacks. But, despite polls which show that blacks favor vouchers more than any other group, black

votes continue to go to Democrats who sacrifice their children on the altar to the teachers' unions.

Black 4th graders scored higher on tests in Texas than in any other state. But 92 percent of black votes went against the Republican governor of Texas in the 2000 presidential election. Democrats had rhetoric, symbolism, and inertia going for them.

Housing is another key area where the interests of blacks get trumped by the interests of another crucial constituency of the Democratic Party—the environmentalist cult. Most blacks cannot afford the exorbitant costs of homes and apartments in those places where the environmentalists are politically dominant.

Name a place where liberal Democrats and environmentalists have been in control for many years and you are almost certain to find a place where housing costs are far higher than housing costs in the rest of the country. That is because sky-high prices for housing are due to sky-high prices for land. These extravagant land prices are in turn due to “open space” laws and other land use restrictions which the environmentalists push, heedless of the cost to others.

But here, as in education, symbolism trumps reality, and black votes go overwhelmingly to support politicians whose policies drive up housing prices by catering to the environmental movement.

Another great problem for blacks is crime. Liberal Democrats have long resisted efforts to crack down on criminals. Instead, the great liberal dogma is that we need to seek out the “root causes” of crime and set up government social programs to solve the problem by “prevention” of crime.

Beginning in the 1960s, massive and ever-expanding

welfare state programs co-existed for decades with ever-increasing crime rates, while liberal judges kept finding new reasons to turn criminals loose. Eventually, however, tougher new laws in the 1980s began to put more criminals behind bars for longer times.

Liberal Democrats loudly protested this increased locking up of criminals. Then, when the crime rate began to fall for the first time in decades, the liberals were baffled as to why this was happening.

Since a higher percentage of blacks than whites are victims of criminals, blacks have far more at stake than others when it comes to controlling crime. But Democrats have been working against the interests of law-abiding blacks because Democrats are more responsive to liberal ideologues like the American Civil Liberties Union.

The issues on which Democrats cater to blacks are largely symbolic issues, such as naming streets for Martin Luther King or throwing money at the pet projects of various community “leaders.” So long as Democrats can get the votes of blacks by promoting symbolism, and the support of other groups by substantive policies, they are in good shape on election day. But blacks are not, because symbolism does nothing about education, housing or crime.

Recycled “Racism”

One of the things that happens when you get old is that what seems like news to others can look like a re-run of something you have already seen before. It is like watching an old movie for the fifth or sixth time.

A headline in the September 14, 2005 issue of the *New York Times* says: “Blacks Hit Hardest By Costlier Mortgages.” Thirteen years earlier, virtually the identical story appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* under the title, “Federal Reserve Details Pervasive Racial Gap in Mortgage Lending.”

Both stories were based on statistical studies by the Federal Reserve showing that blacks and whites have different experiences when applying for mortgage loans—and both stories imply that racial discrimination is the reason.

The earlier study showed that blacks were turned down for mortgage loans a higher percentage of the time than whites were and the later story shows that blacks resorted to high-priced “subprime” loans more often than whites when they financed the purchase of a home.

Both amount to the same thing—less credit being extended to blacks on the same terms as credit extended to whites.

Both studies also say that this is true even when black and white loan applicants have the same income. The first time around, back in 1992, this seemed like a pretty good case for those who blamed the differences on racial discrimination.

However, both research and old age tend to produce skepticism about things that look plausible on the surface. Just scratching the surface a little often makes a plausible case collapse like a house of cards.

For example, neither study took credit histories into account. People with lower credit ratings tend to get turned down for loans more often than people with higher credit ratings, or else they have to go where loans have higher interest rates. This is not rocket science. It is Economics 1.

Blacks in the earlier study turned out to have poor credit histories more often than whites. But the more recent news story did not even look into that.

Anyone who has ever taken out a mortgage loan knows that the lenders not only want to know what your current income is, they also want to know what your net worth is. Census data show that blacks with the same income as whites average less net worth.

That is not rocket science either. Not many blacks have affluent parents or rich uncles from whom they could inherit wealth.

The earlier study showed that whites were turned down for mortgage loans more frequently than Asian Americans and the more recent study shows that Asian Americans are less likely than whites to take out high-cost “subprime” loans to buy a house.

Does that mean that whites were being discriminated against? Or are statistics taken seriously only when they back up some preconception that is politically correct?

These are what could be called “Aha!” statistics. If you start out with a preconception and find numbers that fit that preconception, you say, “Aha!” But when the numbers don’t fit any preconception—when no one believes that banks are

discriminating against whites and in favor of Asian Americans—then there is no “Aha!”

Both this year’s study and the one 13 years ago provoked an outburst of accusations of racism from people who are in the business of making such accusations. Moreover, where there is a “problem” proclaimed in the media there will almost invariably be a “solution” proposed in politics.

Often the solution is worse than the problem.

The older study showed that most blacks and most whites who applied for mortgage loans got them—72 percent of blacks and 89 percent of whites. So it is not as if most blacks can’t get loans.

Apparently the gap has narrowed since then, for the *New York Times* reports that lenders have developed “high-cost subprime mortgages for people who would have been simply rejected outright in the past on the basis of poor credit or insufficient income.”

Of course, the government can always step in and put a stop to these high-cost loans, which will probably mean that people with lower credit ratings can’t buy a home at all.

Dangerous Democracy?

One of the cornerstones of the war on terrorism is the premise that promoting democracy is a long-run goal for creating a better world, one which will not breed so many terrorists. But a new book, *World on Fire* by Professor Amy Chua of the Yale law school, argues persuasively that democracy can be positively dangerous for some non-Western countries, especially when combined with a free market economy.

While democracy and free markets have been an extremely productive combination for many European and European offshoot societies, such as the United States and Australia, Professor Chua sees these two things as being like an explosive mixture in certain non-Western nations. More specifically, this combination is seen as dangerous in those countries where some ethnic minority is dominant in a free market economy, while the majority population dominates politics through their votes.

If this thesis sounds strange, try to make a list of countries that are non-Western and which enjoy the freedoms we speak of as democracy, as well as having a free market in which some minority group is dominant.

Merely making a list of countries that are both non-Western and democratic is enough of a challenge, and adding a free market proviso shrinks that already short list. Now add the key proviso that some ethnic minority dominates the economy.

The Chinese minority is dominant in the economies of

Indonesia and Malaysia, the Indian minority is dominant in Fiji, the Lebanese have been dominant in West Africa, and other groups in other places around the world. But these have seldom been democratic countries.

Perhaps Malaysia might be considered a democracy, since it has an elected government, but the glaring absence of free speech on racial issues in Malaysia keeps it from being a free society, which is what most people mean by democracy, even though that is not the original meaning of the word. It is doubtful whether Malaysia could survive if racial demagogues were free to stir up the Malay majority against the Chinese minority that is still a dominant force in that economy.

The absence of free speech on racial matters in Malaysia means that there can be no careers like those of Jesse Jackson or Al Sharpton in the United States. Maybe the U.S. is secure enough to be able to afford to let irresponsible rabble-rousers run loose—or maybe someday we will discover that we are not—but Malaysia certainly is not.

Sri Lanka started coming apart within a decade of receiving its independence as a free, democratic nation in 1948. The Tamil minority was not as dominant in its economy as the Chinese minority in Malaysia and other Southeast Asian countries, but still Tamils were over-represented at the top in business, in the professions, and in education. That was enough to allow the Sinhalese majority to be mobilized politically against them by ambitious politicians.

Even though there had never been a single race riot between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority during the first half of the 20th century, there were many in the second half, punctuated by unspeakable atrocities. Eventually Sri Lanka descended into outright civil war, in

which this small island nation has suffered more deaths than the United States suffered during the Vietnam war.

Similarly, according to Professor Chua, an authority on ethnic conflicts around the world, there were no major outbreaks of violence between the Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda in the first half of the 20th century. Then majority rule brought ethnic polarization and horrifying massacres.

What about counter-examples of free, democratic, free-market, non-Western societies where an ethnic minority is blatantly more successful in the economy than the majority population, but where the people live at peace with one another? You supply those examples. I can't think of any.

Professor Chua's thesis is especially important in an era when American foreign policy sometimes seems to be pressing our allies and others to become democracies with free markets—whether or not each country's social conditions or cultural traditions provide the prerequisites for letting that particular combination be a blessing rather than a curse.

Are Cops Racist?

In much of the liberal media, large-scale confrontations between police and people who are breaking the law are usually reported in one of two ways. Either the police used “excessive force” or they “let the situation get out of hand.”

Any force sufficient to prevent the situation from getting out of hand will be called “excessive.” And if the police arrive in large enough numbers to squelch disorder without the need for using any force at all, then sending in so many cops will be called “over-reacting.” After all, with so little resistance to the police, why were so many cops necessary? Such is the mindset of the media.

Add the volatile factor of race and the media will have a field day. If an incident involves a white cop and a black criminal, you don’t need to know the specific facts to know how liberals in the media will react. You can predict the words and the music.

Heather Mac Donald of the Manhattan Institute does have the facts, however, in her new book, *Are Cops Racist?* Unfortunately, those who most need to read this book are the least likely to do so. They have made up their minds and don’t want to be confused by facts.

For the rest of us, this is a very enlightening and very readable little book. Ms. Mac Donald first tackles the issue of “racial profiling” by the police and shows what shoddy and even silly statistical methods were used to gin up hysteria. Then she moves on to police shootings and other law-enforcement issues.

Suppose I were to tell you that, despite the fact that blacks are just 11 percent of the American population, more than half the men fined for misconduct while playing professional basketball are black—and concluded that this shows the NBA to be racist. What would your reaction be?

“Wait a minute!” you might say. “More than half the players in the NBA are black. So that 11 percent statistic is irrelevant.”

That is exactly what is wrong with “racial profiling” statistics. It is based on blacks as a percentage of the population, rather than blacks as a percentage of the people who do the kinds of things that cause police to stop people and question them.

A professor of statistics who pointed this out was—all too predictably—denounced as a “racist.” Other statisticians kept quiet for fear of being smeared the same way. We have now reached the dangerous point where ignorance can silence knowledge and where facts get squelched by beliefs.

Heather Mac Donald also goes into facts involving police shootings, especially when the cops are white and the suspect is black. Here again, an education awaits those who are willing to be educated.

People in the media are forever expressing surprise at how many bullets were fired in some of these police shootings. As someone who once taught pistol shooting in the Marine Corps, I am not the least bit surprised.

What surprises me is how many people whose ignorance of shooting is obvious do not let their ignorance stand in the way of reaching sweeping conclusions about situations that they have never faced. To some, it is just a question of taking sides. If it is a white cop and a black suspect, then that is all they feel a need to know.

The greatest contribution of this book is in making

painfully clear the actual consequences of cop-bashing in the media and in politics. The police respond to incentives, like everyone else.

If carrying out their duties in the way that gets the job done best is going to bring down on their heads a chorus of media outrage that can threaten their whole careers, many cops tend to back off. And who pays the price of their backing off? Mainly those blacks who are victims of the criminals in their midst.

Drug dealers and other violent criminals have been the beneficiaries of reduced police activity and of liberal judges throwing out their convictions because of “racial profiling.” These criminals go back to the black community—not the affluent, suburban and often gated communities where journalists, judges, and politicians live.

The subtitle of *Are Cops Racist?* is: “How the War Against the Police Harms Black Americans.”

Rattling the Chains

The president of Brown University has appointed a committee to look into the history of the connections of that institution to the slave trade. This is to be no academic exercise of scholarly research. There is obviously supposed to be a pot of gold at the end of this rainbow.

Brown University president Ruth J. Simmons was coy on the one hand but clear on the other. According to the *New York Times*, “Dr. Simmons said she would not reveal her opinion on reparations so as not to influence the committee.”

“Here’s the one thing I’ll say,” she stated. “If the committee comes back and says, ‘Oh it’s been lovely and we’ve learned a lot,’ but there’s nothing in particular that they think Brown can or should do, I will be very disappointed.”

How is that for not influencing the committee? If there is anything worse than race hustling, it is being coy about race hustling. At least Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson are up front.

Dr. Simmons said that the idea of appointing a committee to look into Brown University’s past came to her because she is a descendant of slaves and the building in which she works was built with the help of slaves. Unfortunately, there are descendants of slaves all over the world, and they are every color of the rainbow.

Slavery was an ugly, dirty business but people of virtually every race, color, and creed engaged in it on every inhabited

continent. And the people they enslaved were also of virtually every race, color, and creed.

A recently published book titled *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters* by Robert Davis shows that a million Europeans were enslaved by North Africans between 1500 and 1800. Nor were they the only Europeans enslaved.

Europeans enslaved other Europeans for centuries before the drying up of that supply led them to turn to Africa as a source of slaves for the Western Hemisphere. Julius Caesar marched in triumph through Rome in a procession that included British slaves he had captured. There were white slaves still being sold in Egypt two decades after blacks were freed in the United States.

It was the same story in Asia, Africa, and among the Polynesians and the indigenous peoples of the Western Hemisphere. No race, country, or civilization had clean hands.

What makes the current reparations movement a fraud, whether at Brown University or in the country at large, is the attempt to depict slavery as something uniquely done to blacks by whites. Reparations advocates are doing this for the same reason that Willie Sutton robbed banks: That's where the money is.

No one expects Kaddafi to pay reparations to the descendants of Europeans whom his ancestors captured on the Mediterranean coast or Western Europeans to pay reparations to Slavs who were enslaved on such a scale that the very word slave derived from their name.

Still less does anyone expect Africans to pay reparations to black Americans whose ancestors they sold to white men who took them across the Atlantic. Only in America can guilt be turned into cash.

Who is supposed to benefit from all this?

Are young blacks, who have a lot of educational lags to make up, supposed to be helped by this distraction or to become more employable with a chip on their shoulders? Are they to be helped by being led to believe that the way to get ahead is to hustle white people?

White guilt is too much of a declining asset to depend on. More and more white people are feeling less and less guilty. Ruth Simmons may squeeze a few bucks out of Brown University but it is doubtful whether whatever good that does will balance the resentments and polarization it creates.

The only clear winners in the reparations movement, whether at Brown or elsewhere, are the people who engage in it. At a minimum, they get publicity and ego gratification.

Dr. Simmons' standing has no doubt risen in politically correct circles, which would include not only the academic world but the foundation world and the world of liberal politics. If she ever wants to make a career move in any of these directions, she is now well set.

But at what price?

Roasting Walter Williams

At George Mason University, they are giving a “roast”—that peculiarly American combination of praise and ridicule—to Walter Williams, professor of economics and columnist extraordinaire. Although I cannot be there, let me participate vicariously with a few observations about Walter.

I first met Walter Williams back in 1969, when I was teaching summer school at UCLA and he was a student working toward his Ph.D. in economics there. Contrary to some accounts in the media, Walter was never a student of mine. Nor did he get his ideas from me.

The very reason Walter Williams dropped by my office that summer was that someone had told him that there was another black man who was expressing the same kinds of ideas that he had been expressing before I got there. To both our surprise, we discovered that we had in fact reached similar conclusions on a wide range of issues, especially those involving race.

In the years ahead these ideas would be called “black conservatism” in the media, though it is hard to imagine two less conservative guys. In the military, each of us was indicted for a court martial—Walter in the Army and I in the Marine Corps—because we did not conform. It should not be surprising that we did not conform to the racial orthodoxy of the 1960s.

Because Walter was tied up writing his doctoral dissertation, I was the first to go into print with ideas that we both had. One of Walter’s earliest writings was an article

explaining why “the poor pay more” in stores in low-income neighborhoods.

Some sociologists had written a book with that title but their explanations overlooked the economic factors behind high prices in ghettos and barrios. After Walter explained the economics behind these high prices, those who were now deprived of their all-purpose explanation—racial discrimination—reacted bitterly by denouncing Walter as a “white racist.”

After Walter went on television, liberals had to come up with some new derogatory labels—and they did. But these labels were like water off a duck’s back to Walter Williams.

Walter was as undaunted by apartheid in South Africa as he was by lockstep racial rhetoric in the United States. Many economists have said that how much discrimination there will be depends on how much it costs to discriminate in the marketplace. But Walter was the only one to put it to a test by living in a neighborhood that the apartheid government had designated as “white only.”

Not very conservative.

Out of this experience came a book titled *South Africa’s War Against Capitalism*. Over the years, I have used examples from that book in my own writings. This is as good a time as any to acknowledge my debt—especially since our flawed legal system will not enable Walter to collect.

Another very enlightening book by Walter Williams is *The State Against Blacks*. This goes into the many American government policies and practices which have had a major negative economic impact on blacks.

These include minimum wage laws, occupational licensing laws, and regulation of railroads and trucking. None of these is explicitly racial in intent but their actual consequences have included restrictions of employment

opportunities for blacks, as Walter demonstrates with hard facts and figures.

Both these books are written in plain English, by the way, a rarity among the writings of economists. The ability to speak this rare dialect has also helped Walter during his appearances on TV programs and as an occasional fill-in host for Rush Limbaugh.

Walter Williams is the only debater to leave Jesse Jackson speechless. On another occasion, he flabbergasted Ted Koppel when a woman on welfare said that she didn't have enough money to take care of all her children and Walter replied: "Did you ever consider that you might have had too many children for the money?"

Although Walter often comes across as hard-boiled on social issues—he once said that the government has no right to take a dime of his money to spend on someone else—the fact is that he has been very generous using his own money and his own time to help others. He just doesn't want politicians doing it and messing things up.

This is a long overdue tribute to a great guy.

“Diversity” in India

If facts carried some weight with those who are politically correct, the recent outbreak of savage and lethal violence in India’s state of Gujarat might cause some reassessments of both India and “diversity.”

This is only the latest round in a cycle of violence and revenge between the Hindus and the Muslims in that country. The death toll has reached 489 people in a few days. That includes the Hindu activists who were firebombed while on a train returning from the site of a razed mosque, where they planned to build a Hindu temple, and many Muslims then slaughtered by Indian mobs in retaliation.

These mobs have burned Muslim women and children alive in their homes. Nor is such savagery new in India or limited to clashes between Hindus and Muslims. At other times and places, it has been one caste against another, locals versus outsiders, or the storm trooper organization Shiv Sena against anybody who gets in their way. In some places, thugs resentful of Western influence attack shops that sell Valentine cards.

None of this fits the pious picture of peaceful and spiritual India that so captivates many Americans. India has served as one of the foreign Edens to which those Americans turn, in order to show their disdain for the United States.

At one time, the Soviet Union played that role, then China, then Cuba, and for some, India. What happens in the real India doesn’t matter. It is the symbolic India of

their dreams to which they impute all the virtues they declare to be lacking in the USA.

It is not India's fault that we have some fatuous Americans who want to put Indians up on a pedestal, in order to score points against their fellow Americans. But we need to be aware of the truth as well.

Those who are constantly gushing about the supposed benefits of "diversity" never want to put their beliefs to the test of looking at the facts about countries where people are divided by language, culture, religion, and in other ways, such as caste in India. Such countries are all too often riddled with strife and violence.

India is one of the most diverse nations on earth. No more than one-third of its people speak any given language and the population is divided innumerable ways by caste, ethnicity, religion and numerous localisms. Lethal riots have marked its history from the beginning.

When India gained its independence in 1947, the number of Hindus and Muslims who killed each other in one year exceeded the total number of blacks lynched in the entire history of the United States. Yet we are told that we should be like those gentle people, as if India were a nation of Gandhis. In reality, Gandhi was assassinated for trying to stop internecine strife in India.

If there is no need to impute wholly unrealistic sainthood to India, there is also no need to single it out for demonization. Many other countries with the much-touted "diversity" have likewise been racked by internal slaughters and atrocities.

Only about 20 miles away from India, the island nation of Sri Lanka has suffered more deaths among its majority and minority populations, as a result of internal strife and civil war, than the much larger United States suffered during

the Vietnam war. Other such “diverse” countries as Rwanda and those in the Balkans have a similar catalogue of horrors.

“Diversity” is not just a matter of demographics. It is also a matter of “identity” and identity politics. Sri Lanka was one of the most peaceful nations on earth before demagogues began hyping identity and demanding group preferences and quotas back in the 1950s.

Demographically, the United States has always been diverse, having received immigrants from all over the world. However, until recent times, it was understood by all that they came here to become Americans—not to remain foreign. By the second generation, most were speaking English, and by the third generation they were speaking only English.

Today, however, our citizen-of-the-world types are doing all they can to keep foreigners foreign and domestic minorities riled up over grievances, past and present, real and imaginary. Above all, they want group identity and group preferences and quotas.

In short, they want all the things that have brought on the kinds of disasters from which India and other such “diverse” countries have suffered grievously.

Race and IQ

Years ago, while doing research on education and IQ, I happened to be in the principal's office at a black school in Cincinnati, as he was preparing to open a large brown envelope containing the results of IQ tests that his students had taken. Before he opened the envelope, I offered to bet him that a large majority of the students with IQs over 110 would be girls.

He was too smart to take the bet. Studies had shown that females predominated among high-IQ blacks. One study of blacks whose IQs were 140 and up found that there were more than five times as many females as males at these levels.

This is hard to explain by either heredity or environment, as those terms are usually defined, since black males and black females have the same ancestors and grow up in the same homes. Meanwhile, white males and white females have the same average IQs, with slightly more males at both the highest and lowest IQs.

This is just one of many unsolved mysteries that is likely to remain unsolved, because doing research on race and IQ has become taboo in many places. My own research was financed in part by a grant from a foundation that told me to remove any mention of IQ research from the activities listed in my project's application.

They didn't care if I used their money for that purpose but they did not want it on the record that they had financed research into race and intelligence. Many schools

and boards of education also did not want it on the record that they had cooperated by supplying data for any such research. Only when assured of complete anonymity would they let me into their records.

A well-known black “social scientist” urged me not to do any such research. His stated reason was that it would “dignify” Professor Arthur Jensen’s thesis of a genetic basis for black-white differences in IQ scores. But my own suspicion was that he was afraid that the research would prove Jensen right.

As it turned out, the research showed that the average IQ difference between black and white Americans—15 points—was nothing unusual. Similar IQ differences could be found between various culturally isolated white communities and the general society, both in the United States and in Britain. Among various groups in India, mental test differences were slightly greater than those between blacks and whites in the United States.

In recent years, research by Professor James R. Flynn, an American expatriate living in New Zealand, has shaken up the whole IQ controversy by discovering what has been called “the Flynn effect.” In various countries around the world, people have been answering significantly more IQ test questions correctly than in the past.

This important fact has been inadvertently concealed by the practice of changing the norms on IQ tests, so that the average number of correctly answered questions remains by definition an IQ of 100. Only by painstakingly going back and recalculating IQs, based on the initial norms, was Professor Flynn able to discover that whole nations had, in effect, had their IQs rising over the decades by about 20 points.

Since the black-white difference in IQ is 15 points, this

means that an even larger IQ difference has existed between different generations of the same race, making it no longer necessary to attribute IQ differences of this magnitude to genetics. In the half century between 1945 and 1995, black Americans' raw test scores rose by the equivalent of 16 IQ points.

In other words, black Americans' test score results in 1995 would have given them an average IQ just over 100 in 1945. Only the repeated renorming of IQ tests upward created the illusion that blacks had made no progress, but were stuck at an IQ of 85. But we would never have known this if some researchers had not defied the taboo on studying race and IQ imposed by black "leaders" and white "friends."

Incidentally, Professor Jensen pointed out back in 1969 that black children's IQ scores rose by 8 to 10 points after he met with them informally in a play room and then tested them again after they were more relaxed around him. He did this because "I felt these children were really brighter than their IQ would indicate." What a shame that others seem to have less confidence in black children than Professor Jensen has had.

Race and IQ: Part II

Professor John McWhorter, a black faculty member at the University of California at Berkeley, has made a suggestion that is explosive in itself and directly the opposite of what is being said by those who are seeking to promote lower college admissions standards for blacks through affirmative action.

One of the reasons given for wanting more black students on a given campus, even if that means lowering admissions standards, is the claim that a certain number of blacks—a “critical mass”—on campus is necessary, in order for these students to feel comfortable enough to relax and do their best work. It sounds plausible, but lots of things have sounded plausible.

Professor McWhorter says just the opposite in his book *Losing the Race*. According to McWhorter, anti-intellectualism in the black culture keeps many black youngsters from doing their best. If he is right, then creating a critical mass is creating a bigger handicap for black students.

There have been many media stories about hard-working black school children being ostracized, or even threatened with or subjected to violence, for “acting white” by trying to succeed academically. Creating a critical mass with that attitude is unlikely to help anyone.

More direct factual evidence is available, however. A study of the effect of an increased proportion of black students in a racially integrated school found little effect of this on the academic performances of most other students—

except for high-ability black students, whose performances declined.

Another study, about the effects of ability-grouping, found that high-ability students performed better when put into classes with other high-ability students—and that this was especially so with high-ability minority students. In other words, a critical mass of students sorted by high ability did more for bright minority students than a critical mass of students sorted by race.

If Professor McWhorter is right, then his thesis might also help explain another puzzling phenomenon. A study of black orphans adopted by white families found their test scores to be higher than those of black youngsters raised by their own biological families. However, this initial finding eroded away when these same students were tested again in later years.

One of the things that can change as black kids grow older is that they become more conscious of race as they go into adolescence—and more responsive to peer pressure. If Professor McWhorter is right, then an anti-intellectual culture would be more likely to handicap them in the later period.

In an earlier era, when there were seldom enough blacks on most elite white college campuses to form a “critical mass,” did those students not do as well as in the post-affirmative action era, when blacks became more numerous on such campuses?

It is significant that no such evidence has been sought by those promoting the critical mass theory. However, students who graduated from an academically outstanding black high school in Washington between 1892 and 1954 left an impressive academic record at Amherst College during that

era, even though there were seldom more than a handful of black students on that campus at that time.

About three-quarters of these black students graduated from Amherst and more than one-fifth of these graduates were Phi Beta Kappas. This was long before the era of grade inflation or affirmative action.

None of this is definitive proof. But those with the critical mass theory offer no evidence at all and none is asked. Their views prevail by default—and dogmatism.

The time is long overdue to judge beliefs and the policies based on them by what actually works, not by what sounds good or what makes people feel good.

Having opposed the racial inferiority thesis in various writings over the years, I have in my own teaching held black students to the same standards as white students, though not all black students appreciated this kind of equality. Many of those who promote double standards for blacks seem convinced that blacks cannot achieve what whites have achieved. That is part of the ugly secret behind affirmative action.

Race and IQ: Part III

I happened to run into Charles Murray in Dulles Airport while he and Richard Herrnstein were writing *The Bell Curve*. When I asked him what he was working on and he summarized what he was writing, he could tell that I was concerned about him, so I told him why: “Charles, no matter what you say, people will hear what they want to hear.”

That is one prediction that I wish had not come true, but it has. There are people who have never read a single word of *The Bell Curve* but who are convinced that they not only know what it says but also know what the motivation was for saying it.

Partly this is because there are increasing numbers of people for whom indignation is a way of life. But that is not the sole reason. Historically, blacks have been among the many peoples accused of being innately inferior, especially in intelligence.

Back in the days of the Roman Empire, Cicero warned his fellow Romans not to buy British slaves, because he found them hard to teach anything. A 10th century Muslim scholar noted that Europeans grew more pale the farther north they were and that the “farther they are to the north the more stupid, gross, and brutish they are.”

With our love of labels today, we might dismiss both these statements as “racism.” In reality, both statements were probably true, as of the time they were made. At the very

least, the people who said these things were eyewitnesses, which we cannot possibly be.

Britain was a primitive, illiterate, tribal land at a time when the Roman Empire was in its glory as one of the most advanced civilizations on earth. A Briton transplanted to Rome in captivity must have found this complex civilization completely baffling and was probably none too quick to understand instructions on what to do and how to do it in such a wholly unfamiliar setting.

As of the 10th century, the Islamic world was more advanced than Europe in general and far more advanced than the northern regions of Europe, which had for centuries lagged behind Mediterranean Europe. The relative development of these different regions of Europe, especially in economic terms, would be reversed in later centuries, but what the Muslim scholar said in the 10th century was probably still true then.

The point here is that there have always been gaps between the development of one people and another, even if their relative positions did not remain the same permanently, and even if their genes had nothing to do with it. In the case of blacks in the United States, there was a special reason for particularly negative pronouncements.

Although slavery existed all over the world for thousands of years, among people of every race, it was considered a “peculiar institution” in the United States because it was in complete contradiction to the principles on which the country was founded. Slavery was controversial among Americans when it was still accepted as just another fact of life in other countries.

Nowhere else in the world was such a literature of justification of slavery produced as in the antebellum South, because nowhere else was slavery under such sustained

attack. An especially virulent racism arose to try to justify slavery, and this racism lasted long after slavery itself was gone.

That history and its painful consequences are undeniable. But, in a world where whole nations have in effect raised their IQs by 20 points in one generation, it is time for black “leaders” and white “friends” to stop trying to discredit the tests and get on with the job of improving the skills that the tests measure.

A number of black schools, even in rundown ghettos, have already reached or exceeded national norms on tests, so there is no question that it can be done. The question is whether it will in fact be done, on a large enough scale to change the abysmal educational results in too many predominantly black schools.

So long as demagogues are concentrating on demonizing anyone who points out the problem, do not expect the kind of general improvement that is needed. This demonization has made *The Bell Curve* one of the most misrepresented books of our time. But such demagoguery has not helped one black child to get a better education.

An Old War and a New One

Back in 1939, when Senator Daniel Inouye was a teenager, he attended a Japanese language school in Hawaii. He was appalled to discover that it was also a center for political propaganda, urging young Japanese Americans like himself to remember that they were Japanese first and owed an overriding loyalty to Japan—in peace or in war. They also ridiculed Christianity.

When young Daniel Inouye objected, he was thrown bodily out of the school. Later, during World War II, he proved his loyalty to America as a soldier in battle, where he lost an arm.

Inouye was one of many Japanese Americans who proved themselves in battle, many winning combat medals for valor. It is also true that there were some other Japanese Americans who went to Japan and joined their military forces to fight against America.

In short, there were both loyal Japanese Americans and disloyal Japanese Americans, including among the latter some who cooperated with Japan's espionage and subversion networks within the United States before and during the war. This was recognized at the time, even within the Japanese American community.

They could hardly have failed to recognize the disloyal among them, for some loyal Japanese Americans were bullied or beaten by those who were loyal to Japan.

The passage of time has, however, caused much of this to fade into the background. Thus steps taken during the

war to deal with the dangers of espionage and subversion have later been widely attributed to sheer racism, an ever-popular explanation in some quarters.

A new book by Michelle Malkin, titled *In Defense of Internment*, challenges the widespread condemnation of the relocation of Japanese Americans away from the militarily vulnerable west coast. She brings out many facts and arguments that have long been ignored by those who prefer simpler explanations that enable them to condemn America.

As if inconvenient facts were not enough to guarantee that she would be viciously attacked and demonized, Ms. Malkin argues that what is called “racial profiling” was valid then, with the country in grave danger, and is valid again today when it comes to people from the Middle East living in the United States.

Michelle Malkin does not say that all Arabs or Muslims in America today should be rounded up and interned. Nor does she claim that all or most Japanese Americans were disloyal during World War II. Her argument is much more sober and thoughtful than that, and a brief summary here cannot do it justice.

Ms. Malkin’s book begins with the essential task of trying to re-create for today’s generation of Americans the circumstances and dangers faced by the United States in early 1942, when the relocation of Japanese Americans began.

The term “relocation” is more accurate than the term “internment” that has become more popular. Japanese American citizens in the west coast military zone were allowed to move anywhere else in the country without going into internment camps, and thousands did.

Relocation was the policy but internment became the

reality for most, because at that time many were still citizens of Japan and thus enemy aliens in wartime. Internment on the mainland was an alternative to putting the whole west coast population—of whatever race or citizenship—under martial law, as happened in Hawaii.

The times were grim and the choices stark, even if later second-guessers would grandly dismiss as “hysteria” the weighty concerns of that time. Japan launched many stunning attacks in the wake of its bombing of Pearl Harbor, including the sinking of American ships off the California coast and the shelling of that coast itself. No one knew where Japan would strike next.

In Defense of Internment is a carefully researched and carefully analyzed history but it is also a warning for our own times. Too many American lives are at risk today from people already inside this country to be paralyzed by the politically correct rhetoric of those who decry “racial profiling.”

“It is entirely appropriate to take into account nationality when deciding which foreigners present the highest risks,” Michelle Malkin says. Agree or disagree with her book, it makes us think—and political correctness is no substitute for thought.

Silly Letters

Most of the letters and e-mails I receive are a pleasure to read and my only regret is that I cannot answer even one-tenth of them. However, there are certain e-mails and letters that repeat the same fallacies again and again. Let me try to answer one of those fallacies now, once and for all.

One of the silly things that gets said repeatedly is that I should not be against affirmative action because I have myself benefitted from it.

Think about it: I am more than 70 years old. There was no affirmative action when I went to college—or to graduate school, for that matter. There wasn't even a Civil Rights Act of 1964 when I began my academic career in 1962.

Moreover, there is nothing that I have accomplished in my education or my career that wasn't accomplished by other blacks before me—and therefore long before affirmative action.

Getting a degree from Harvard? The first black man graduated from Harvard in 1870.

Becoming a black economist? There was a black economist teaching at the University of Chicago when I first arrived there as a graduate student in 1959.

Writing a newspaper column? George Schuyler wrote newspaper columns, magazine articles, and books before I was born.

A recent silly e-mail declared that I wouldn't even be able to vote in this year's California election if there hadn't

been a Voting Rights Act of 1965. I have been voting ever since I was 21 years old—in 1951.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were necessary for some people in some places. But making these things the cause of the rise of most blacks only betrays an ignorance of history.

The most dramatic rise of blacks out of poverty occurred before the civil rights movement of the 1960s. That's right—before. But politicians, activists and the intelligentsia have spread so much propaganda that many Americans, black and white, are unaware of the facts.

There is a lot of political mileage to be gotten by convincing blacks that they owe everything to the government and could not make it in this world otherwise. Dependency plus paranoia equals votes. But blacks made it in this world before the government paid them any attention.

Nor has the economic rise of blacks been speeded up by civil rights legislation. More blacks rose into professional ranks in the years immediately *preceding* the Civil Rights Act of 1964 than in the years right after its passage.

What moved blacks up was a rapid increase in education. There was certainly discrimination but, in many fields that demanded higher levels of education, there were not that many blacks to discriminate against in the first place.

Moreover, even if certain laws and policies may once have served a purpose, that does not mean that these laws and policies should last forever, in total disregard of their counterproductive effects today. For a California election in 2003 to be held up by the federal government because of what happened in Mississippi decades ago is ludicrous.

Finally, the argument that anyone who has benefitted from affirmative action should never oppose it is as illogical

as it is ignorant of the facts. I certainly benefitted from the Korean war, which led to my being in the military and therefore getting the G.I. Bill that enabled me to go to college.

Does that mean that I should never be against any war? Was it wrong of me to be against the Vietnam war after I had personally benefitted from the Korean war? Are the duties of a citizen, not to mention the duty to be honest and truthful, to be overridden by what happened to benefit me personally?

Some of the things I advocate would ruin me personally if my recommendations were followed. For example, I am totally opposed to the environmentalist extremism that has made it an ordeal to try to build any kind of housing—much less “affordable housing”—on the San Francisco peninsula. But if such restrictive policies were repealed, the inflated value of my home would be cut at least in half when more housing began to be built in the area.

Is myopic selfishness supposed to be a moral obligation?

Black History Month

What is called Black History Month might more accurately be called “the sins of white people” month. The sins of any branch of the human race are virtually inexhaustible, but the history of blacks in America includes a lot more than the sins of white people, which are put front and center each February.

Obviously, there is current political mileage to be gotten from historic grievances. At a minimum, politicians and activists get the media attention that is the lifeblood of their careers. Then there are racial quotas, money for special minority programs and hopes for reparations for slavery. If nothing else, some people get excuses for their own shortcomings—and excuses are very important.

One of the many penetrating insights of the late Eric Hoffer was that, for many people, an excuse is better than an achievement. That is because an achievement, no matter how great, leaves you having to prove yourself again in the future. But an excuse can last for life.

Those black achievements which did not involve fighting the sins of white people get little attention during Black History Month. Indeed, many of those achievements undermine the blanket excuse that white sins are what prevent blacks from accomplishing more. How many people have heard of Paul Williams, who became a prominent black architect long before the civil rights revolution, or about successful black writers in the 19th century?

There was also an outstanding black high school in

Washington, D. C., which had remarkable achievements from 1870 to 1955. For example, most of its graduates during that period went on to college, even though most white high school graduates did not make it to college during that era. As far back as 1899, this school's students scored higher on standardized tests than two of the three white academic high schools in the District of Columbia.

Given the terrible educational performances of so many ghetto schools, you might think that there would be great interest in how this particular school succeeded when so many others failed. But you would be wrong. Where there was any reaction at all from the black establishment to an article I wrote about the history of this school, that reaction was hostility.

Dunbar High School was an achievement but it destroyed a thousand excuses. The prevailing dogma is that all the failures of black schools were due to the sins of white people, including inadequate funding and racial segregation. But Dunbar was inadequately funded—its class sizes were sometimes 40 or more—and it was racially segregated for more than 80 years. Its history of success was therefore not welcomed by black “leaders.”

Another big problem with Black History Month is its narrowness. You cannot understand even your own history if that is the only history you know. Some explanations of what has happened in your history might sound plausible within the framework of just one people's history, but these explanations can collapse like a house of cards if you look at the same factors in the histories of other groups, other countries, and other eras.

Shelby Steele has pointed out that whites are desperate to escape guilt and blacks are desperate to escape implications of inferiority. But, viewed against the

background of world history, neither group of Americans is unique. Nor are the differences between them. Both their anxieties are overblown.

Black-white differences in income, IQ, lifestyle or anything else you care to name are exceeded by differences between innumerable other groups around the world today and throughout history—even when none of the factors that we blame for the differences in America were present.

For example, when the Romans invaded Britain, they came from an empire with magnificent art, architecture, literature, political organization and military might. But the Britons were an illiterate tribal people. There was not a building on the island and no Briton's name had ever been recorded in the pages of history.

The Britons didn't build London. The Romans built London. And when the Romans left, four centuries later, the country fragmented into tribal domains again, the economy collapsed, and buildings and roads decayed. No one would have dreamed at that point that someday there would be a British Empire to exceed anything the Romans had ever achieved.

Maybe we need a British History Month.

Bravo for Bill Cosby

Bill Cosby has provided a lot of laughs for millions of Americans over the years but black “leaders” were not laughing after he lashed out at those black parents who buy their children expensive sneakers instead of something educational. He also denounced both those children and those adults in the black community who refuse to speak the king’s English.

“Everybody knows it’s important to speak English except these knuckleheads,” Cosby said. “You can’t be a doctor with that kind of crap coming out of your mouth.” He also mocked those who referred to “the incarcerated” as “political prisoners.”

At this gathering on the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education*, some in the audience laughed and applauded but the pillars of the black “leadership” establishment—the head of the NAACP, the head of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and the president of Howard University—were “stone-faced,” according to the *Washington Post*.

Theodore Shaw of the Legal Defense Fund then “told the crowd that most people on welfare are not African Americans, and many of the problems his organization has addressed in the black community were not self-inflicted.”

Other groups are not perfect—but is that an excuse for doing self-destructive things?

Bill Cosby and the black “leadership” represent two long-standing differences about how to deal with the problems of

the black community. The “leaders” are concerned with protecting the image of blacks, while Cosby is trying to protect the future of blacks, especially those of the younger generation.

Far from just bashing blacks, Cosby has given generously to promote black education. But he is still old-fashioned enough to think that others need to take some responsibility for using the opportunities that were gained for them by “people who marched and were hit in the face with rocks to get an education.”

Now, in too many black communities, dedicating yourself to getting an education is called “acting white.”

These are painful realities and they do not become any less real or any less painful by hushing them up. Nobody enjoys being made to look bad in public. But too many in the black community are preoccupied with how things will look to white people, with what in private life would be concern about “what will the neighbors think?”

When your children are dying, you don’t worry about what the neighbors think. When the whole future of a race is jeopardized by self-destructive fads, you put public relations on the back burner.

There are still whites out there who think that blacks are innately incapable of achievement—and some of them support affirmative action for that reason. But there is plenty of evidence that innate ability, or even developed mental skills, are not the big problem.

Not only blacks with low test scores, but even blacks with high test scores, do not do as well academically as whites with the same test scores. Among Asian Americans, it is just the opposite. They do better than whites with the same test scores, whether in educational institutions or in economic activities.

Years ago, Cosby urged a group of young blacks to put more effort into their studies, the way Asian students do. “Do you know why they are called Asians?” he asked. “Because they always get A’s.”

The differences among all these groups are in one four-letter word that you are still not supposed to say: work.

Anyone who has taught black, white, and Asian students will know that they do not work equally. Studies show it but you don’t need studies. Just go into a university library on a Saturday night and see who is there and who is not there.

In some places, you might think it was an all-Asian university, judging by the students in the library on Saturday night.

How surprised should you be when you go into a classroom on Monday morning and find out who is on top of the work and who is struggling to keep up?

What Bill Cosby said was no laughing matter. It is closer to being something to cry about.

Quota “Logic”

Old-timers may remember a radio program about a crime-fighting hero called The Shadow, who had “the power to cloud men’s minds, so that they cannot see him.” Affirmative action has that same power today. Some of the murkiest thinking of our times has come from those defending group preferences and quotas.

Professor James M. McPherson of Princeton University has launched a recent defense of affirmative action that is classic. For example, affirmative action is redefined to include such things as the fact that he and other white males of his generation “received a great deal of support from faculty and families to aspire to a career” and to hope to reach the top, while minorities and women did not.

This was, Professor McPherson says, “a more powerful form of affirmative action than anything we have more recently experienced in the opposite direction.” Moreover, he was first hired to teach at Princeton on the recommendation of his faculty adviser at Johns Hopkins, part of “the infamous ‘old-boy network,’ surely the most powerful instrument of affirmative action ever devised.”

As if this were not enough special privilege, James McPherson was also part of a generation born “during the trough of the Depression-era birth rate,” so that he entered the job market just when the baby boom generation was being educated, at a time when there were relatively few people from the previous generation around to educate

them. Therefore he was spared the exhausting job searches of today.

“The jobs sought us, not vice versa,” he says. This too constituted—you guessed it—affirmative action. Professor McPherson calls it “a sort of demographic affirmative action.”

Even if we accept all of Professor McPherson’s arguments and redefinitions, what is the conclusion that he reaches? Is he going to resign his professorship at Princeton and his presidency of the American Historical Association as undeserved windfalls? Not on your life!

Instead, McPherson is prepared to sacrifice other people to his vision of undeserved good fortune. “Having benefitted in so many ways from these older forms of affirmative action that favored white males,” he says, he cannot condemn the newer version that “seems to disadvantage this same category.”

In short, older white males of Professor McPherson’s generation benefitted unfairly, so reparations are owed to minorities and women—not from those who benefitted, but from white males of this generation, including those too young to have had anything to do with the advantages and disadvantages he describes.

And we thought *The Shadow* could cloud men’s minds!

This is classic academic self-indulgence in the name of noblesse oblige. Professor McPherson can get credit for noblesse and force someone else to pay the cost of oblige.

This argument is also classic academic thinking in another sense—talking about people in the abstract, as members of “the same category.” As Professor McPherson knows full well from his scholarly work, the 14th Amendment mandates equal treatment for flesh-and-blood individuals, not for abstract categories.

One of the many differences between abstract people and flesh-and-blood human beings is that real people are born, live and die—taking their sins and their sufferings to the grave with them. Only by focusing on abstract categories that live on can redressing the wrongs of history be made to seem even plausible.

Professor McPherson's argument also confuses gratitude and guilt. He should indeed be grateful for the support and encouragement that he received from family and mentors. But neither he nor they should feel guilty because others did not receive similar support and encouragement.

Anyone who is serious about extending the same benefits to others must become serious about developing the same abilities in others—that is, raising them up to the same standards, not bringing the standards down to them.

Finally, the notion that demographic trends constitute social injustices to be lamented shows the unreality of this jerry-built argument. But confusing the vagaries of fate with the sins of man is also part of the argument for affirmative action—and betrays how lacking it is in real arguments.

Quota “Logic”: Part II

Princeton professor James M. McPherson’s recent arguments for affirmative action, in a newsletter to members of the American Historical Association, make many sweeping assertions and implicit assumptions that need not even be challenged to show the shakiness of his arguments. However, since we both belong to an organization devoted to history, let me make a few corrections of the history that Professor McPherson offers.

First of all, he mentions that his academic career began in 1962 at Princeton, as a result of what he now calls “the infamous ‘old boy network,’” which he characterizes as affirmative action for white males. Despite being black, my own academic career also began that very same year, 1962, just a few miles up the road from where McPherson’s career began, at Douglass College, Rutgers University.

I too received my appointment via the old boy network, being recommended by my mentors at the University of Chicago, just as McPherson was recommended by his mentor at Johns Hopkins. Women were hired the same way, out of the same “old boy network,” which was also an old girls’ network.

I was hired despite the fact that Douglass College was a college for young women and almost all these women were white. I was even hired despite having challenged and antagonized one of the senior members of the department during the job interview.

Incidentally, during my first semester of teaching, I

received an unexpected offer of another appointment, at the University of California at La Jolla. A signed contract arrived in the mail, requiring only my signature to make it official. So the idea that there were no academic opportunities for blacks in 1962 is not easy to sell to someone who was there. Save that one for guilty whites.

McPherson makes much of the fact that “virtually none” of his fellow students in graduate school were minorities or women. That was my experience as well, but Professor McPherson leaves the impression that absence means exclusion. Otherwise, why is that fact relevant to his discussion of affirmative action?

We need not rely on personal anecdotes, either his or mine. My research, using data from the American Council on Education, showed that black faculty members with the same degrees and publications as white faculty members were receiving higher pay than their white counterparts, as far back as 1969.

The real problem was that there were not nearly enough black faculty members with the same qualifications. There are still not enough. In some years, the total number of blacks in the entire country who receive Ph.D.s in mathematics is in single digits.

With women, the problem was different: Women became mothers and that was by no means the same as men becoming fathers, no matter what politically correct parallels we create today with words, such as “an expectant couple.”

Those academic women who never married—which, back in those days, had some relationship to becoming a mother—had higher incomes than academic men who never married. Apparently Professor McPherson’s “infamous ‘old boy network’” was either not as powerful or not as sinister as he depicts.

The fact that recommendations from established scholars in a field carry weight when hiring an unknown graduate student to become a faculty member has been made to seem like some exclusionary plot, if you believe defenders of affirmative action. Indeed, any reliance on any criterion of quality—test scores, publications, whatever—can be depicted as an exclusionary bias by those who want quotas.

White guilt may be fashionable in some quarters but the only people it helps are those whites who want to become saints on the cheap and those blacks who have learned to hustle guilty whites. What most blacks need is—first of all—the kind and quality of education that they do not get in most ghetto schools. Least of all do they get this education from those teachers who spend precious class time dredging up the past instead of preparing students for the future.

Professor McPherson's defense of affirmative action to members of the American Historical Association invited comments via e-mail (jmcphers@princeton.edu). He did not say whether that included comments from people in the real world beyond the ivied walls.