

Affirmative action is a necessary corrective measure

By RICARDO AMPUDIA
Staff Columnist

In response to Matt Bandyk's article "Affirmative Action violates American Spirit of Equality."

Bandyk's article misinterprets a fundamental concept of affirmative action: this practice is not founded upon racist stereotypes as Bandyk and others contend, but it acts as a corrective measure against them.

It only takes a little mathematical intuition and looking at a census report to conclude that, sadly, race is an economic and social determinant. There is a high degree of correlation between ethnicity and income level: while the percentage of Asian and white children living in poverty in the United States is below 13%, the corresponding figure for black and Hispanic children is above 30%.

But, more importantly, Bandyk is gravely mistaken in believing that affirmative action regards this correlation as some kind of biological disability on the part of black or Hispanics; it rather acknowledges the abovementioned correlation as the result of past and present social biases against these particular ethnic groups and proceeds by taking corrective measures.

Some will argue that these biases are non-existent today. This is a complicated argument, but I remember working in a Californian bank (i.e. in a relatively non-traditionalist state), where it was evident that whenever a black customer came in to cash a check, for instance, the managers would always request the tellers to call the owner of the account at home to verify the veracity of the document.

What is very clear, however, is the fact that past biases against these minorities still hurt them in the present. Blacks in particular have had to fight for the implementation of their rights as members of society.

It would be hopeless to argue against the fact that, historically, a black person has found it much more difficult to succeed economically than a white one and that this has deeply affected the present conditions in which most black communities currently find themselves: segregated and poor, two characteristics that would generate violence and preferences that do not favor the pursuit of higher education even in the whitest of societies.

It is worth clarifying that affirmative action in college admissions is not awarding points to non-Asian minority students due to some sort of racist pity.

Rather, it acknowledges the merit that lies behind achieving a certain level of scholarly achievement while at the same time being a minority, not because these students in themselves are not able to attain a certain level of achievement, but because of the socially constructed barriers that these students must overcome.

The statistics are there and they are clear, and it will take more time and implementation of corrective measures until economic and social standing will no longer be ethnically determined.

Affirmative action makes it easier and more attractive to non-Asian minority groups to attain a higher level of education, thus improving the overall standing of the members of these communities and breaking the mutual poverty-prejudice cycle that haunts them.

Students ought to play a role in town planning effort

By DAVID CROW
Perspectives Editor

Monday, an important event took place that represented the start of a long-term process that will change the way Davidson College and the town of Davidson interact for years to come.

That event was a town meeting inaugurating the town of Davidson's efforts to come up with a master plan for the future of downtown Davidson.

For those who don't already know, Davidson is embarking on an ambitious master plan over the next five years that will attempt to bring in more businesses, expand main street, make downtown more pedestrian friendly and hopefully increase the interaction between the town and the college.

What was so encouraging about this meeting was that the wants of the citizens of Davidson follow exactly the pattern that has historically brought about the best growth and revitalization of downtowns across the country.

The people from the town seem genuinely committed to making Davidson a place that is unique and authentic, avoiding both the ubiquitous strip mall feel of most of the surrounding areas as well as steering clear of making Davidson into the next Birkdale: a fake representation of what a downtown should look like that actually resembles an outdoor shopping mall more than a genuine streetscape.

Instead, the town is dedicated to making sure downtown Davidson maintains its unique feel of a true town while hopefully providing more attractions for both residents and visitors.

What was saddening, however, was that at this meeting there were a grand total of three students from the College. If we as students have any desire to create a town that offers more attractions for us, and I think that many of us do, we must play our role as residents and participate in the planning process.

Currently, very few students regularly take advantage of what the town has to offer, and I cannot blame them.

There simply aren't many stores or restaurants that attract students from the College in Davidson. Hopefully this will change in the future, but only if our voices are heard.

There is clearly a desire on the part of the people of Davidson to make town-gown relationships better and they want to encourage the use of the town by the students.

It is in everyone's best interest that this interaction takes place.

However, the students must tell the town and the planners what they want to see.

The firm of HyettPalma, which is leading the planning effort, has already conducted a focus group of students and has been very responsive to what students need and want in a college town.

However, a focus group of ten students cannot and should not be the sole outlet for the student voice.

Therefore, I urge all students who have ever said that they wish something were different or better about our town to voice their views by emailing pjohnson@ci.davidson.nc.us with your suggestions.

Only by voicing our views can we hope to make a difference in improving our town and our college.

Before rebuilding Iraq, we must look at roots of conflict

By LAUREN LESTER
Guest Columnist

The possibility of a free and democratic Iraq excites everyone, both those for and against the war. Many who disagreed with why and how the war started hoped that, for the sake of the Iraqi people, America, and the world, this war would end successfully and that history would prove our worst fears wrong.

But as we wait and hope for the final outcome, Americans should also be looking at the policies underlying the war. To understand the future's challenges, we must continue to look at the problematic roots of this conflict and the possible problems that have led us down the road to this war.

Even if this war does turn out for the best, it signals a shift in foreign policy that sets an immoral and impractical precedent for the 21st century, a policy that focuses on real or imagined security at the price of our most prized American principles.

Part of me wants to believe in the dream that lies behind this war, regardless of our many other motives for invading: the New American Century, in which we push out and disarm the bad guys, liberate the people of unjust regimes, and bring in democracy.

It might just work in Iraq, which for various reasons is an easier target than many other countries with bigger ties to terrorism.

But we do not have a legacy of accomplishing this dream well in the recent past, and even our success stories in the 50's did not happen as easily as we like to think.

If we want to militarily execute a democratic century, the hypocrisy innate in "all's fair in war" is going to hinder us.

In the past, we have had to ally with Stalin, Sadaam Hussein, and Osama Bin Laden, to name a few, to achieve our military and foreign policy goals.

The ethical and practical quagmires of our unrefined foreign policy in the past show that the USA will have a tough

The time is now to change the debacle we call a lottery

By ZACH WILLIAMS
Staff Columnist

After once again experiencing the debacle that is double lottery night, it seemed imperative that I compose a follow-up on the chaos that ensued last Wednesday. As the hordes of optimistic students made their way to West with lottery numbers in hand, many would anxiously wade through the winding queue, only to see their fate revealed by the masses of colored X's representing dashed hopes for living quarters next year.

Embellishment aside, the outcome of this year's double lottery literally and metaphorically (sub-free) left many in the gutter. In fact, a whopping 76 students remain homeless for next year while countless others faced the dreaded sub-free contract as their only prudent option for housing. Although RLO often assumes the role of scapegoat in the eyes of students when things don't go according to plan here at Davidson, it looks as if there is some legitimate blame to be handed out in this instance.

However, instead of reverting to trivial cut downs and inconsequential name-calling as one might see in the affected pages of *Libertas* in regards to RLO, I believe there are some significantly easy changes which could be made to the system in order to stave off the results of this year's lottery in the future.

First, the current system is guilty of producing lottery numbers that are ambiguously representative of where one stands among the masses.

With Davidson's sex-segregated hall policy, there should be separate housing lotteries for men and women. This way, when you get your number, you'll know the true place in which you stand relative to the actual people you will be competing with for rooms.

This helps when deciding on clustering or even roommate choice prior to the actual night of lottery. Moreover, it would do away with at least some of the confusion the current method affords as crowds of directionless people annually pile into a room of temporary madness.

Second, people who go through singles lottery should not be allowed to subsequently enter doubles lottery!

It further devalues the fairness of the lottery system when students on the singles wait list go through doubles lottery only to find that more singles have opened up and end up giving up what could be a first-rate double room to those whose poor numbers placed them on the doubles wait list.

This also occurs when RLO invariably grants further off-campus permissions (which they will have to do this year) in order to accommodate those on the on-campus waitlist.

Lastly, and perhaps most contentious, sub-free housing should be eliminated for upperclassmen.

Davidson does not have the space to block off an entire building for this cause, especially when it results in non-sub-free students agreeing to live on a sub-free hall for lack of a better option. Contract or no contract, people are sub-free of their own accord. This realization diminishes the supposed value of the sub-free experience to begin with.

Having been forced to take my fourth housing choice as a rising junior, I believe I speak for the majority of disaffected students after last Wednesday's lottery night.

But with changes made, our system can certainly be made to produce results more fair and desirable to all than it does now.

time if it tries to democratize the world.

It is the problem of the benevolent autocrat (or empire) when you try to make people good, you usually lose your integrity, and destroy innocents in your attempts.

If you watched the PBS documentary a few weeks ago you have heard about the neo-conservative visions of preemptive strikes, unilateral action, and democratization of the world.

A nice dream. But as human nature gets in the way of communism, it also will get in the way of this dream. American human nature especially.

So for now, I think we at Davidson College should still be thinking about what led to this war as a framework for what its future implications are.

It is not anti-American to challenge our policies and leaders, even in the midst of fear and war. Based on our cultural and political system, engaging in the complexity of criticism and debate is the most American thing we can do.

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