

Affirmative action violates American spirit of equality

BY MATT BANDYK
Staff Columnist

While the public's attention is currently centered on the war on Iraq, two lawsuits regarding the University of Michigan's affirmative action policy are being debated in the Supreme Court.

I'll leave it to the justices to sift through the legal issues; instead I want to focus on the larger question: Is affirmative action a coherent policy for increasing diversity and decreasing racial discrimination?

The answer is no. Affirmative action is firmly rooted in the same racial biases that create the problems it is trying to solve.

The most often cited example of affirmative action's prejudice is discrimination against whites. Affirmative action assumes that white people are inherently more competitive, qualified and privileged than members of other races. Never mind that there are many poor whites who suffer through bad schools and bad neighborhoods. Affirmative action can and does eliminate opportunity for fully qualified white applicants.

It is a sadly overlooked fact that Asian-Americans suffer the same fate as white people when it comes to affirmative action. This makes little sense, because according to the US Census, 88 percent of Asian students have at least one immigrant parent.

They must contend with language barriers and other disadvantages. So why aren't they favored in the admissions process? A racist generalization is the basis for this oversight: that Asians are smarter and harder working than other races.

Affirmative action even perpetuates negative notions of the very groups it attempts to help. It assumes that if you are

black or Hispanic, then you must be poor, less educated and unable to succeed in society without outside help. These stereotypes are at the core of racism.

Affirmative action cannot break down the inherent biases against minorities if it reinforces them in the same breath.

In addition, when it comes to increasing opportunities for blacks, affirmative action is a band-aid policy. It doesn't address the crux of the issue: that many members of minority groups don't apply to college at all. 45 percent of black teenagers don't graduate from high school. This is the true educational crisis threatening diversity.

What about the arguments for affirmative action?

Supporters contend that creating more diversity is necessary to ensure the academic integrity of our colleges and universities. I agree, but at what price?

The University of Michigan's system awards 20 points to non-Asian minority applicants, while a perfect score on the SAT is worth only 12 points. As President Bush explained in January, "Those 20 points awarded solely based on race are often the decisive factor."

Supporters of affirmative action are caught in a catch-22: They want to create a better learning environment at colleges, but to do so they must degrade the academic quality of the student body.

Some defend the policy by pointing out that colleges use other kinds of affirmative action. Admissions takes into account geography, alumni lineage, and other non-merit based factors. But just because policies similar to affirmative action exist does not somehow excuse racial preferences of their unacceptable flaws.

The 14th Amendment to the US Constitution ensures that all people receive "equal protection under the laws." A policy that relies on broad generalizations of racial groups is not in the spirit of this American notion of equality.

U.S. must give Iraqi people a large role in rebuilding

BY RICHARD GUYER
Staff Columnist

With a coalition victory in Iraq now a foregone conclusion, the chief question facing the Bush Administration is what to do when the war ends — which it probably will in the next few days, or even hours.

However, even if this best-case scenario does not play out, the next few weeks will have a tremendous impact on the future of the Iraqi nation and the Middle East as a whole. As a result, several things must be done to make this troubled region of the world more stable and more receptive to democracy.

It is essential that we establish some form of government in Iraq as quickly as we can. Fortunately, the Administration may currently be taking steps to do this. According to the British Guardian, the Pentagon wants to install an interim Iraqi government as early as next week, even if the fighting is not yet finished.

Another key stipulation for the rebuilding of Iraq should be that nobody who didn't participate in the "coalition of the willing" gets to play a key role in the coming rebuilding process. It is really ridiculous and — if I may say so myself — arrogant of the French to demand a lead role in anything

after the way they have acted for the past few months. It was American and British blood that freed Iraq, so it should be the American and British people who rebuild it.

Furthermore, we need to make sure the Iraqi people are given a large and visible role in the reconstruction process. It is essential for our interests in the Arab world that this does not look like the establishment of a colony.

As Thomas Friedman wrote recently, "We have only one chance to make a first impression in how we intend to reshape Iraq, and we must make a good one."

The best way to do this is to let the people of this ancient nation take as large a role as is possible in their own land's renewal. The Iraqi National Congress will probably get a prominent role, which is a good step towards handing the nation back to its rightful owners.

The previously mentioned story in the Guardian and other reports indicate that the Bush Administration is doing exactly what it should: moving quickly and predominantly without the United Nations to build a broad, democratic "government of the people, by the people, for the people" in Iraq.

If the French have a problem with that, they should realize they cannot run alongside the American bandwagon, hopping on and off when it is convenient for them. And maybe they will decide to help topple the next totalitarian regime.

Social rift reflects diversity of students, not cause for alarm

BY LINDY BALDWIN
Staff Columnist

I'm sure I'm not the only one who responded to Mike Galdo's column ("Growing rift between social groups...") with a twinge of regret that the Outpost walls are now plain dull white instead of the multicolored expressive mural they used to be.

I miss those greasy 1 a.m. quesadillas, the ancient chairs, the bad lighting and that terrible out-of-tune piano with the defective F key. Lest I bore the classes of 2005 and 2006, however, I should probably move on to my real point.

While I think Mike is right in arguing that the campus is becoming divided socially, I'm not sure it's a crisis situation. Instead, I think it's merely an indication of the fact that not all Davidson students like to have fun the same way.

It is true that most weekends, non-drinkers and drinkers head to different places, but the divide between the two is hardly rigid. A student who spends Friday night at a Union coffeehouse might well end up partying at Connor on Satur-

day, and no one is stunned by that student's ability to bridge the gap between social groups.

It is also true that many students tend to gravitate towards one to the exclusion of the other. But can we really expect that everyone on campus would find pleasure in the same kinds of weekend activities?

Davidson wouldn't be very interesting if we all liked to party down at the Court, or if we all packed out the 900 Room every weekend for a quirky foreign film.

The fact that all of these things go on tells us that Davidson attracts different kinds of people, which ought to be a cause for celebration rather than concern. When was the last time you heard someone say that Davidson needs less diversity?

I'm also not sure that the increase in substance-free housing represents our inability to get along. In my experience, my friends who have lived on substance-free halls do not scorn drinkers or want to isolate themselves from all those horrible people who enjoy beer. In fact, people who live in sub-free occasionally drink (not on their halls, obviously, but down on the Court or with dinner). They just prefer a quieter



The Senior Source

by Jeremy Trantham

The ER is no place to spend the weekend

I'm pissed off this week. Davidson, I don't know what gotten into you lately. Actually I do—too much booze.

Despite my best efforts, this column is not the most amusing thing in the Davidsonian. At best, it runs a distant second to the police blotter.

I read the blotter first thing every week. I like reading about the antics of drunk kids. Fortunately, none of my antics have ever appeared on the illustrious list (only by the grace of God).

So I turn to the blotter the last couple of weeks and I keep seeing the same entry. "Identified student was transported to Lake Norman Regional Medical Center for potential alcohol poisoning. Student was treated and released." The past two weeks I have seen five such entries of students so drunk they had to be taken to the hospital.

I like drinking as much as the next guy, maybe more. Admittedly, I have drunk to excess on occasion. I have no problems with anyone else doing the same. A lot of people (including me) work very hard at this school, and I think we've earned a little R&R. If alcohol is your way to blow off steam, that's so be it.

But there is nothing cool or special about drinking yourself into the ER. I've never had my stomach pumped. I've heard it sucks. Sometimes they put charcoal down your throat to soak up the booze. I've never eaten charcoal myself, but I imagine it tastes only slightly better than a cake.

There isn't anything cool about hugging the toilet all night either. First of all, the toilets on this campus are largely public. Think about what you're shoving your face in. Most importantly, nobody wants to make out with you after boozing.

Passing out sucks too. It gives your friends ample opportunity to draw things on your face, and then take embarrassing pictures of you. You're lucky if the worst thing written on your face refers to your sexual preference for goats.

In short, drinking yourself into incapacitation is not fun. It's certainly not healthy. The reason you pass out after an all-night bender is because your body cannot handle any more alcohol. It's shutting you down from drinking anymore because you don't die.

Dying, for the record, isn't cool either.

I never thought I'd write a column telling anyone to drink less. I'm not really doing that now. But, we're not in high school anymore. By now we ought to know our drinking limits enough to exhibit some semblance of control. So Davidson start watching out for yourself and your friends. I don't want the blotter to be moved back to the front page because someone drank himself to death.

I'm mad at you Davidson. You really let me down this time. Stop acting like 15-year-olds that have never sniffed beer before and show a little decorum. I'm not mad at you for drinking, or even getting bombed. I'm just pissed that I wrote a column making me sound like my parents. Damn you, Davidson, I hate it when I do that.

atmosphere and would rather not deal with people getting sick all over their bathroom floor. I would hardly interpret that as antisocial.

Just because some people aren't drinking on the Court, drinking in a dorm room doesn't mean they "never have fun and prefer to isolate themselves from social interaction." Again, all it means is that they find other ways and places to have fun.

We should also keep in mind that the weekends are not only opportunity for social interaction on campus. If one student spends every weekend drinking on the Court, and another student spends every weekend watching old movies with friends, those two people might still come together to organize a letter-writing campaign or help build the Wild Habitat House.

If the sub-free halls make themselves T-shirts that say "I am Evil, Repent Now" or there's a violent brawl in Commons between drinkers and non-drinkers, then I'll worry about a serious divide between social groups. Until then, we're different—so what?