

May 9, 1998

Brian Lamb
C-Span
Washington, D.C.

Dear Brian:

You may recall that, as a former U.S. Ambassador, I appeared on C-Span twice during the crisis leading to our occupation of Haiti. At present, I am the Ambassador in Residence at a private Virginia liberal arts college.

I would like to make some suggestions regarding the recent morning show featuring the California Congressman, I believe named Riggs, who sponsored the amendment to eliminate by law all affirmative action in admissions to public supported universities. Unfortunately, I do not remember the name of the young man on your staff who was the moderator. Please understand that I am not writing this as a criticism of the moderator as I know that C-Span is absolutely fair in its programming, but I do hope my comments may be helpful.

First, regarding the questioning of the Congressman: One has to be careful in accepting the statistics offered, which, of course, are designed to present the issue in the most favorable light of the proponent. It would have been well to begin with accurate statistics indicating the actual scope of the problem. As I am an alumni of UCLA, although I do not have absolutely accurate data, I do try to keep up with what is actually happening. I would have begun by defining the parameters of the issues arising out of proposition 209. What is the population breakdown of California which would be reflected as the tax paying base supporting public institutions. Black Americans constitute about 9% of the total U.S. citizen population, Asians about 6%, Latinos about 30% (not including illegals) and white Americans, about 55%, the balance being various "others". I would then have asked what the breakdown was at the university level during affirmative action. According to my information the total California state university system of eight campuses had about 160,000 students, with about 34,000 at Berkeley and 34,000 at UCLA. Of the 160,000, at the height of affirmative action, only about 2% were African American, (I will not quote Latino numbers, but they can be obtained). Taking UCLA, which I have more accurate knowledge, Asians are largest group, approximately 40-50%, or about 14,000. Of the Asians, Koreans and Chinese make up the largest ethnic groups, with Pacific Islanders, Filipinos and other south Asians far behind. At UC Irvine, with about 20,000 students, Asians make up 56% of the student body, Black Americans less than one percent.

Therefore, a precipitous 60% decline in admissions of African American citizens, excluding athletes, where African Americans tend to dominate and, of course, bring in the revenue that significantly sustains university wide funding, is very significant. Conversely, the Congressman's statement that the end of taking race as one of many factors in admissions has resulted in a marked percentage increase of African Americans at the secondary campuses was not explained. As numbers are so small any increase in numbers results in a distortedly large increase in percentages, but, in reality is not of much importance.

The interviewer then posed a hypothetical: If a white and black student were of equal qualifications and the black was chosen to improve diversity, how would you explain that to the white student who was, therefore, discriminated against on the basis of race? The interviewer did not ask how you would explain to black taxpayers that when their enrollment is less than two percent of the student body a fully qualified black is rejected, in favor of a white, or most likely in favor of the an Asian immigrant? The interviewer never explored the possibility that either

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rejected student, black or white, with qualifications for UCLA would certainly be admitted to almost any private college and probably receive substantial financial aid. That is what happened at Boalt Hall Law School when all the blacks admitted chose to attend other law schools this year. The issue then is not so much exclusion, but what kind of a public, taxpayer supported institution do we want?

I will stop here concerning the Congressman, and shift to some of questions that could have been asked the young lady representing LaRaza. Again, I would have liked to have basic parameters explored. When dealing with Hispanics, or Asians, it is necessary, I think, to define terms and numbers. Hispanics are not an ethnic group, but a linguistic group, and this should always be explained. There are at least two major ethnic groupings which should be recognized: 1. the descendants of indigenous Indians populations, sometimes mixed with Spanish - the Mexicans, and Central Americans; 2. The Caribbeans - the last pure Indian on the island of Hispanola was about 1700 and it was the same in the other islands. Therefore, although there may be some very distant Indian blood, the Caribbean Spanish speakers are of Spanish or other European lineage, and African or, as is much more prevalent, a mixture of Spanish and African - more African in the Dominican Republic (if the US test of race were applied - that is, one drop of African, equals black American, at least 90% of Cubans and Puerto Ricans would be classified as black). Hispanics can not be compared to Black Americans who are a cohesive ethnic-racial group with hundreds of years of common cultural heritage in this country.

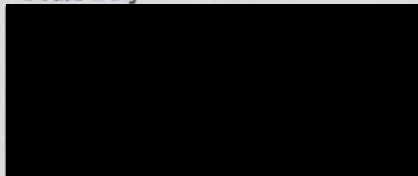
The lady from LaRaza was asked how many Hispanics were in the US - again the premise being that they are a distinct ethnic group - and she answered 28 million. This was not explored. Even if it is true, which I doubt, it is essential to distinguish between U.S. citizens, legal immigrants and illegal immigrants. If only US citizens are used as a comparative marker, the numbers would be much less, probably around 12 million.

Returning to the Congressman, whenever a member of Congress chooses to introduce legislation, that is premised on race, and which results in significant increases in racial tension and debate, we have a right to know the racial-ethnic composition of his district.

As Asians are the primary beneficiaries of the end of considering racial diversity as one factor in planning the composition of a freshman class - the numbers of Asians admitted to the California system increased about the same as the decrease in the numbers of Black Americans and Latinos - it would be well to have a representative of their community speak on the admissions issue. There are Asians in Congress and certainly many community activists and others that have political opinions. I would think the public should hear from them. I would also have liked to have heard the representative of LaRaza comment on the recent decision of the government of Mexico to grant dual citizenship to all Mexican Americans.

In any case, there is so much misinformation, needless emotion and general hysteria concerning proposition 209, and its off shoots, that it is, I think, essential to be as probing and accurate as possible. I trust this rather long letter has been useful.

Yours truly

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Washington, D.C. 20011