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Comments to the Board of Trustees of Indiana University

February 24, 1995

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As a member of the Task Force on the Underrepresentation of Women and Minorities in the university I would like to comment on the racial situation in this country. Having discussed this topic with thousands of people over the last fifty years both here and abroad, I have learned that many people quite innocently do not know the history of this issue and consequently do not understand the present situation. Nevertheless, the problem of color and race continues to hang like a millstone around the neck of every person in this country, regardless of color and race, whether on or off the university campus.

Since we are attempting to position the university for successful operation in the future, it is obviously imperative that we have a truthful, honest and realistic appraisal of where we have been and where we are, in order to arrive at where we want to be, both as an institution and as a society. It is hoped that we can avoid seeking solutions to the wrong problems or placing band-aids on the symptoms of a cancerous growth, rather than dealing with the cancerous growth itself.

One major issue, which most people continue to overlook, to ignore or to discount, is the fact that only thirty years ago the segregation laws aimed specifically at native-born black Americans were taken off the books. These segregation laws were not the result of the random and accidental actions of people on the fringes of the society. These segregation laws were the direct result of the conscious, deliberate, calculated, discussed and debated actions of the leaders of the society. These segregation laws were intended to insult, intimidate, humiliate, isolate, restrict and exclude native-born black Americans from every possible aspect of American society--cultural, educational, economic, political, geographical and social. As a result of these laws we had the absolutely insane situation where it was literally against the law to be civil, polite, friendly or nice to black Americans--whether or not one wanted to be and whether or not one was black or white.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 brought an end to the segregation laws, but the centuries-old negative and hostile attitudes and behaviors toward black Americans which caused those laws to be written in the first place and which were required by those laws in the second place did not end on January 1, 1965. The negative and hostile attitudes toward black Americans continue down to the present day because all of the people in this country over the age of thirty have spent their formative and most impressionable years directly under the influence of the



segregation laws and their attendant hostile attitudes and behaviors. Those people under the age of thirty have grown up only slightly less directly under the influence of these laws and attitudes. We now find ourselves in the very difficult position of expecting people in their thirties, forties and fifties to behave in a manner which is diametrically opposed to the behavior which they learned in their formative years and which was required of them by law. They are now expected to include black Americans in all aspects of American society with the same enthusiasm and comfort with which they formerly excluded them.

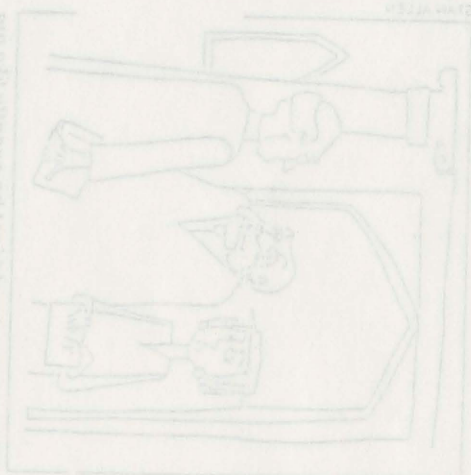
We note with alarm and wonder the scarcity of black faculty members today because we obviously overlook the fact that faculty members are created in kindergarten, in the first, second and third grades. Potential black faculty members of today not only were not being created thirty years ago, but through the segregation laws they were being actively and systematically discouraged from aspiring to, hoping for or expecting much beyond a bare existence. If we are to avoid a repeat of this cycle thirty years from now, the university will have to find ways to play a greater role and have a greater influence in the lower grades, even at the kindergarten level, in preparing future faculty members and professional staff.

The wasting of potential and talent, the blunting of aspirations and hopes and the distorting of the entire society as a result of past and present attitudes, laws and actions become apparent with a simple example. If we assume a population base consisting generally of 40% white males, 42% white females and 18% racial or ethnic minorities and if we analyze the top 1000 largest organizations in each of the various sectors of the society (business enterprises, governmental agencies, educational institutions, etc.), we find that 30 years ago every job, every position, every situation and every activity that had money, prestige, authority, responsibility or power attached to it, also had a quota attached to it. The quota was right up front, everyone knew the quota, the quota was quite simple. In essence, for anything desirable the quota was 100% white male, 0% white female and 0% minority. Now after 30 years of intense and vigorous affirmative action efforts, after 30 years of widespread and rampant reverse discrimination and after 30 years of widespread and rampant race-based and gender-based preferential treatment we have been able to make tremendous and dramatic changes in the quota. The percentage for white males has been pushed all the way down from 100% to 96%, the percentage for white females has been pushed all the way up from 0% to 3% and the percentage for minorities has skyrocketed from 0% to 1%. And all of this has been accomplished in only 30 years. Just imagine what dramatic changes will take place in the quota over the next 30 years when affirmative action has been phased out, when reverse discrimination has been stopped and when gender-based and race-based preferential treatment has ended.



The above example illustrates simply and dramatically just how far we still have to go to change the university and the society into what they should be and can be. Whatever one's views on the terminology, methodology, procedures or percentages may be, it is perfectly obvious that the status quo is totally unacceptable for the next century. It is, therefore, necessary and crucial specifically for the leaders of the university to be aware of the issues in this area, to offer both personal and institutional commitment to change attitudes and behaviors and to play a strong leadership and modeling role both for the institution and for the society in moving into the future.

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РЕПУБЛИКА СРБИЈА

Универзитет у Београду

1998