

COMMENTARY

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Editorial

Academic world, society still need some affirmative action programs

Monday saw the observation of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, so it seems a good time to look into the issue of affirmative action.

On Friday, President Bush announced that the government would come out in opposition to Michigan State University's affirmative action plan when it goes to the Supreme Court.

The president is wrong on this one, as affirmative action seems to be the only plan on the table that addresses why minorities are grossly underrepresented at most universities in the United States. For instance, here at the University, out of nearly 20,000 students, fewer than 300 are black.

Unfortunately, despite the many advances made since the civil rights movement of the 1960s, institutional racism is still alive and well in America. While people who oppose change may say "it's about slavery," it is most assuredly not. The reason that affirmative action programs were put in place originally was to counteract this scenario: The rich white man can afford to go to college and get the job as the top executive of a company and work so that his rich white children can go to the right prep schools and the right colleges; then they can get jobs as top executives of a company — and repeat ad nauseum.

On the other hand, there are the poor of all races — but especially minorities — who don't have the money to go to prep schools. For them, college plans take a distant second to attending schools, and living lives, where surviving unscathed one more day — not education — is often the goal.

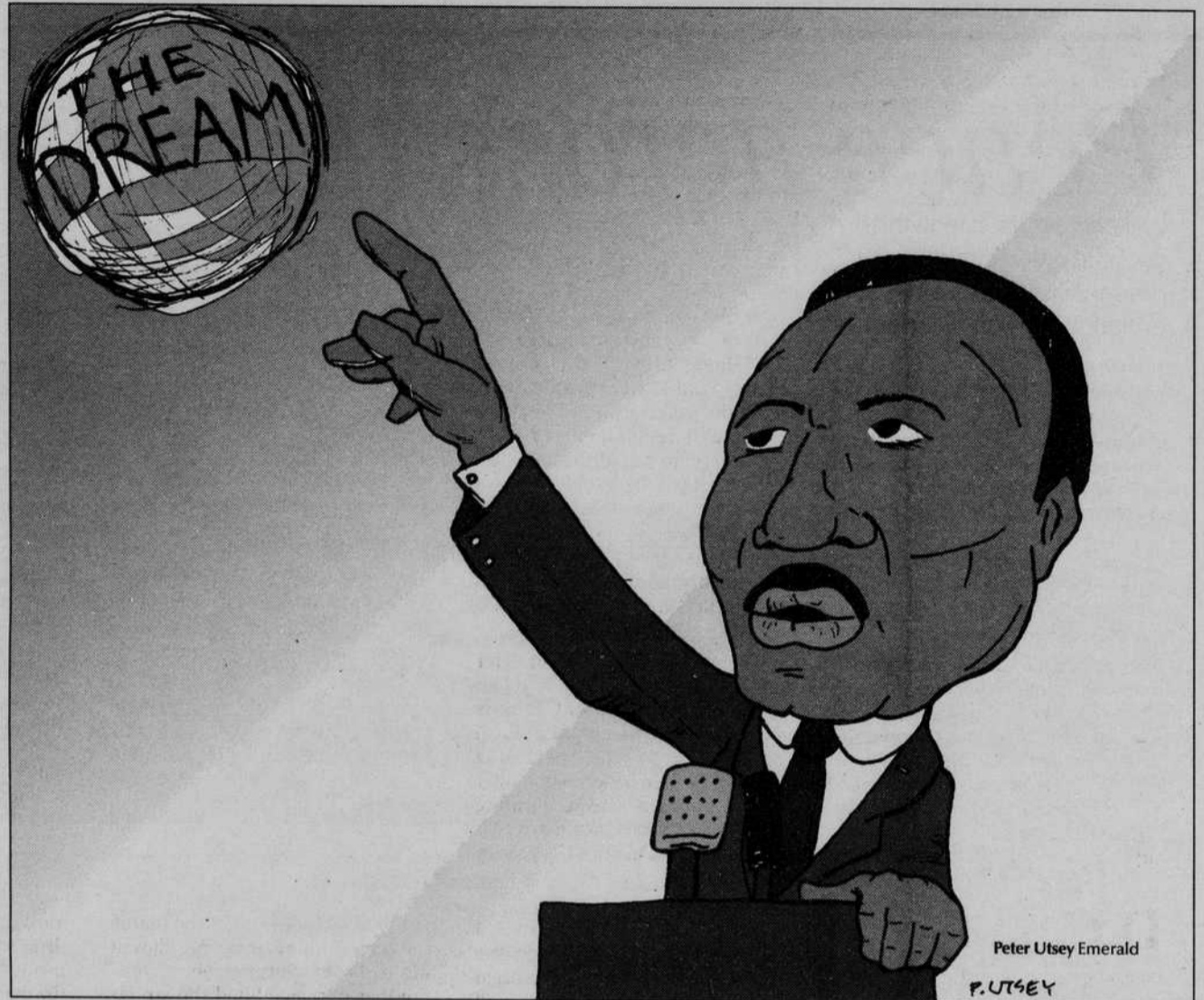
We wholeheartedly affirm, then, that race has a necessary place in determining college admissions; considering race is a compelling state interest. Our disagreement with Michigan's policy comes from the method in which it was implemented.

The point bonuses at Michigan are given for all sorts of subjective measurements that have nothing to do with academics, and this strikes us as wrong. Michigan's policy gives 20-point bonuses not only for being a minority, but for being an athlete as well. Having good marks on the SATs, on the other hand, garners only 12 points. A system that hands out bonuses on all manner of characteristics seems arbitrary.

While we may disagree with the method, *something* clearly is needed to maintain diversity on college campuses.

There is, of course, another solution to the problem, one that would eliminate concerns that opponents have with affirmative action, yet make the system open to all, not merely those with enough money: Increase federal funding for colleges, and make the admission requirements such that more people can successfully apply. In short, give the youth of this country a right to higher education.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the United States appeared to be heading in this direction. America is a rich country, and if it wants to be competitive in the global marketplace, why isn't it offering education as an investment in the future, rather than an expensive privilege? No matter how society achieves this goal, it needs to get more people — black, white, Asian, Latino — into college than the usual crop of rich white kids. It's only when all Americans have the ability to improve their minds that the country's underlying racial problems — which require affirmative action as a temporary solution — can be solved.



Peter Utsey Emerald

P. UTSEY

Still just a 'dream'

Martin Luther King Jr. had "a dream," and he shouted that dream out on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on Aug. 28, 1963. But how far have we come since he demanded that our nation hold to our creed, "that all men are created equal"?

In my opinion, we are not very far from the day those words were heard. Men are not equal. Though it is true that we are closer to living the "dream" because there are different races attending the same schools and no one is forced to sit at the back of the bus or drink from different fountains.

The "dream" has left a lasting impression on me since I first learned of it in my school lessons. Although my trials are nowhere near what others have had to endure, I know what it is like to be considered the inferior race.

I am Mexican-Irish. I grew up in a biracial home, but my mom and dad always let me know that how I succeeded was my choice, and that my brown skin was not a hindrance unless I made it one. But I also know that my parents had to endure far more

than I ever have. People didn't look too highly upon a Mexican and an Irish together.

Even to be called a "spic" is nothing compared what other races have had to go through. But, even for all of the people who treated me in a positive way, the one person who dared utter their ignorance to me with that word had an effect. I knew of the ignorance of people who believed that white people were the superior race, and with that, I believe those people will always exist.

Though "nigger" is not something I care to hear directed at someone I know, or even don't know at all, I have heard it. In passing, I heard a friend of mine call a black person that word. I stood aghast in disbelief. He had the audacity to say they were friends, and his friend was cool with it.

Needless to say, I felt the civil rights movement had been put back 20 years. Why would someone be fine with being called something of that nature? Have people gotten so used to the defaming remarks and name-calling that they just as noncha-

lantly call their "friends" names that were deemed so discriminatory and repulsive just a short while ago?

We've made strides in civil rights, yes, but we also seem to have gotten so comfortable in society with hate speech and derogatory comments that calling someone a "retard" is not considered a demeaning remark, when in fact it is.

There are minorities across the country in schools with white students. There are people of color sitting anywhere they want on the bus. We are sharing drinking fountains. But people of color will never be considered equals because there are still so many out there who feel white people are of a superior race. As long as ignorance is still voiced in hate speech and everyday conversations with "friends," we will never be equal and the "dream" will never be seen.

That is how far we've come.

Contact the columnist at salenadelacruz@dailyemerald.com. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Letter to the editor

Human Life Day is 'blatant hypocrisy'

Our glorious leader, President George W. Bush, has, in all his wisdom, declared Jan. 19th to be National Sanctity of Human Life Day — a move to be praised by all, right? Wrong. It is no coincidence

that next week happens to be the 30th anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision, which made a woman's right to choose legal in the United States.

No matter where you stand on the issue of abortion, it is unjust to support a day to respect the sanctity of human life while we are at the same time waging war around the world, killing untold innocents. This blatant hypocrisy is just an-

other example of Bush's disrespect for human life and the political opportunism he regularly displays with issues that truly have deep meaning for all people.

If we want to be honest about it, why doesn't Bush call it National Sanctity of American Conservative Life Day?

Kirk Wintermute
 junior
 history

Online poll

Each Monday, the Emerald publishes the previous week's poll results and the coming week's poll question. Visit www.dailyemerald.com to vote.

Last week: Should the NCAA adopt the "student-athletes' bill of rights"?

Results: 34 total votes
 Yes—29.4 percent, or 10 votes

No, but something similar should be instituted — 17.6 percent, or 6 votes
 No, things are fine as is — 8.8 percent, or 3 votes
 No, college sports should be spun off as minor leagues — 20.6 percent, or 7 votes
 Don't know — 5.9 percent, or 2 votes
 Leave me alone! — 17.6 percent, or 6 votes

This week: Do you agree with the University of Michigan's race-based admissions policy?

Choices: Yes — Michigan is doing the right thing; Yes — Michigan's system is better than nothing; No — Having a point system is unfair; No — Race should never be a factor; Don't know; Leave me alone

CORRECTION

The graphic accompanying Thursday's online story about student group budgets ("APALSA receives largest increase in PFC funds," ODE, Jan. 16) should have shown a total funding increase for the meeting of 14.32 percent.

The Emerald regrets the error.