

## AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: PREFERENCE, PROGRESS OR PROMISE, WHAT LIES AHEAD?

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Thank you for affording me this opportunity to share a few thoughts and observations with you on the subject of affirmative action. I recall vividly the visit of Dr. Suzanne Brainard and Dr. Susan McIntyre to my office at NASA last year. Their visit was the outcome of an inquiry on how the Office of Equal Opportunity Programs at NASA might work with WEPAN. I recognized the important contribution of WEPAN to the advancement of women in engineering and I wanted to ensure that its contribution was assured through a broader network of diverse membership.

Since that visit, I have moved to academia where the issue of affirmative action continues to rage ferociously and insanely. In an arena where rationality and civility are purported to be the dominant values, U.S. academia is at risk of becoming the forum of insanity and duplicity. I am in the eye of the storm and I accept the challenge with the clear understanding and conviction that I can make a difference in the university community. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss a subject most people are afraid to discuss even in polite audiences. That subject is affirmative action or affirmative inaction. On the eve of the 21st Century, most organizations, institutions and sectors of society are undergoing a major transformation: education is reforming, with new partnerships among leaders in education, business, service, and government; corporate America is restructuring in an effort to be globally competitive; authority in every sector is becoming more distributed; and entire nations, such as the former Soviet Union, are restructuring along these lines. I believe that Affirmative action is key to America's success in the global marketplace. However, if you had not noticed, my opinion isn't shared by everyone. Maybe we can find answers if we address the following: Is it possible for a person living in this country to attend kindergarten, elementary school, college, do post-doctoral work and never hear of our national anthem, the Statute of Liberty, or NASA? Is it possible for Majority (white) Institutions to enjoy accreditation without a visit? Is it possible for a white manager, administrator, engineer, scientist, accountant, or professor to believe that they've achieved stature and position in corporate America, academia, or government only because of their hard work and talent or brilliance? Most whites are not consciously aware of the ways in which they have benefitted from a preferential system, (a system that prefers them to the exclusion of others) that works, and has worked historically, to benefit them. If you have not surmised, we are not talking about affirmative action. We are talking about a preferential system that is built into the core and fabric of society, fueled by racism, sexism, ageism, and other forms of discrimination and "social astigmatism". All that one needs to do is look at the disproportionate number of women and people of color clustered on lower back shelves. We know that their absence from top shelf or upper shelves is not coincidental. Until this situation radically changes, lawyers will continue making millions of dollars on employment decisions from managers on issues ranging from affirmative action to managing diversity; to re-engineering for equity.

I recall the comments of a young pilot who flew across the Atlantic Ocean at the age of 12. At one point of the flight,

ice formed on the wings of the aircraft. She descended to a lower altitude, flying only 500 feet above the sea. The ice melted and she continued her history making flight. "Were you afraid?" The pilot was asked. "No, I knew what I was doing. I have confidence in what I can do," was her reply. The pilot is a wonderful junior high student, whom I meet last year named Vicki Van Meter.

Her confidence came from her 'years' of preparation and the caring network of family and friends. All of us in the business of creating a better future for the next generations have our years of preparation and our networks of caring friends, colleagues, and family members. WEPAN is such a network. We can make a difference. We all can make a positive contribution to the future. The challenge is, Are we the preferred? Have we made progress? Does the future promise equity with every change? Are we focused on our goals? What are women doing in the quest for equity, especially in the field of engineering? What is our progress? Is our eye on the prize or are we blinded by preferential behavior and isms or social astigmatism?

To answer the question of progress, we may want to turn to a paper presented to the American Society for Engineering Education in 1993 by William K. LeBold and Donna J. Lebold of Perdue University. Their paper, "An historical perspective on women engineers and a futuristic outlook" discussed the role of women in engineering for the 100-year period between 1893, when the Society for the Promotion of Engineering Education was founded, and in 1993, when the paper was presented to the SEE Annual Conference. One of the anecdotes the authors cited is worthy of repetition at this assembly even though many of you may be familiar with it. The LeBolds wrote:

The Brooklyn Bridge might not exist had it not been for Emily Warren Roebling. For eleven years she assisted with the construction after her father-in-law, a master bridge builder, became incapacitated when his leg was crushed by the bridge's timbers. Additional responsibility was given to her when her husband contracted a dread disease leaving him paralyzed... The bridge had taken thirteen years to build and twenty men had lost their lives.

The bridge was completed in May 1883, and indeed a woman was among the master builders.

The LeBolds (who were among the presenters of the WEPAN Conference in 1994 ) noted that during the first half of the 100-period, women's roles in engineering were "fraught with discrimination, rejection and inequity". However, the second half of the 100-year period brought "almost exponential changes in engineering education for women". They credited "the women's movement, civil rights, affirmative action, and greater acceptance in the technological workplace" for improving opportunities for women in engineering.

According to a recent note on the INTERNET, "the engineering student population of women in the United States has reached a plateau at around 16 percent. Less than 10 percent of the working engineering population are women." To amplify an outdated popular expression, we might say, "While we have come a long way," we have promises to keep, and miles to go before {we} sleep!" Women have achieved significant progress in engineering even though true equity-- is yet to be realized. I dare say women are uniquely qualified to redefine the equity agenda.

In a slightly different vein, Dr. Anne Petersen, National Science Foundation's Deputy Director, in an address to the NSF Conference on Women and Science last December, also spoke of the many signs of progress." There are more women in policy meetings, more women at the mastheads of corporations. The former chief scientist of NASA, France Cordova, is a woman. The former head of the Office of Management and Budget Alice Rivlin is a woman. A number of astronauts are women, in fact of significant note we celebrate 3 new African American Women in the 1996 Astronaut class at NASA. Increasingly, university presidents are women. I invite your attention to the leadership of Dr. Johnetta Cole, President of Spelman College who inspite of the rocks on the playing field she continues to "raise

the bar". We need to recognize and celebrate progress of women , for they offer a glimpse of what is possible and a marker of our progress through the unending journey to equity.

All of you know of the increasing and unending assault on affirmative action which is being touted in the public media as a wedge issue for this year's election. When I was at NASA, I directed the Equal Opportunity staff to develop an affirmative action survival kit consisting of significant articles and papers on affirmative action. For a brief three-month period last year, the staff had collected more than 80 significant articles. Recently, I asked a colleague to do a literature search on the same subject, and he reported that the task was "mission impossible." The floodgate has opened and there are literally hundreds of articles on the subject and dozens of national organizations working to support affirmative action.

In the Chronicle of Higher Education, the "trade paper" for university professionals, there are more than 100 items on "affirmative action and women" in the last 10 months, since September 1995. A sampling of the headlines for May 1996 might provide a snapshot of affirmative action as the media reports it:

Georgia may face suit over affirmative action, May 31

College leaders plan strategy to defend affirmative action, May 31

Penn State University settles lawsuit over firing of gay administrator, May 24

Black students week to enter court case on affirmative action, May 24

University of California Regents to discuss ending minority scholarships, May 17

Texas asks high court to uphold legality of affirmative action, May 10

California Bill would criminalize preferences in education, May 3

Appeals Court suspends order barring use of race in admission, may 3

Most of the articles in the May issues of the Chronicle deal with the race issue. In fact, most of the articles on affirmative action since the beginning of the debate deal with the race issue. If the primary foci of these articles are indicative of the nature of race discrimination in this Nation, we in this audience might celebrate that gender or sex discrimination has been reduced to a negligible level, no longer worthy of public attention. However, we know, mostly from our personal experiences, that sexism and sex discrimination is alive and well in this Nation. The distorted focus on the racial dimension of affirmative action is nothing more than a political ploy to distract and discount, and perhaps discredit.

Stated differently, we might ask, since women are the primary beneficiaries of affirmative action and more white women have been advanced through the implementation of affirmative action, why is the attack on affirmative action focused on its racial aspect and not its gender aspect? The answer is simple: There are more women voters than minority or minority male voters.

There is a continuing attack on affirmative action based on the theme of "preferential treatment" that minority people are given special privileges. The truth is, opponents of affirmative action are the products of preferential treatment. They were privileged from the moment they were born. What they are objecting to is that the same privileges they enjoy have to be shared with other people, people of a different colors, pigment imperatives, ethnic and religious persuasions.

Affirmative action is an outcome-based initiative and some people have argued that America should not focus

on the equality of outcome. They suggest that we should not pay attention to whether women and minority people are found in the work force or in colleges and universities, or whether they have a fair share of the public money for research and contracts. The critics of affirmative action want us to focus on the equality of input, that is bring everybody to the starting gate and let them compete on their own merits, with or without track shoes as usually required for optimal performance or just shoes. Unfortunately for many the input process also has precedent preferential treatment as some were born with seats at the table while others were born without seats or tables. More recently, in California and Texas, they have changed their minds. They don't want people different from themselves or their children to be at the starting gate. They want to TALK - I put the emphasis on the work "talk" -- they want to talk about equality of opportunity not "equalizing opportunities".

In all spheres of business, we are to focus on outcome, but in the use of human resources, we are told not to pay attention to outcome. Isn't that interesting? Interesting double talk, it certainly is!

Willie Brown, former Speaker of the California Assembly, now mayor of San Francisco, has an interesting answer to the notice of equality of opportunity. He said, "Let me tell you what you're really saying when you talk about taking away affirmative action. You have, in America, a country which for years, if they were playing poker, has been cheating in the game. They've been cheating on every card, they've been cheating on every bet, and suddenly you discover that they're cheating and you say, "Hold it." Now they have accumulated about 98 percent of all of the chips, and when you catch them cheating, what do you do? Do you say, "Okay, now you don't cheat anymore. You keep all you've acquired through cheating, but now you don't cheat anymore. You just don't cheat anymore. From now on, we're all equal. Does that make sense? Willie Brown provided an answer. He pointed out that in that lopsided situation, "all you've got to do is just keep upping the bet from the accumulation of chips you already have and I won't be equal because I can't compete with that because I don't have the same resources."

Affirmative action gives white women and minority people a chance to excel on a level playing field. I have no doubt that I could and would reach the top of civil service in my life time as I demonstrated in 1993. I am not sure I would have reached the top as fast as I have without the push of affirmative action. You see, affirmative action raises the consciousness of the work place. It makes the practice of "like hiring like" less acceptable. It makes the employer more aware of the availability of exemplar yet melanin defined talents in the global community. It is through programs such as affirmative action that more women and minority people are able to "break the glass ceiling," and to achieve economic equality, to be engaged in non-traditional occupations and to be considered for graduate and post-graduate study, and for faculty and presidential appointments.

The current debate on affirmative action offers an excellent case study on the crucial importance of being able to define the terms of the debate. Despite clear and unequivocal emphasis on targets or goals for accomplishing a more diverse work force, reflective of the diversity in America, critics of affirmative action insist on labeling targets and goals as "quota." The Republican National Chairman Haley Barbour has said, "The American People abhor discrimination. They are sick of special preferences. They are sick of quotas, giving preferential treatment because some people are part of some class." But, as Speaker Brown said, white people are where they are as a result of special preferences in the past! Preference is for some a birthright, for others a passport and for others still non-existent.

We must choose our terms for the debate and we must be on the offense. What the critics of affirmative action refuse to recognize is the privileges enjoyed by the dominant group since the founding of America. They clamor for color-blind decisions, and they cry "foul" when the outcome is of a color different than what they want. They claim to want to treat all people alike, but they favor the old boy network! They favor gender, "male" and race "white"! We need to expose this secret, while not so secret a secret it is that the attack on affirmative action is really an attack on women! We must define the terms of the debate.

In the January 24, 1995 issue of Los Angeles Times, professor Norman Matloff of UC Davis presents an interesting argument for using a lottery for selecting applicants for admission to University of California schools. He points out that "neither SAT scores nor any other numeric measure will be a very accurate predictor of future grades. It thus makes no sense to admit one applicant over another simply because the first applicant had slightly higher test

scores.” He points out, however, that numeric measures do have some power in predicting success at a school.” And he recommends that “some threshold values should be established for numerics such as SAT scores... After having set such threshold values, there is... no defensible reason for further comparison of these scores among applicants. Once the applicant pool has been narrowed in this manner, a sensible policy would be that school admissions officers use a lottery for selecting applicants.”

In addition to college admissions, some critics argued that lottery should be used for employment decisions. Many of you are probably familiar with a case known as *Taxman v. Piscataway*. Sharon Taxman, a white teacher, and Debra Williams, a Black teacher, were hired on the same day to teach business skills at Piscataway High School in New Jersey. “In 1989, the school board faced a budget deficit and decided one of them would have to go. Historically, in cases where both employees were “equally senior,” the school board flipped a coin. Not in this one. The board decided that because Williams was the only Black teacher in the business education department, she would stay and Taxman would be separated from the employ of the School district.” Taxman sued the board and the case is headed to the U.S. Supreme Court. I am not getting into a discussion of the merits of the case; I am simply pointing out that, like the critics of affirmative action, we must be free to define our terms of the debate and we might think of an alternate way to the present system of implementing affirmative action. If drawing lots or flipping a coin would give minority people and women a better chance in career advancement or college admission than the current subjective selection process, let’s give the alternate way a trial!

I have already stated that the attack on affirmative action is really a political ploy, a socio-political distraction. In the higher education arena, you are undoubtedly familiar with the negative action of the Board of Regents of University of California voting to eliminate affirmative action. Last week, a panel of the American Association of University Professors issued a report to condemn that decision stating that “the regents were motivated by partisan politics, rather than educational concerns.” Politics of race and gender again raises its ugly head. The panel noted that the regents violated the principle of shared governance which requires that the university’s administration and faculty be deeply involved in major decisions of this sort. A majority of Regents disregarded the factor that the chancellors and faculty senates at each of the university’s nine campuses had expressed support for affirmative action. Partisan politics and political play! An equation for the destruction of social justice and shared equity. Politicians are using affirmative action programs as another code word for minority bashing. We know many white men are hurting, afraid, and angry. Instead of leveling with the people, especially white males, about the challenge of the global economy and the high cost of change; instead of calming their fears and soothing their angers, politicians continue to mislead their constituents by scapegoating minority people. Who made the decision to send our country’s economic resolve to other countries? Minorities? Women? I don’t think so. Worse yet, while they are more subtle in not naming the minority group for scapegoating, it is made abundantly clear that Black people are who politicians have in mind. Thus, they exploit the fear and anger of white males; they fan up inter-racial hostility, all in the hope of winning the White House or retaining control of the Senate or the House. And, of course, these are our national leaders! People we empower to lead this Nation out of chaos and into reason and tolerance. The road to progress must always be under construction.

The fact is, even if all the jobs held by minority people are given over to the white males, they will still be discontent. The world they once knew is no more and will never be again. They must wake up and realize they cannot go home again. Yet, the desire for the mythical golden past or the “gilded age” is so powerful that they would listen to the nonsense of aspiring presidential candidates who talk of bringing us back to the America we once knew. Listen to the pious rhetoric. Are these politicians for real? And yet they have their following! As a Black woman, I certainly do not want to be brought back to the America we once knew. The pain is debilitating, overwhelming, and toxic. I have no desire to be spat upon again as I was spat on in Nashville in 1965, merely 30 years ago! I have no desire to sit at the back of a bus or to drink from a “Colored Only” fountain!

Instead of gathering and channeling the resources of the Nation, through proper taxation, America under Ronald Reagan had become a debtor nation. Interestingly, Reagan was a popular president, certainly more so than Jimmy Carter.

I wonder what it is in the American psyche that allows us to be so easily deceived. What is it in our

socialization process that we confuse form with substance, we want greatness without pain and discipleship and discernment. If a candidate can promise what we want, we elect him our president! Promise is not enough. We honor the entertainers and the jokes while our national house goes up in flame. Under Reagan, we gave tax cuts to the middle class, and the very rich, wrecked the national economy, and dismantled programs credited for sustaining life and dignity. And we said ignore the historically underrepresented, the undereducated, the underpaid and their children. Under the Republican majority, we shut down the government to score a political point. History does have a way of repeating itself, doesn't it? Instead of promoting and investing in the American people, politicians preach strangling the poor and they are re-elected time and time again! Instead of using diversity as our competitive edge in the global market, we want to compete without regard to the external reality. And we ask why we are losing ground! We ask why our fingers are slipping from the edge of the ledge of dignity and self respect.

During the presidency of Ronald Reagan, America began running up its national deficit and now his spiritual descendants are talking of a "Balanced Budget Amendment!" The trouble is, even with a so called balanced budget, America will not regain its competitive edge without a mobilized population. If "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" is not equally available to all Americans, we will be so preoccupied with internal conflicts and strife that we have no energy left for global engagement. We will be no better than a Third World nation in the 21st Century. In fact we may be closing the gap on a Nation within a Nation or a two tiered society, of haves and have nots. We need to have a new Covenant with ourselves as Americans, to make sure that decency, civility, and dignity for all people is kept alive in this Nation, that "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" is real and not an illusion, and available to all people. Only then can we turn this Nation around.

It is time that we inform White males in America that they lose ground not because they are displaced by minority people or women. They lose ground precisely because the world they knew-- we once knew-- has been replaced by a new world. The ground in fact isn't theirs, it's ours all of ours. Much through some of their decision making and because many more responsible politicians would desire it, America does not live in isolation, it lives in a world or global community. The political upheavals in Tokyo, Beijing, Moscow or Islamabad have as much impact on us as those in London, Paris, or Berlin. We are engaged in global competition and some of the jobs white males used to have in the manufacturing sector are no longer here. The white owners and managers have exported their jobs overseas, to the cheaper labor markets abroad. It is not minority people or women who say to the white men that they have lost the competitive edge; their white owners and managers say so by their actions! Blaming it on affirmative action is merely a convenient excuse, tantamount to a scuba diving exercise, submerged in fluid argument and experiences, free flowing and uncontained.

White males are losing ground because the skills they have are being replaced by machines. Automation has matured. Cars can be assembled by robots. Cash can be dispensed by an ATM. We are increasingly a wireless, paperless society. It has been estimated that 500,000 clerical and technical jobs had disappeared since 1992! It is projected that many more white collar workers -- most of whom are white men -- will become redundant by the early decades of the next century.

As the Nobel Laureate economist Wassily Leontief said, "the role of humans as the most important factor of production is bound to diminish in the same way that the role of horses in agricultural production was first diminished and then eliminated by the introduction of tractors."

The white men lose ground ironically as a result of the gains they made in the Reagan years when taxes were cut and defense spending was increased. The policies of the Reagan era were to enrich the top 20 percent at the expense of everybody else. And the top 20 percent are predominantly white men! The less fortunate white men had the illusion they were getting ahead with the tax break; they discovered lately that the quality of their life had deteriorated. Due to drastic under funding, education, public health, transportation, housing, and public safety have sunk to a lower level. They expect better, Should it surprise you that they are angry? Unfortunately, they continue to allow themselves to be misled and they direct their anger on the wrong objects! Minority people, women and mostly immigrants

Prejudice is a strange thing. You might remember the saying “My mind is made up; don’t bother me with facts.” Regardless of the heap of facts you can pour on a bigot, he or she is unlikely to be moved by them. Consider the following facts as compiled by the National Rainbow Coalition:

White males are 33% of the U.S. population, but they account for:

80% of tenured professors

80% of the U.S. House of Representatives

90% of the U.S. Senate

92% of the Forbes 400

97% of school superintendents

99.9% of professional athletic team owners

Given these data, can you tell me how white men have been disadvantaged by affirmative action? This disadvantage is numerically non-existent.

The crux of our problem is not whether white men as a group have lost ground. It is that some individual white men are not getting what they are brought up to expect to get. They have what psychologists call a “dissonance” in their life experience. They are uncomfortable. And they complain. While they argue that using race as a criterion for selection is unfair, they rely on race as the primary factor for their argument. As there are more white men as a group than the various minority groups, the crescendo of their complaint has drowned out the voices of justice and equity. We need to find a way to reach these angry and afraid white men and let them know that we are on this planet together. We are in the same boat, and bail water as we must, together to stay afloat.

Exactly a hundred years ago, in 1896, almost to the date, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of the infamous doctrine of “separate but equal” in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, barely 31 years after the end of the Civil War in 1865.

You might recall that in 1865 and 1868, the United States ratified the 13th and the 14th Amendments establishing the rights of citizenship of former slaves. In 1870, the 15th Amendment was ratified, prohibiting race, color, or previous condition of servitude as grounds for denying or abridging the rights of citizens to vote. These amendments were ratified during Reconstruction. However, even as Blacks were empowered, Black Codes were introduced in the Southern States. The Black Codes, you might remember from U.S. history, were the laws that restricted Black economic options and thus forced them to continue working as plantation laborers. Did we need, do we need Affirmative action? of course we do, yet we push Human rights abroad.

The Compromise of 1877 allowed Rutherford Hayes to assume the presidency. In return, the Republicans agreed not to challenge Democrats’ control of South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana. The Compromise of 1877 ended the Reconstruction. Federal troops were withdrawn from the South. In the last two decades of the 19th Century, Blacks were disenfranchised and stripped of other rights through the enactment of Jim Crow laws in the South. The infamous “*Plessy v. Ferguson*” decision in 1896 was merely a reflection of the tenor of the time. The gains of Black people in the Reconstruction period were wiped out 31 years after the end of the Civil War. California and Congress are about set to abolish affirmative action barely 30 years after the beginning of that program! History does have a tendency to repeat itself! Or, perhaps I should say, we have a tendency to repeat history.

What can we do about this? What should we do about this? For a start, we must repudiate efforts that exploit the fear and anxiety of people. We need moral leadership. We cannot count on Congress or the Supreme Court to provide it. We have to define this moral compass for ourselves. We must speak up when our so-called leaders are disseminating misinformation, marketing malice and social disgust.

I think it is absolutely essential that we maintain the vitality of our network of associations, the civil rights groups that serve as the conscience of this Nation and help won the hard fought battles, the professional groups such as WEPAN that ensure the inclusion of the hitherto excluded, the community groups that monitor and support the well being of all people. I know all of us are busy. All of us have more than we can do within our allotted time. I also know

that I find time to do that which I feel is important. If we do not find time to speak up when vital issues are being discussed, we have ourselves to blame for the vanishing opportunities. You need to write to your local papers, express your opinions. Weigh in!

I contend that what lies ahead is a rough and rocky road. I share Lani Guinier's viewpoint, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania School of Law, whose nomination to head the civil rights division of the Justice Department in June 1993, was withdrawn after she came under fire from conservatives. "The leadership vacuum from both the Supreme Court and the Political institutions is creating a void --- Nature abhors a vacuum, and into that vacuum may move the most extreme voices on each side." This leads me to believe that greater conflict and confusion over affirmative action is inevitable. Rest assured the history of exclusion, isolation, disdain, disenfranchisement of some minority people guarantees that we commit our individual attention to equity in a real sense as the retreats from the journey to equity and fairness will be few. Just like Dr. Suess in Bartholomew and the 500 Hats, some people history requires that they "keep coming". Uncompromised Pride and one peoples history will usually sustain you.

I also think that it is essential for you to contact your representative and senator, both at the national and state levels, and share your concerns with them. They may not recognize your name, but they are still your representatives. Make them responsible, make them accountable. Tell them about the importance of diversity in global competition. Get in touch with the committees that have oversight of science and technology and issues of importance to women and professionals. Urge them to provide adequate investment for the future. Urge them to pay more attention to waste management instead of wasting resources. As an aside, I would offer a challenge to you as engineers. You need to use your cerebral power to develop the tools and the systems to manage organic and inorganic wastes. Environmental pollution, social pollution and environmental racism are alarming problems, symbols of waste confronting the world. As scientists, you have an obligation to find a solution to waste elimination.

Indeed the most potent argument for affirmative action is that people of a different background can bring to the table a different perspective which can generate new vitality and resiliency. In the natural world, we know that biodiversity is critical to the survival of a species. It is equally true in our social world. The challenge confronting us is what kind of contribution we make after we have arrived. As women engineers, how have you contributed to the development of your profession? What business are you engaged in? To what extent have you made a difference and what kind of difference do you make? What are your unique contributions in terms of perspective and methodology? In the course of reaching where we are, have we been masculinized or become androgynous (neither male or female)? Can we think like a male and still maintain our femininity? These are questions you need to ask and your answers might well define the future of affirmative action.

Stripped of all data and rationale, affirmative action is ultimately a moral issue. It is the attempt of a society to cure itself of a virulent disease known as the R-S complex of racism and sexism and to restore a fuller measure of health to the body politic. Racism and sexism are fundamentally issues of power and control. As women and as professionals, we can bring to the diagnosis and treatment of the disease with our unique antidote, antigen, and antibody. We must demonstrate how we share power, share control share vision and share leadership. Collectively, we are the demonstration that we can be whole. We do not need to be sickened with racism and sexism. And as we live and grow through the swarm and yet not be contaminated, we show the world the basic truth of diversity. We are different yet we are the same and we can cure our society from its penchant for self-destruction.

Therefore, affirmative action is far from being dead. Globalization is forcing us to learn, to innovate, and to operate with far greater quality and excellence in order to compete successfully in the world global marketplace. To achieve world-class performance standards, we will have to better respect and honor the diversity of individuals, and empower them in their quest to maximize their talent, creativity, and whole potential. The 21st Century will need to develop whole new percepts about the value of every human being. While affirmative action alone is not enough to meet this challenge, it does serve a vital role in helping our generation establish new role models for our children, who will then live in a society which appreciates both genders and the broad spectrum of all people.



We have promises to keep and miles to go before we sleep. The drum beats we hear from the distant; they are not the noisy gongs or the sounding cymbals of the new Congress nor the babbles of the misled multitude. The drum beats we hear are the steady beats of human dignity, justice, and equality. Let us march together, and steadily, to the distant drum beats! If we are going to live together in this world we must have a passion for equity and fairness.

Let us understand the broad implications of preference, understand and define well our progress and heed our promise not to fail as a Nation, at fairness. With our collective compass we will move in the right direction, with the right people for the right reasons Diversity is the application of democracy and I believe therefore life's greatest opportunity for equity and peace. Perhaps diverse people represent life's greatest symphony. With a moral compass, hope lies ahead.

While our talent bank is exponentially fuller than it was 20 or 30 years ago. It is encouraging to note that there is a pool of African American and other minority college graduates and it has increased in the last decade. Women have made impressive gains in entering the labor force, especially white females. These gains can be traced to affirmative action.

I must also caution you to continue to revisit the Glass Ceiling issues. According to the Glass Ceiling Report, a larger proportion of women and minorities continue to be locked into low wage, low prestige, and dead-end jobs that are not connected to any career ladder. Equally discouraging is the finding that equal educational attainment does not guarantee that Black men and women in particular are getting through the glass ceiling or they are fairly compensated. We have long been aware that equal educational attainment does not level the playing field for Black men and women. Although Black female occupational mobility shows an increase since 1964, Black women are still the most under represented group in executive, administrative, and managerial occupations on any educational level, when compared to Black men and white non-Hispanic men and women. While Black men and women with college degrees are more likely to be in executive, managerial, and administrative positions than Black men and women without degrees, the pattern for white women indicates a nearly equal proportion of white women with only high school education in the same top positions.

In 1995, minority and women correspondents were less visible on the network news program than in 1994, according to a new study by the center for Media and Public Affairs. This is the first time the percentage has dropped since the Center began assembling annual data in 1988. Last year, minority correspondents reported 12.5 percent of all news items on ABC, CBS, and NBC news shows, compared with 14 percent in 1994. Women reported 21 percent, down from 25 percent. (News and Notes, "Less diversity on camera," The Bergen Record, Thursday, February 15, 1996).

We also know that women-- especially white women-- are bridging the salary gap with men, but black and Hispanic women lag behind. Over the past 15 years, the gap in men's and women's pay has narrowed. Today, women earn 76.4 cents for every dollar earned by men, vs. 62.5 cents in 1979. But Black women earn only 66 cents of every dollar men earn, and Hispanic women earn 58 cents. (Gary and Susan Berger, "Women could be big losers if affirmative action falls,"

As I close I share a much loved quote.

"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having "new eyes." - Marcel Post with these "New Eyes".

We must ask America, "Oh say can you see real equity". Let's stay the course and make the moral difference.

