



Written by [Walter E. Williams](#) on July 23, 2014

Do Blacks Need Favors?

Earlier this month, the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act was celebrated. During the act's legislative debate, then-Sen. Hubert Humphrey, responding to predictions, promised, "I'll eat my hat if this leads to racial quotas." I don't know whether Humphrey got around to keeping his promise, but here's my question: Is it within the capacity of black Americans to make it in this society without the special favors variously called racial preferences, quotas, affirmative action and race-sensitive policies? What might a "yes" answer to that question assume and imply about blacks? Likewise, what would a "no" answer assume and imply? Let's look at it.



There are some areas of black life in which excellence can be found without the slightest hint of racial preferences. Young blacks dominate basketball, football and some track-and-field events despite the fact that there has been a history of gross racial discrimination in those activities. Blacks are also prominent in several areas of the entertainment industry. Those observations mean that racial discrimination alone is not an insurmountable barrier to success. By the way, I can't think of any two fields with more ruthless competition.

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You say, "OK, Williams, everyone knows about the success of blacks in sports and entertainment, but what about the intellectual arena?" A few inner-city junior high and high schools have produced black champion chess players, schools such as Philadelphia's Roberts Vaux High School and New York's Edward R. Murrow High School. Last year, two black teens — from Intermediate School 318 Eugenio Maria de Hostos in Brooklyn, New York — won the national high-school chess championship. All of this is in addition to quite a few black international masters and grandmasters in chess. Moreover, there's a long list of former and current black inventors and scientists. So there's no question that black people have the capacity to compete intellectually.

Civil rights organizations and their progressive allies, who all but suggest that blacks cannot achieve unless they are given special privileges, grossly insult and demean black people. But worse than that, when civil rights organizations and their progressive allies pursue special privileges for blacks in college admissions and when they attack academic performance standards as racially discriminatory, they are aiding and abetting an education establishment that delivers fraudulent education. They let educators off the hook, thereby enabling them to continue to produce educational fraud.

You say, "What do you mean by educational fraud, Williams?" There are many inputs to education that are beyond the control of educators, such as poor home environment, derelict parental oversight and students with minds alien and hostile to the education process. But there's one thing entirely within the control of the education establishment. That is the conferral of a high-school diploma. When a school



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confers a diploma upon a student, it attests that the student has mastered the 12th-grade levels of reading, writing and arithmetic. If, in fact, the student cannot perform at the seventh- or eighth-grade levels, the school has committed gross fraud. Even worse is the fact that black people, including those holding fraudulent diplomas, are completely unaware. It has absolutely nothing to do with racial discrimination. In fact, black education is the worst in cities where blacks have been the mayor, chief of police and superintendent of schools and where most of the teachers and principals are black.

Racial preferences in college admissions give elementary schools, middle schools and high schools a free hand to continue their destructive educational policy. If colleges did not have special admissions practices for black students, there would be far fewer blacks in colleges, and the fraud would be more apparent to parents. They might begin to ask why so many blacks with high-school diplomas could not get into college.

If the civil rights establishment and the progressives have their way, blacks will have to rely on special privileges in perpetuity.

Walter E. Williams is a professor of economics at George Mason University. To find out more about Walter E. Williams and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com.

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