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in my opinion

"Black like me. . ."

For the past several months, I have been a member of the black race according to the computers of the National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) and the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB). During this time I was considered for a number of scholarships and recruited as a minority student by over 30 colleges and universities. Only recently have the "machines" learned differently: I am caucasian.

The computers did not make a mistake; I misled them. I was not trying to "lie" my way into a college or a scholarship; my purpose was to openly challenge what I feel is reverse discrimination.

Discrimination, in itself, is not necessarily immoral or illegal. By this, I mean that if a scholarship is given to the intelligent, then, one might argue that the unintelligent are being "discriminated" against. Discrimination based on natural ability, however, is not unjust. Our legal system, I feel, must only guarantee each man an equal opportunity to succeed.

The NMSC awards a scholarship based primarily on race. Unlike their standard National Merit Scholarship, which is only given to the top one and one half percent of college-bound students, they also administer the National Achievement Scholarship Program for Outstanding Negro Students. In striking contrast to the first, the Negro Scholarship is awarded to blacks scoring as low as the 86th percentile. Such a program is not discriminating on a valid criteria, like intelligence, but

on an arbitrary standard which abrogates man's right for an equal opportunity.

Many people, however, argue that existing circumstances in America justify, in this instance, discrimination; 1) American society has held the black labor force down unfairly for many years. This has created, in effect, a special pool of cheap labor, 2) the majority of blacks suffer severe handicaps from going to second-rate schools, 3) even today the remnants of prejudiced America still limit the black man's job opportunities.

Many people feel that these oppressions must be counterbalanced; that it is necessary to lean over backwards to give black people a more equal opportunity to succeed. However, if you will excuse the cliché, —"Two wrongs don't make a right." If our legal system will accept balancing injustice against injustice, we will move away from ultimate equality and not toward it. We should correct existing injustices, not create more.

Even from a more practical analysis the Negro scholarship program has several flaws:

1) A few blacks are capable of sending their children to college. To arbitrarily give them money is wasteful. There are undoubtedly other disadvantaged youths who could make better use of it.

2) Along with the many blacks, there are a great number of whites and other minorities that suffer the same disadvantage of going to inferior schools. To deprive these students of the opportunity for a scholarship simply because of their race is also unjust.

3) Blacks are not the only minority that are somewhat confined by economic and social conditions to the lower class. If we wish to balance the social strata, we should encourage the entire class and not just the most vocal or visible part of it.

The main concern that I have with special minority programs is that they seem to represent a general trend moving away from the protection of an individual's rights. The present system seeks an individual's rights by "lumping" the individual into a larger group and then trying to secure the group's rights. This new "group consciousness" has manifested itself in many areas outside the college admission's program.

A Harvard sociologist, Nathan Glazer, recently has written a book about this specific issue. In "Affirmative Discrimination," Glazer describes a definite evolution in the "Affirmative Action" programs for equal rights. He cites a change from the individualistic policies of the early sixties, to those of today. In 1964 and '65 the programs were directed at individual injustices; they concentrated on changing voting laws, and unfair housing practices. Today the program consists of quotas, statistical parity, and more stringent governmental controls.

Redressing the discrimination of the black man in America is a complicated and serious matter. There is no clear-cut answer, but I do challenge the collective trend of today. A better guideline, I believe, is to deal with each person as an individual, and not as a statistic or hard number.