

MINORITY REPORT

The Education Issue

March 2010

This paper aims to spread cultural awareness of the challenges facing historically disadvantaged and ethnically underrepresented groups in the IMSA community and the world as a whole. We believe that with the proliferation of knowledge through words, we can confront the stereotypes facing these groups and change commonly held misconceptions.



Affirmative Action: Diversity for Some, A Disadvantage to Others

By Shawon Jackson



“Pssh...you don’t need a 4.0 GPA to get into college,” my friend tells me on our break during the PSATs, “You’re

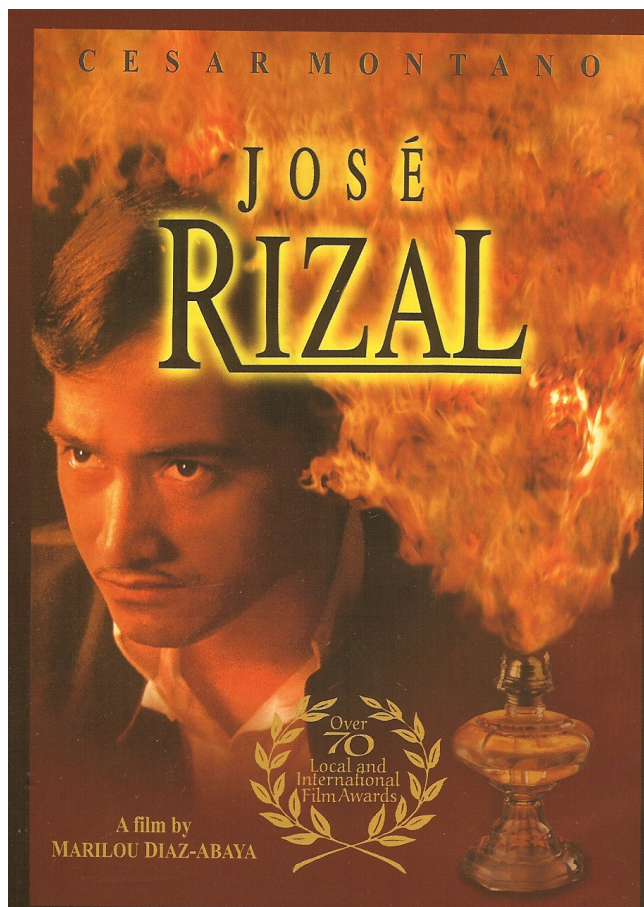
black.” I pondered these words for several days, wondering how other minority students would feel about this statement. Do they appreciate the diversity that universities are trying to achieve? Or does Affirmative Action send the message that minorities are not as competent as other races? To answer these questions, I created a brief survey, and asked ten minority seniors to complete it online

using Survey Monkey. To clarify, the minorities who took this survey were of African or Hispanic descent.

To begin, students were asked if they believed race should be considered in the college admission process. 70% responded yes. At the same time, however, 80% of the participants admitted that they believe that they are receiving special treatment because of

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Courtesy of www.answers.com (left), www.mahasamusic.com (right), www.benedu.wordpress.com (cover)



Filipino culture dates back to the middle of the 16th century. Since its discovery by Spanish explorer Ruy López de Villalobos, the Philippine Islands have been heavily influenced by Spanish customs. Pictured at the left is the cover of the biographic movie about the life of Filipino revolutionary, Jose Rizal. Below is the flag of the Philippine Islands.



Filipinos on Education

By Reichert Zalameda



For each nationality, there is a stereotype. For Asians and Pacific Islanders, it is the myth that they are all academically gifted. Even from a young age, my friends would always ask me why I worked so hard in school. While the rest of my classmates in elementary school were playing outside, I would be tediously working on my homework. When they would ask me that question, I would simply respond, “Because my parents make me.” It was a simple reply, but I honestly did not know why I had to work so hard. However, as I grew older and made trips to visit

my family in the Philippines, I came across the real answer. Filipinos value education because it is the reason why a group of 7,107 islands is called a country today.

During Spanish rule, the Filipinos were downtrodden and oppressed in every way. Socially, you could never be as good as a Spaniard, no matter how affluent you were. In academia, Filipinos were discriminated against by Spanish teachers, who compared the size of Filipino brains to their height as seen in the biographical film *Jose Rizal*. Many wanted to overthrow the Spanish rulers and there were attempts at revolutions, but none were effective. The various islands were not united and thus could not organize an effective revolution. Many realized that the only way to unite the Filipinos under a common cause was to educate them. Jose Rizal, the man who inadvertently spurred rebellion against Spanish colonizers through his

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The Academic Achievement Gap in the African-American Culture

By Omotayo Balogun

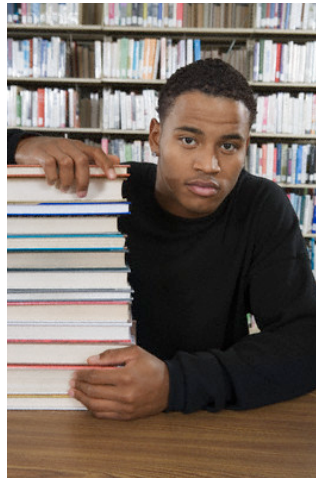
Cultural divides are apparent within nearly every large racial group, but nowhere are they more apparent than in the African-American community. Africans, referring to the inhabitants of the continent of Africa, and African-Americans, referring to the descendants of African slaves in America, have long been seen as two very different, independent cultures. Unlike other cultural communities, this divide extends far beyond unkind sentiments. This divide is religious, economic, and most importantly for the purposes of this article, academic.

According to a study published in the American Journal of Education, “one quarter of black college freshmen [are] immigrants from Africa, rather than native born.” Also, 40% of black Ivy League students are African immigrants. In fact, some statistics show that the academic achievements of African immigrants and the children of African immigrants are equivalent to and in some cases surpass the academic achievements of Asian and Asian American students. The same can not be said for African-American students.

The rift in the academic performance of those who are African and those who are African-American is not new. Educators have long tried to

understand the achievement gap between the two groups. Some educators speculate that the difference is strictly cultural. They believe that Africans have such high academic achievement because the

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struggles of their homeland cause them to develop fierce determination. When these Africans immigrate to America, they come in hopes of getting a better education and job. These immigrants bring with them this fierce sense of determination and apply it to their studies. Their determination, as one would imagine, works to their advantage, and they usually do well for themselves in the U.S. African Americans, on the other hand, are negatively influenced by culture. Researchers speculate that because African Americans have a history of being known as second class citizens, their morale and therefore their ability to do well

academically has been destroyed. Because African immigrants don't share the same history of slavery and oppression, it is much easier for them to do well academically.

As a Nigerian immigrant, I myself agree with the claims of educators about the values and work ethic of African immigrants leading to academic success in the U.S. Also, some of the African-Americans I have spoken to agree with the educators' claims about their demoralizing past leading to deficient academic achievement in their community. However, these African-Americans claim that their past does not give them or other blacks cause to destroy their future of their race. They urge African-Americans to “wake up” and smell the coffee. While they are proud of the achievements made by their immigrant counterparts, they feel that African-Americans have not taken full advantage of the opportunities offered to them. I feel as if some of the success of African immigrants in this country is due to resources originally intended for African-Americans. Indeed, researchers and educators alike can testify that Affirmative Action and other educational opportunities

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An Appraisal of the State of Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

By Bayo Bankole



Considering that the media concerning Africa in the western world revolves mostly around the status of certain especially underdeveloped regions, it might be a surprise to some readers that education is one of the foremost problems afflicting most African states. Many African nations, such as Burundi and Senegal, have already promised free primary and secondary education to their citizens. However, it is easy to see that these promises are little more than illusions which fail to address the problems facing modern African states. The literacy rates for Burundi and Senegal are 59.3 and 39.3 percent, respectively. Obviously the free and compulsory education offered in both states is failing to address the basic problem of illiteracy. This

“Education in Africa is a system in which all the rules regarding conventional methods of teaching are rendered defunct”

Bayo Bankole

unfortunate story has repeated itself across the entire continent.

Education in Africa is a system in which all the rules regarding conventional methods of teaching are rendered defunct. State-run schools all the way from elementary to universities are underfunded and riddled with corruption, while private schools, some of which are very good, have prices that are excessively. In addition, due to a badly regulated practice many schools are little more than scams. In the end, the biggest loser is the average African child. On top of the other barriers to their success, African children have to put up with sub-standard schooling on the parts of state and private providers.

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Because many African nations want to give all citizens access to education, governments have promised to provide free schooling. However, the education that students receive is sub-par and inadequate.



Courtesy of www.benedu.wordpress.com

Courtesy of www.south-africa-tours-and-travel.com

Affirmative Action

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Affirmative Action. Furthermore, the participants were asked if they would leave the ‘race’ portion of their college application unanswered and lose the presumed benefit of Affirmative Action. All of the participants responded that they would *not* leave this portion unanswered. Reasons given for this decision ranged from “feel[ing] obligated” to declare their race to admitting that they know they “have an advantage” because of their race. One student stated that their race (African-American) “...adds another positive thing to [his/her] application.”

Another reason why some of the participants agree with Affirmative Action is because they value diversity. The average percentage of minorities enrolled in the institutions IMSA students participating in this survey applied to is merely 5-10%. For this reason, students who took this survey may feel it is beneficial to support Affirmative Action, because it ensures that all races are represented on a college campus, especially at schools that already have a low percentage of minorities.

In addition, minority students who took the survey tend to gravitate towards schools with a higher percentage of minorities when making their final decision. As alluded to earlier, diversity is valued by many minorities, and – as one student stated – they do not “want to feel like an outcast” when they attend college. One student eloquently describes the importance of diversity by stating:

“College is all about developing/enriching our education and discovering who we are as people. With such exposure to different lifestyles, I believe that we as students are given more perspectives on life, thus helping us figure out which perspectives and ideas we ourselves want to follow.”

After conducting this survey, I found myself thinking about the statement that initially motivated my curiosity: “You don’t need a 4.0 GPA to get into college – you’re black.” When I first heard this statement, I felt that it would be wrong for me to fill in the ‘race’ portion of my college application, and that I would be hurting my peers in the college admissions process. The participants of my survey, on the other hand, generally believed that Affirmative Action was useful in that it promotes diversity. While I agree with this statement, I still feel that colleges should not give special treatment to minorities just to ensure they meet a certain quota. In conclusion, all participants expressed their appreciation for diversity, and I value it, too. The difference in opinion arises when considering how to achieve this diversity. Some believe that Affirmative Action is a plausible solution and reap the “...benefit[s] from being a minority...” and others, like myself, are hesitant to do so because we believe this advantage is “...at the expense of another person who isn’t a minority.”



Many people are split over the affirmative action debate. Some think it gives opportunities to those who would otherwise not have them. Still others believe that it is unfair to non-minorities. What do you think?

Courtesy of www.npaper-wchaa.com

Filipinos on Education

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writing, sought to convince Filipinos that the only way to end Spanish persecution was to show the Spanish that the Filipinos were as good as them. He traveled to Europe to show exactly this. There were famous Filipinos in the arts and the academic world. In the end, the Spanish arrested and executed Rizal because of the revolutionary beliefs he professed in his novels. However, his death incited the Filipino people and they finally revolted against the Spanish. This was not only a revolution in the sense of battles. It also changed the way Filipinos looked at themselves. No longer were they persecuted. Well-known Filipino artists and writers who were exiled in Europe could now come out of hiding and return home. Education not only served as a revolutionary factor, but also an equalizing one. For the first time, Filipinos were not inferior to any other race, but equal to them.

Education brought the Philippines out of poverty before and many Filipinos still think that it can do the same today. This is the reason why Filipinos see education as a valuable thing. Many children have to trek through jungles for miles just to get to the nearest classroom. This sounds like a gross exaggeration, but sadly it is true in many parts of the Philippines. In the Philippines, many children cannot go to school for one of two main reasons. Either the parents cannot pay for the education of their children while also paying for daily living, or there is no school where the family lives. The latter is commonly true of families living in the rural areas of the Philippines. In this respect, the lack of education in rural areas is a divisive factor in the Philippines. This is why the government is striving to establish more schools and send more teachers to those areas.



Filipino revolutionary, Jose Rizal worked to better the social standing of his people by inspiring them to be as good as the Spaniards who were persecuting them.

Courtesy of www.alpsaguado.com

Education in the Philippines is not a commodity like it is in the United States. Many parents sacrifice food and money just so their children can go to school. This issue has affected me personally. Some of my cousins would not be here if my uncle had not given up his own schooling so his little brother could have a chance. This family love is the only reason why my uncle is in America today. This is why I sometimes become angry when I hear of people dropping out of high school or college. Although I know school is not for everybody, whenever I see those people, I am reminded of the thousands of children in the Philippines who would give anything to go to school for even one day. And this is also the reason why many Filipinos become teachers. Since they received an education, they want to give back to those who are not as fortunate as they were. With the current turbulent state of the Philippines, many believe that education will again be the proponent for change. This is why Filipinos in America are so strict about school. They know what it is like in the Philippines.

Education, something that even I have learned to take for granted, is a treasure for people in the Philippines and Filipinos living in America. In the Philippines, it is a cause of major concern. In America Filipinos work hard, remembering the gift they have been given. It is not only a symbol of where we come from, but also of where we are going. It presents new opportunities for Filipinos everywhere. However, education is not limited by race or culture. It should be the dream of all people. In the words of the great Dr. Jose Rizal, “Genius has no country. It blossoms everywhere. Genius is like the light, the air. It is the heritage of all.”

The State of Education in Africa

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In regards to the universities, a completely different set of problems emerges. The universities are more often than not involved with local and national politics. This presents a major problem as political corruption is a significant problem in African states. Students can be allowed into schools on a basis of political affiliation alone, and their behavior on campus can run more or less unchecked. This oversight in the system has fomented the creation of dangerous groups such as the Secret Cult Boys of the University of Benin who regularly kill personal enemies and terrorize their fellow students. In addition, the state of universities in certain African countries has degenerated in recent years due to political instability and mismanagement. This has driven some students to distrust the system and fall prey to overseas scams. The number of Nigerian students trapped in Malaysia and Indonesia reflects this unfortunate phenomenon.

However, the state of education in Africa is not as grim as it may sound initially. The quality of education in select private elementary and secondary schools can be considered world class (the author of this article can attest to that). The teachers in these institutions are completely devoted to their students and they teach to the best of their ability. In addition, certain universities have partnered with American schools in order to improve the services they offer. One such partnership is between the University of Science and Technology in Kano and the University of Wisconsin. African universities have also graduated individuals who work as doctors and engineers throughout Europe and the United States.



Courtesy of www.words-sounds-images.com

The story of education in Africa cannot be condensed into any one overarching generalization. In the same city one school could barely have enough money to keep a roof over the students it serves and across the street another school could be educating its students at the same level of a similar school in Europe. The same universities have graduated students who have killed in cold blood and students who have gone on to lead successful careers in the western world. However, one important conclusion in regards to the state of education in Africa can be made. The majority of African students do not have access to the quality of schooling that their European and American counterparts take for granted. There are no immediately apparent panaceas to the maelstrom of administrative inefficiency, political intrigue, student and teacher delinquency, and bureaucratic nonchalance. However, to abandon the prospect of creating sustainable educational infrastructure in Africa would be counterproductive. Instead, the model of successful African schools must be followed and more regulations put on underperforming locals. However, if the general trend is to be reversed, even more menacing problems such as institutionalized corruption and administrative inefficiencies must first be addressed.

The Academic Achievement Gap Continued from pg. 3

have been beneficial to African immigrants. This is mostly because the determination of immigrants makes them more likely to seek out and utilize these resources. There are many educational opportunities in this country dedicated to helping the African-Americans in the academic world. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the black community

to utilize their educational resources to achieve academic success.

It is my sincere hope that the African-American community finally takes advantage of the opportunities which the U.S. has to offer. After all, their immigrant counterparts have, and they seem to be doing all right for themselves.

A Note from the Editor Opening Lines of Communication

By Bernice Fokum

The beauty of the Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy is the fact that even though we all hail from diverse backgrounds, we are united by education. Ultimately, we are all here to learn and prepare ourselves to be pioneers once we leave.

This issue of the IMSA Minority Report touches on a few of the topics in the multi-faceted arena of education. The achievement gap in the African-American community continues to incite a great divide between Black Americans and the children of African immigrants. First and second-generation Africans in many cases outperform their Black American peers in the classroom. Omotayo Balogun seeks to answer the question: Is there truly a difference between those with close ties to the motherland and those that may trace their ancestry to Black American slaves? Two featured articles analyze some of the education systems and ideals that are found in other parts of the world. In *A Concise Appraisal of the State of Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Mr. Bankole explores the

strengths and weaknesses of the schools in Africa, while Reichert Zalameda discusses some of the contributing factors of the Filipino attitude towards education. Our cover story, *Affirmative Action: Diversity for Some, A Disadvantage to Others*, is sure to spark thoughtful conversation and consideration as Shawon Jackson looks at the attitudes that certain students have about the presumed advantage that affirmative action gives to Minority students.

The goal of the Minority Report staff, as always, is to present a new perspective to the IMSA community. Why do some groups of people consistently underperform in the arena of academics? Do minority populations truly hold an advantage in the college selection process? What is the state of education in the Diaspora? Education and its effect on the Minority population is something that affects all of us. I hope that this issue of the Minority Report provides a fresh outlook on something that many of us tend to take for granted.

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