

Generosity without Sacrifice

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The U.S. Supreme Court decision in the case of the New Haven, Connecticut firefighters who were passed over for promotions because of their race – all but one of the 19 are white; the other, Latino – is raising questions about the very legitimacy of affirmative action. The conversation that will flow from these questions will not be easy. Race, after all, is the wound that never quite seems to heal in America.

But if we continue down this old, bumpy road, where certain people get affirmative action “points” because of their race and ethnicity, it will be a long, long time before we arrive at our destination – the kind of equality, affirmative action supporters are striving for. And this is why it’s time for a radical change in our thinking.

Which brings us to my plan.

I have devised a plan that will bring much more diversity into the workplace and into our universities and into the culture at large without the pain and discontent that has been inflicted by the old affirmative action plan. My plan represents real change – change we can believe in. Because with my plan we will see results not in another 10 or 20 or 30 years, but literally overnight!

Here’s how it works: every white person in America who thinks affirmative action based on race and ethnicity is a good idea, an idea that will make America a better place, *voluntarily gives up his and her job on one and only one condition: that they be replaced by someone who is not white!*

I know, I know. It’s brilliant. In the blink of an eye, my plan would achieve the kind of equality the architects of affirmative action have not been able to achieve in the past

40 years. My plan would immediately bring many more black Americans into the workplace, many more Latinos too, and many other minorities. It would bring more minority kids into our colleges, thanks to all those idealistic white kids who think we need more diversity on campus, and therefore would voluntarily give up their seats in the classroom for minority students who didn't make the cut the first time around.

I tried my idea out on two executives in a world I know a little something about – TV News. I explained to them, in two separate conversations, how the plan would work. I told them that since they were proponents of affirmative action, they would be among the white folks who would be quitting their jobs so that black folks and other minorities could take their place. Let's just say they were not amused. These are two white men who speak glowingly of affirmative action (and maybe even get bonuses based on the number of minority workers they hire) yet were not willing to make a sacrifice – their own jobs – for a better, more diverse America. Someone needs to tell these titans of business and morality that generosity without sacrifice is suspect.

As for those city officials in New Haven: They would not give the firemen their promotions simply because no black candidates passed the test. These city officials were more than willing to discriminate solely on the bases of the firefighters' skin color. This is the kind of racism white liberals can live with because it's the kind that makes them feel good about themselves.

So, to show their dedication to equality, those white city officials should resign, immediately. They should let black and other minorities take their place. It's the decent thing to do, isn't it?

The Supreme Court ruling was one of those close ones. Five justices said *Ricci vs. New Haven*, as the case was called, was a clear-cut case of racial discrimination in violation of the

United States Constitution. Here's an idea for the four white liberals who weren't troubled by such obvious racism: Resign. Make room for a few more wise Latina women and other wise minority justices. It's the honorable thing to do.