

How to Talk About Ferguson

Peter Alexander Bresnan
Guest Contributor

In the most recent wave of racially-focused campus activism, many have posed an excellent suggestion: “Let’s talk about Ferguson.” Although I’ve found many of the self-proclaimed ‘Movement’s’ postings to be inflammatory and reductive—though undoubtedly well-intentioned—this one strikes me as particularly valuable, since it really aims to engage our community in a conversation that is absolutely worth having. However, while this might be a good way to *begin* the conversation, the language of social activism doesn’t provide a useful way to continue the discussion. The kind of pithy, axiomatic language that fits on signs and on the bricks of Martin’s Way is too simple and too myopic to be really effective in launching a serious conversation about prejudice. Therefore, in the hopes of generating a more substantive dialogue, I have compiled a list of suggestions about how to have a productive discussion about the shooting of Michael Brown, or any of the other recent tragic shootings of young black men by white police officers.

1. Be weary of simplifying a story so that it fits a particular narrative. We cannot allow outrage to overwhelm our capital-R Reason. Outrage only simplifies, never augments our understanding, and often replaces truth with good storytelling.

2. Avoid the following terms: “white privilege,” “race card,” “conspiracy,” the infamous “There is no more racism,” any reference whatsoever to slavery or

Hitlerian genocide, or God forbid, “He had it coming.”

3. Remember that the language that you use is just as important as what you actually say.

4. Speak in sentences, not in slogans. If your entire ideology fits onto a poster, you need to reconsider the value of that ideology.

5. Remember that our focus cannot be on *guilt* but must be on *injustice*. Don’t ask the question *Who did it and where can we find him?* but *Why did this happen, and how did it happen, and how can we make sure that it doesn’t happen again?*

6. Understand that the clear majority of police officers in the United States are honest and hard-working. Remember that 99.9% of them don’t want to shoot *anyone*. Ever.

7. Remember that hashtags do not catalyze constructive discourse. True discussion does not blossom when limited to 140 characters.

8. Speak to living, breathing human beings. A series of Facebook posts does not count as a dialogue.

9. Acknowledge the fact that there is no scientific consensus on whether a white police officer is more likely to shoot a black suspect than a white one. Data on unjustified shootings and homicides is severely lacking, especially since the numbers that do exist make almost no reference to the race of the victims. The studies that do exist present contradictory conclusions: on the one hand, some suggest, as we might intuitively believe, that predominately white police forces are far more likely to shoot blacks than whites. On the other hand, a study done at the University of Washington suggests that black

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, September 10

Enquiry Meeting
8:00 PM | KJ 124

Thursday, September 11

Leo Strauss Reading Group
with AHI Resident Fellow
Dr. David Frisk
7:00 PM | Burke Library 109

suspects are actually less likely to be shot than white suspects, given that “[cops] know the social context in which they’re operating,” as Dr. David Klingler stated in a recent article for *The New York Times*.

10. Nevertheless, still acknowledge the fact that prejudice and racial profiling is real—hardly an invention of America’s minority populations—and that it is a serious hazard to the freedom and safety of all American citizens, minority or not.

11. Remember where we are. We are all very lucky to live and study in an environment that is for the most part nurturing to our differences and violently opposed to prejudice. The kind of discussion that needs to happen at Hamilton College is very different from the kind that needs to happen in Missouri. Let’s not pretend as though we’re in the eye of a cultural hurricane.

12. Appreciate moderation and uncertainty. “I don’t know” is a valid answer to some of the questions we’re faced with.

13. Replace the mantra “Black lives matter” with “All lives matter.”

Affirmative Action and Asians

Alex Klosner | *Staff Writer*

A favorite strategy of the Democratic Party is to focus on winning over particular ethnic groups. Asian voters, a small percentage of the electorate, do not receive the same kind of attention as other minority voters. However, it is no secret that a majority of Asian Americans support the Democratic Party. This hasn’t always been the case. Voting patterns reveal that the Democrat Party has succeeded in winning the loyalty of a significant majority of Asian Americans over the past two decades. In the 1996 presidential election where Asians made up just one percent of all voters; 44% voted for Bill Clinton and 48% voted for Republican contender Bob Dole. In the most recent presidential election, the number of Asians voting grew to three percent; and 73% voted for Barack Obama and only 26% voted for Mitt Romney. Despite overwhelming support for Democratic candidates,

affirmative action policies supported by the left often undermine Asian Americans.

Last spring, in a 6-2 decision (Justice Elena Kagan recused herself) the Supreme Court upheld a 2006 Michigan referendum prohibiting public universities in Michigan from giving “preferential treatment to any individual or group on the basis of race.” In her dissenting opinion, Justice Sonia Sotomayor claimed she benefitted from “race-sensitive admissions policies” and argued that such policies “benefit minority groups.” But not all minority groups benefit from Justice Sotomayor’s beloved “race-sensitive admissions policies.”

In 1996 California voters approved proposition 209, an amendment to the state constitution outlawing affirmative action in public university admissions. The amendment declares “the state shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the

operation of public employment, public education, or public contacting.” Legal challenges to Proposition 209 have failed. Earlier this year, California State Senator Ed Hernandez (D) proposed Senate Constitutional Amendment 5 (SCA 5) which would repeal portions of Proposition 209. SCA 5 sparked vast opposition not only from the right, but from left-leaning Asian Americans as well. Although many minority students would indeed benefit from SCA 5, studies prove race-based admissions policies place Asian students at an alarming disadvantage compared to other racial groups. A study by research fellow Dr. Althea Nagai of the Center for Equal Opportunity found that in order to compete in the admission process at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Asians must score higher than other races on their SATs. Dr. Nagai discovered that the Asian students admitted in 2008 scored a median of 1370 out of 1600 on their SATs while white students scored 1350, Hispanics 1250, and African Americans 1190. Thomas Espenshade a professor of sociology at Princeton University discovered that Asian students who scored a perfect 1600 on their SATs had the

same chance of gaining admission to an elite college as an African American student scoring an 1150. These studies, along with others suggests that Asian students must score much higher on their standardized tests in order to gain an equal chance of acceptance to college. Several advocacy groups such as the Asian Legal Foundation and the National Federation of Indian American Associations have called on lawmakers to rein in such overt discrimination against Asian students. Though well-intended, when race-sensitive admission policies give preference to individuals of one group, they inadvertently harms individuals of another group.

The Republican Party has a long way to go to not only win over Asian voters but minority voters in general. The data make clear that Democrats have succeeded in winning the loyalty of Asian Americans. The GOP must articulate a clear message to young Asian students that race-based admissions policies from the left impede their chances of admittance to elite schools.

The Hidden Costs of Educating Illegal Immigrants

Amy Elinski | *Layout Editor*

Since the start of the year, upwards of 66,000 unaccompanied children from South America and Mexico have flooded the southern border of the United States, nearly double that of the previous year. Rumors of unilateral amnesty by President Obama motivated the unaccompanied children's to make the long journey to the United States. As the new school year rolls in, at least 50,000 of these minors are expected to enter our public schools.

In the 1982 Supreme Court case *Plyler v. Doe*, the court ruled that it was unlawful for a state to deny a child admittance to a public school regardless of immigration status, or charge illegal immigrants additional tuition. Because the states pay the majority of the costs of education, this places an extensive burden on the schools. Many states, including Texas, withhold funding to schools for illegal immigrants, as funding is allotted on a per-student basis.

The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) estimated that it will cost approximately \$761 million to educate these new students. The majority of that financial burden will fall on the individual states. The Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) reported that Americans already spend approximately \$39 billion per year on educating illegal immigrants. A number of places, including Arizona and Miami-Dade County in Florida, have demanded that the federal government pay the full cost since the federal government has been slow to deal with the immigration crisis. Cash-strapped states like Arizona and Florida already spend among the lowest per student and are feeling the financial pressures of the influx of illegal immigrants. Additionally, they believe

it is unjust to force taxpayers to pay for students who have been deposited in the state by the federal government. Arizona's state superintendent, John Huppenthal, wrote in a letter addressed to Education Secretary Arne Duncan, "It is unreasonable to ask Arizona schools and Arizona taxpayers to pay for these expenses. These unaccompanied minors in question did not illegally cross in Arizona, but rather they were bussed into our state by the federal government."

The majority of these illegal immigrants do not speak English, and some do not even speak Spanish. The Hall County School District in Georgia has reported several new students who speak only Mayan, a tongue so rare outside of rural South American villages few interpreters are available for schools to use. Additionally, a large number of these children have never been to school, and are often all but illiterate. These students require extra attention from teachers in programs such as Title-1 or English as a second language educational programs and they require additional bilingual educators to be hired, or even interpreters for some of the more obscure languages. A 2006 study found that it costs schools an additional 30% to educate non-English speakers.

President Obama has done little to enforce immigration laws, and has threatened to use executive action to grant unilateral amnesty to millions of illegals in the United States. Speaker of the House John Boehner, Texas Senator Ted Cruz, and Alabama Senator Jeff Sessions have criticized President Obama for his lack of concern for present immigration laws. Senator Ted Cruz has introduced legislation in the Senate to "stop President Obama's amnesty, reform the William Wilberforce Trafficking

Victims Protection Act, and empower governors to utilize the National Guard to address this specific crisis at federal expense, including authority to arrest violators of federal immigration, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and terrorism laws."

Speaker Boehner has said that members of the House are planning for immigration reform in 2015. However, until President Obama actually enforces the laws that are currently on the books, the House will not begin to discuss immigration reform. "The president is going to have to demonstrate that he can be trusted to implement a law the way it was passed," Speaker Boehner said. "I would hope that the president would continue to follow the law, and begin to take steps that would better secure our border. It would create an environment where you could do immigration reform in a responsible way next year."

Enquiry Staff

Editor-in-Chief: Joe Simonson

Senior Editor: Mike Adamo

Layout Editor: Amy Elinski

Staff Writers: Taylor Elicegui, Alex Klosner, Sarah Larson, Andrew Nachemson, Phil Parkes, Will Swett

The opinions expressed in these articles are the views of their authors and do not represent the views of Enquiry or the Alexander Hamilton Institute.

Enquiry accepts articles of 500 to 800 words at jsimonso@hamilton.edu and madamo@hamilton.edu. Please be aware that we do not accept anonymous submissions.