Clinton Speaks on Brown v. Board of Education at Low Library

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city, but no one can doubt that there is still work to be done," he said. Yet disparities between races still remain, and in some cases, have worsened, the former president conceded. Clinton lamented that the vast majority of schools with a high concentration of minorities suffer from concentrated poverty, which, citing a recent Harvard study, he said contributes to unequal education opportunity. "While the problems of African-American minority—particularly black minorities—may have been racially triggered and may have a huge racial context today, they cannot be fully solved by race-based legal solutions."

Nevertheless, Clinton praised President Lee C. Bollinger for his efforts in defending affirmative action during his presidency at the University of Michigan. "We recognize that affirmative action is still needed in our society; that if there are problems, they can be addressed without throwing it out all together; that the racial disparities are still real," the former president said.

Clinton went on to stress that other means of leveling the playing field between races through economic gains were necessary. "Don’t blame Brown for the return of class warfare," he warned. "It’s the real lesson of Brown that we continued in the same direction!" the former president asked. Clinton implored members of the LDF, Columbia Law students, and all Americans of goodwill "not to waste a moment’s breath on criticizing Brown because it couldn’t solve every social and economic problem in America 50 years later."

Clinton said that all Americans must ask themselves what’s next. "But if we remind ourselves of how Brown changed the inner life of America, we can find the wisdom and strength to do what has to be done." Clinton cited the U.S. military as a successful example of how affirmative action can be implemented successfully. "The promise of Brown has worked better in the military than in any other sector in our society," Clinton said. "There, it was taken to its logical conclusion more aggressively in terms of creating opportunity and letting everyone develop on the basis of their God-given ability."

Toward the end of his talk, Clinton began to sound more like a preacher and less like a politician. "And so I say to you," he declared, "if you want to believe that separate but equal is a fraud, you can’t make everyone equal economically in a free enterprise system, but if you chain them into inequality you have done a grievous thing. If you take away their chance for opportunity … that is the primary obstacle to realizing the dream of Brown."

"Economics matter," he concluded. "Jobs, matter, investment matters, education, healthcare and housing matter. Finding some alternative to sending all these kids to prison matters, and we cannot do it if our most important domestic priority is to keep those of us who have been fortunate to live in America, no matter what our skin, to pay the lowest possible taxes. We ought to pay our way, and that too should be part of the legacy of Brown."

Columbia Hosts Diversity Recruiting Conference at Lerner Hall

Students learned about future trends in the job market from a range of employers.

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equity was 34 percent higher than those with the smallest representation of women. So organizations are beginning to realize that having gender diversity is good for them," Welle said.

Richard Roberts, director of Goldman Sachs’s Urban Investment Group, has also found that diversity is good for business. Roberts’ group, which he helped found, has invested more than $100 million of the firm’s capital in minority-owned or managed businesses and in urban real estate. Roberts said that Goldman Sachs sees these areas as a huge market opportunity.

“There’s increased buying power that’s accompanied the growth in population among minorities, particularly among Hispanics and African Americans,” Roberts said. “We see hundreds of business plans each year seeking to capitalize on these markets. There’s a real desire to build brands that target and focus on these markets.”

Roberts offered several examples of the burgeoning market and its opportunities, citing the 26 percent mean increase in income of African-American households between 1990 and 2000. Roberts also noted that some 3.7 million African-American households now have incomes of more than $50,000.

Rodolfo de la Garza, Columbia professor of political science, said that there is a danger inherent in targeting minority markets. He warned that the risk is that minorities may be hired only to reach potential markets and may be assigned the task.

"For example, you want to work on the presidential campaign," he continued. "‘Yes, okay you get to take care of the Hispanics.’ ‘No, no, I want to work on the presidential campaign, not the Mexicans.’ So, there can be a kind of tension.”

The events are part of an ongoing series of Center for Career Education programs that will explore job-related diversity issues. "The objective of the conference and this programming is to give the diverse Columbia student population the opportunity to learn about industries and fields in which they are interested," said Christopher Pratt, dean of Career Education, "and to give employers the opportunity to foster relationships with students of diverse backgrounds early in their academic careers. The conference also fostered a dialogue between the university community and employers about the impact of diversity on future employment strategies.

"The Diversity in Recruiting Conference is a reflection of the Center for Career Education’s mission," Pratt continued. “It is part of exciting programming exploring important topics relating to careers, the workplace, the workforce, entrepreneurship, enterprise leadership and economic development internationally to create new opportunities for learning, dialogue and connections among students, administrators, faculty, alumni and employers.”