

Directions: Analyze each article for main idea, supporting details, rhetorical appeals, and rhetorical devices

Half Baked

UC Berkeley's diversity machine loses its mind over cupcakes.

Heather Mac Donald

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Tuesday's now infamous affirmative-action bake sale at the University of California at Berkeley is unlikely to dissuade Governor Jerry Brown from signing a bill that would reintroduce race and gender preferences into the state's public universities. It has nevertheless served one useful function: it has clarified just what Berkeley's vice chancellor for equity and diversity does for his whopping \$194,000 annual salary.

Berkeley's College Republicans wanted their "Increase Diversity Bake Sale" to serve as a counterweight to a phone bank erected on the campus's main thoroughfare, where students could call Brown and urge him to sign the preference-reinstating legislation, Senate Bill 185. Like other anti-affirmative-action bake sales on college campuses over the last decade, the College Republicans' sale priced items according to the race and gender of the customer: whites paid \$2 for a pastry, with Latinos paying \$1 and blacks 75 cents, while women got a 25-cent discount on all items.

And like all such previous bake sales, it triggered a storm of ludicrously clueless outrage. Student Devonte Jackson told the San Francisco Chronicle that the sale was inappropriate and hurtful, "attacking underrepresented communities by reducing their communities to a cheaply priced good." The president of Berkeley's student government, which sponsored the pro-SB 185 phone bank, explained to CNN that the bake sale "humorized and mocked the struggles of people of color on this campus." Another student government officer professed dismay at such a shocking insult to students of color. "We were really taken aback and, frankly, disgusted," Joey Freeman informed the Los Angeles Times. Capping off this outpouring of what one can only hope is willful misreading, the student senate passed an emergency resolution on Sunday condemning "the use of discrimination whether it is in satire or in seriousness by any student group."

Gibor Basri, Berkeley's vice chancellor for equity and diversity, could have served a valuable role here by pointing out that the bake sale was obviously a parody of racial and gender preferences, not a criticism of students themselves. Whatever one thinks about the issue of preferences, he might have said, such political theater belongs to Berkeley's once-revered tradition of free speech. Instead, Basri chose to stoke the melodramatic self-pity of today's college students. "A lot of students, especially students of color, read [the bake sale] as placing a higher value on white students," Basri told the New York Times. Basri, in other words, obeyed the ironclad script for all such minor perturbations in the otherwise unbroken reign of campus political correctness. That script requires that the massive campus-diversity bureaucracy treat the delusional claims of hyperventilating students with utter seriousness. Students in the ever-expanding roster of official campus victim groups flatter themselves that by attending what is in fact the most caring, protective, and opportunity-rich institution in the history of the world, they are braving unspeakable threats to their ego and even to their physical safety. (Indeed, so desirable is this alleged threatened status that a gender and women's studies major held a sign during Tuesday's protest of the bake sale decrying the exclusion of "queer people" from the Republicans' pricing structure.)

This supposedly toxic "campus climate" has engendered a nauseating rhetoric about the need for "creating safe spaces" for various endangered groups, who would otherwise risk utter obliteration in the tsunami of hatred and bias that daily

washes over them. Reality check: no adult on today's college campuses wishes for anything more than to see females and minority students succeed to the utmost of their capacities. The overwhelming majority of students, meanwhile, are indifferent to race and gender and simply want to get along. It is hard not to attribute bad faith to Basri for his stupendously misguided interpretation of the bake sale as "placing a higher value on white students." If he really is incapable of understanding such a simple satire, he does not belong in an institution of higher learning—or at least what used to pass for one. One might think that a college administrator's mission would be to work for enlightenment, diffusing whatever tensions may arise from ignorance and misunderstanding. Basri has, after all, been granted an enormous piece of taxpayer largesse, commanding an expensive office of 17 staffers.

But like all such campus diversocrats, Basri is in fact a partisan in the crusade for unending identity politics, stoking tensions rather than calming them. The University of California is already wasting millions of dollars on these ever-expanding diversity sinecures. (And UC Berkeley itself has gone into the business of diversity activism, sponsoring a student-run, credit-bearing course in how to agitate for racial preferences.) If Governor Brown signs SB 185 into law (likely violating the state's constitution, which, after Proposition 209, forbids granting preferential treatment on the basis of race, sex, or ethnicity), the diversity bureaucracy and its political supporters in Sacramento will have scored another victory and ensured the diversocracy's future growth—as students admitted for their race, not their academic qualifications, provide the pretext for yet more vice chancellors for equity and diversity.

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Remember the racist cupcakes? Fordham University fights back with its own bake sale

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Interesting. About a week ago, when the University of California-Berkeley College Republicans hosted a bake sale with a pricing structure based on common college admissions practices, opponents of the sale cried “racism.” That’s because the pricing structure dramatically revealed that some minority students have an easier time obtaining admission to universities, thanks to affirmative action — and critics of the bake sale didn’t like that the publicity stunt revealed that truth. Surprisingly, most of the backlash didn’t come from the white students who were charged \$2 a cupcake as Asians were charged \$1.50, Hispanics \$1.00, blacks \$0.75 and Native Americans \$0.25.

Now, Fordham University students plan to host a bake sale in response to the Cal-Berkeley event. Dubbed “The REAL Affirmative Action Bake Sale,” the sale’s pricing structure will take all admissions factors — including family income, legacy status and athletic ability — into account. The results? Children of the very wealthy will have to pay just \$0.25 for a cupcake and athletes will have to pay just \$0.50. Legacies and under-represented minorities will pay \$1.00 while general admission will be \$1.30 for women and \$1.25 for men.

Mark Naison, professor of African and African American Studies at Fordham, explains why this structure is actually more reflective of what drives the college admissions process:

According to James Shulman and William Bowen, in their book *The Game of Life: College Sports and Educational Values*, recruited male athletes, in the 1999 cohort, received a 48 percent admissions advantage, as compared to 25 percent for legacies, and 18 percent for minorities (the comparable figures for women athletes were 54 percent, 24 percent, and 20 percent, respectively). Not only do athletes get a larger admissions advantage, Bowen and Shapiro report, they constitute a larger portion of the student population than under-represented minorities at the nation’s top colleges, averaging 20 percent at the Ivy League colleges and 40 percent at Williams. And the vast majority of the recruited athletes at those colleges who get those admissions advantages are white, including participants in sports like men’s and women’s lacrosse, golf, tennis and sailing, which few minorities play in.

But it was not the material in *The Game of Life* which most outraged my students, it was the analysis offered in a book I used in my course for the first time, Peter Schmidt’s *Color and Money: How Rich White Kids Are Winning The War Over College Affirmative Action*. According to Schmidt, higher education has become a plutocracy, where “a rich child has about 25 times as much chances as a poor one of someday enrolling in a college rated as highly selective or better.” In the last twenty years, Schmidt claims, universities have quietly given significant admissions advantages to students whose parents can pay full tuition, make a donation to the school, or have ties to influential politicians. Schmidt’s statistics, showing 74 percent of students in the top two tiers of universities come from families making over \$83,000, as compared to 3 percent come from families making under \$27,000 a year, enraged my students.

Frankly, the Fordham Bake Sale sounds awesome. It reflects that underrepresented minorities receive advantages — but it also points out all the ways the college admissions process isn’t exactly an academics-based meritocratic one. Instead, it reflects all the ways college has become about so much more — and so much less — than education. Personally, as much as I love college sports and all the other traditional trappings of “the college experience” from rec centers to on-campus concerts, I wonder whether that might not be a shame. I’m inclined to agree with American Enterprise Institute

scholar Charles Murray, who writes that the elevation of the bachelor degree to an almost-entitlement for middle class kids does a disservice to individuals who might not be academically-minded but who offer other abilities to society. Instead of making those individuals feel like they have to go to college to have a job worth working, we ought to offer them opportunities to develop their non-academic abilities and provide them with ways to use those abilities to contribute to society. In effect, college sports do that for athletes who might not otherwise go to college (and, arguably, from an academic perspective, shouldn't go to college) — but that they're tied to educational institutions is misleading. Murray proposes to abolish the B.A. as a right-of-passage piece of paper and bring back true universities, centers to cultivate research and thought. That's dramatic and controversial, but well worth considering. In the meantime, both the Berkeley and Fordham bake sales did what they were designed to do — spur discussion.