

Are Asian-Americans Discriminated Against in US Universities?

by Gary Fouse



On Thursday night, I watched a [segment of Tucker Carlson's Fox News show](#) with great interest. Carlson was interviewing Lee Cheng of the Asian American Coalition for Education about the planned Department of Justice probe into the question of discrimination against Asian-American students in university admissions.

Teaching part-time at the University of California at Irvine (UCI) from 1998-2016 gave me a chance to observe an aspect of this first-hand. UCI has a student body that is somewhere just above 50% Asian-American. I could say that part of this is due to the fact that UCI has a relatively small humanities section, concentrating more on fields such as engineering,

biology, pre-med and other hard sciences. That would only be part of the reason, however. It is no secret that Asian-Americans tend to excel in education. One reason for that is the cultural respect Asians and Asian-Americans have for education. Parents tend to involve themselves deeply into their children's learning and get involved with their schools. Late in life, when I was earning my masters degree in something called Social Foundations of Education, we spent a lot of time studying the educational systems of Japan, China and Korea hoping to find a solution that might improve our own failing educational system. (We never did succeed.)

But that leads us to the specific question of whether our universities are discriminating against Asian-American students when it comes to admissions in favor of lesser-represented minorities like blacks and Hispanics. It's safe to say that at least some universities are. Mr Cheng gave ways that they are, such as requiring higher SAT scores for Asian-Americans. Is this right or justifiable? I say no.

Let me begin with the premise that all discrimination against ethnic groups should be condemned as being against our constitution, and I include whites. I believe in meritocracy no matter how it breaks down. Academically, Asian-Americans are running circles around the rest of us and that includes whites. It behooves us to do better-not for Asian-Americans to do worse.

I know for a fact that the University of California, which has large Asian-American student numbers at most of their campuses, has had this discussion as to whether they "have too many" Asian and Asian-American students (which includes many Chinese exchange students), and whether these numbers should be reduced in favor of more black and Hispanic students. If they want to reduce foreign students in favor of American minority students, that can be justified, but not by penalizing deserving Asian-American students.

One of the more pleasurable aspects of being on the UC Irvine campus for me was the fact that there were so many Asian-American students. They were there for a reason-to get an education. One area they were under-represented in was campus protest. (I am not singling out other minorities here. I include white students.)

Mind you, I am not against seeing more black and Hispanic students on our campuses; I am all for it. A quality education is the key to solving most of our societal problems. This cannot be done, however, by artificially managing the make up of our university student bodies. Education improvements for minorities has to start before college. If they fail in lower education, how will they succeed in higher education? It has to start at the bottom. I don't pretend to have the solution for that.

We cannot begin to solve the problems of lesser-represented minorities in education by discriminating against Asian-Americans. Harming one group will not help another group. In addition, it is flat out unconstitutional. I hope the DOJ will follow through on its planned probe.