

It's dj vu for affirmative action proponents

Newstex Blogs

CalMatters

October 27, 2020 Tuesday 8:35 AM EST

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Length: 731 words

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Body

Oct 27, 2020(CalMatters: <https://calmatters.org> Delivered by Newstex) In summary Proponents of Proposition 16, which would reinstate affirmative action, are trailing badly and once again are playing the Ku Klux Klan card. It is, as the inimitable Yogi Berra once observed, 'dj vu all over again' for the proponents of affirmative action in college admissions, contracts and other governmental decisions. Twenty-four years ago today, they were trailing badly in trying to defeat Proposition 209, a California ballot measure that would prohibit using race or ethnicity in such actions. Voters later ratified Proposition 209 by a nearly 10 percentage point margin. In 2020, they are trailing badly in attempting to pass Proposition 16, which would repeal Proposition 209 and thus once again allow affirmative action to be used.

A new poll from US Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies[1] found that support for Proposition 16, placed on the ballot by the Legislature, is less than 40% with scarcely a week remaining before election day. In a desperate effort to defeat Proposition 209 in 1996, opponents conjured up a stunt, seeking to link the measure's proponents — particularly then-Gov. Pete Wilson and University of California regent Ward Connerly — to the violent racism of the Ku Klux Klan. They staged a mock debate at California State University, Northridge, and invited white supremacist David Duke to represent the pro-209 side. Get a veteran journalist's take on what's going on in California with a weekly round-up of Dan's column every Friday. Keep tabs on the latest California policy and politics news Lydia Chavez, a former New York Times reporter who now teaches at UC Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism, wrote a book about the Proposition 209 campaign entitled 'The Color Bind: California's Battle to End Affirmative Action' in which she detailed how the phony debate was staged as 'the opposition's campaign was languishing.' The 'debate' certainly generated national media attention, particularly when it featured overheated pro and con protests at the campus. Duke performed as expected, spouting racist dogma, and the opposition campaign tried to exploit it. A spokeswoman for the opposition campaign said, 'Anyone who says 209 is about ending discrimination — the moment David Duke steps across the state line, that's a bald-faced lie.' I wrote a column about it at the time, saying, 'If Duke's invitation to represent Proposition 209 was a sophomoric trick to turn sentiment against the measure, it backfired badly.' Other media coverage was similarly critical. Apparently, however, those who now want voters to endorse Proposition 16 and repeal Proposition 209 didn't learn the lesson. Desperate once again, they are playing the Ku Klux Klan card. The pro-Proposition 16 campaign has published a memo[2] entitled 'The Anti-Latino Roots of California's Ban on Affirmative Action and Opposition to Prop 16' that attempts to portray the other side as blatantly racist by citing what happened in 1996. 'The Wilson-Connerly duo was successful in passing Proposition 209, misleading voters into believing the effort would create a colorblind society, while being endorsed prominently by David Duke, former Ku Klux Klansman and known white supremacist,' the memo said. Reasonable people can differ on whether affirmative action is needed to overcome economic and social disparities or is merely reverse racism that ignores other factors in those disparities. It's a topic worth vigorous

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debate, which it received in 1996 and is receiving again today. But the proponents' memo that attempts once again to link their opposition to the Ku Klux Klan crosses the ethical line, especially given its origin in the phony Northridge State debate. As Ying Ma, a spokeswoman for the anti-Proposition 16 campaign says, 'whatever Californians may think of the merit of Prop. 16, it is utterly despicable for the yes side to link our campaign to David Duke, as they did in 1996.' Support in-depth reporting that matters As a nonprofit newsroom, we rely on the generosity of Californians like you to cover the issues that matter. If you value our reporting, support our journalism with a donation. [1]: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2pr670k8>? [2]: <https://voteyesonprop16.org/news/memo-the-anti-latino-roots-of-californias-ban-on-affirmative-action-and-opposition-to-prop-16/>

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