



# Media Reality ✓ Check

A Regular Report on Major News Stories Distorted or Ignored □ [www.mediaresearch.org](http://www.mediaresearch.org)

ABC's Gibson Defends Michigan Race Plan: "It's Not a Quota System. It Is a Consideration of Race."

## Pushing Liberal View of Affirmative Action

Although President Bush only opposes the particularly egregious policy of automatically awarding points to applicants at the University of Michigan if they belong to certain racial or ethnic groups, the broadcast networks on Wednesday night and Thursday morning adopted the liberal definition of "affirmative action" as each insisted Bush had come out against it.

On *World News Tonight*, ABC's Peter Jennings declared, "the President joins a lawsuit against affirmative action," as if the Michigan policy reflects the essence of "affirmative action," not an illegal distortion of allowable discrimination remedies. Conservatives would define affirmative action as selecting the minority applicant if all else were equal or recruiting candidates from majority-minority high schools who might not otherwise apply to a college.

Last night both CBS and NBC newscasts stressed how "conservatives" argued for opposing the Michigan scheme while "others" in the White House and elsewhere defended it. CBS's Bill Plante asserted: "The President's conservative base strongly opposes racial preferences, but others in the Republican Party fear that position hurts efforts to reach out to middle class black and Hispanic voters."

ABC's Jennings suggested "this is being taken tonight at least, by both liberals and conservatives, as more a political gesture than an attempt to change the law." Reporter Terry Moran agreed as ABC made more clear than CBS or NBC that Bush was "punting" on the basic issue of racial preference by only opposing this particular system.

This morning, both CBS and NBC presented balanced discussions of the issue. On *Today*, NBC's Matt Lauer challenged a former University of Michigan official to refute his description of a discriminatory admissions process: "It's a point system. Prospective students are awarded points for certain things like grades, test scores and minority students are given 20 points just for the fact that they're a minority. So if a white student and a black student start that process together, the black student starts with 20 points, the white

student starts at zero, correct?"

But over on ABC's *Good Morning America*, Charles Gibson skewed the debate in favor of liberal assumptions. He recounted the same point system as Lauer, but suggested to University of Michigan President Mary Sue Coleman that the real problem is that it was written down, that oral instructions to admissions officials to favor blacks over whites would have thwarted a legal challenge: "As soon as you reduce admissions to some kind of formula, you can pick it apart legally, as opposed to if you just said to your admissions department, 'Bring me a diverse class.'" Gibson

also encouraged Coleman to paint a dire picture of higher education without Michigan's particular system: "You wrote last year that Michigan, if they lose this case, it will amount to immediate re-segregation of top universities, public and private. Really?"

In contrast, in a later interview with *New York Post* columnist Robert George, Gibson defended

the Michigan policy and rebuked Bush for using the word quota: "The President, in a very short statement yesterday, kept calling an apple an orange. He kept saying, 'This is a quota system, I oppose it.' It's not a quota system. It is a consideration of race, which the Supreme Court in 1978 said is perfectly proper. You can't have quotas. You can consider race."

While Gibson interviewed Coleman, he debated George, bristling that Bush had renounced the only Supreme Court-sanctioned remedy for discrimination: "The question is, what's the legalities here. In 1978, the Supreme Court said you can consider race in admissions, you just can't have quotas. The President says he's for diversity, but he says, 'I'm against the only system that the Supreme Court has considered in 25 years.'" — Brent Baker and Rich Noyes

**The broadcast networks' morning and evening news shows all adopted the liberal definition of "affirmative action" and insisted President Bush had come out against it when he joined opponents of the University of Michigan's admissions policy.**

L. Brent Bozell III, Publisher; Brent Baker, Rich Noyes, Tim Graham, Editors; Geoffrey Dickens, Jessica Anderson, Brad Wilmoth, Brian Boyd, Ken Shepherd, and Patrick Gregory, Media Analysts; Kristina Sewell, Research Associate; Liz Swasey, Director of Communications. For the latest media bias, sign up for *CyberAlerts* at [www.mrc.org](http://www.mrc.org).