

## **In Melting-Pot Class, Everyone Hates Quotas**

By Shann Nix

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The weekly assignment of a 350-word essay on any topic spurs a discussion about racism in American democracy class. An Asian girl says that during the Rodney King riots, she was afraid of being jumped at school by a black student.

Racism, she says, is still a serious problem.

In open discussion, it is established that many of the students -- maybe an eighth of the class -- are of mixed racial descent. There are white/Hispanics, white/Chinese, white/Japanese, white/black combinations.

The kids know how to work the system. One girl who is Japanese and Caucasian says her parents wanted her to go to Lowell, the high school for academic achievers, and she didn't want to go. So, she checked the box for Asian, knowing she would be judged more rigorously. She was not accepted.

She said she resents the stereotype that Asians are smarter and work harder in school. "Just because it's a positive stereotype," she says, "doesn't mean it's fair."

The kids are extremely angry about quota systems. They resent it even when it works to their advantage, because it implies that their success doesn't stem from their own efforts. Those who feel cheated by quotas hate it all the more.

CHART: WASHINGTON HIGH'S RACIAL MIX  
Ethnic distribution, 1990-91 school year.

\* STUDENTS

|                 |      |
|-----------------|------|
| American Indian | 0.2% |
| Japanese        | 1.1% |

|                 |       |
|-----------------|-------|
| Korean          | 2.7%  |
| Filipino        | 3.4%  |
| Spanish surname | 5.0%  |
| Black           | 13.2% |
| White           | 16.9% |
| Chinese         | 38.7% |
| Other nonwite   | 18.1% |

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\* TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

|                 |       |
|-----------------|-------|
| Chinese         | 13.0% |
| American Indian | 0.7%  |
| Japanese        | 4.6%  |
| Filipino        | 1.5%  |
| Spanish surname | 3.8%  |
| Black           | 3.8%  |
| White           | 69.2% |
| Other nonwhite  | 3.0%  |

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Source: George Washington High School, 1991-92 Accountability Report Card  
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