



## **JCRC Statement on Affirmative Action**

October 12, 1995

### **Part I: Preliminary Statement By Judith Chapman, Chair**

The Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties, which represents more than 70 synagogues and Jewish organizations on public affairs issues, approved the following statement on affirmative action at its October 11, 1995 board meeting, culminating a six-month examination of the issues.

During that six month period, the JCRC strongly reaffirmed that the issue of affirmative action remains a subject of specific and direct concern to the organized Jewish community; established a Task Force on Affirmative Action representing a broad cross-section of views, with Earl Raab, Executive Director emeritus of the JCRC, as its consultant; held numerous task force meetings to identify areas of common agreement; distributed a draft statement along with a study guide comprised of pro and con articles and a speakers bureau list for use by member organizations and synagogues; helped organize extensive educational discussions, culminating in 25 synagogues and organizations submitting their responses to the draft JCRC statement; and deliberated on the statement at the Marin, Sonoma, North Peninsula and South Peninsula JCRC committees.

As a result of the response from member organizations and synagogues, it was clear that there was overwhelming support for the JCRC statement and equally clear that there is no consensus now on taking a position on the [California Civil Rights Initiative](#). Thus, the JCRC approved the attached statement, and declined to put the issue of the CCRI on the table at this time. It was also noted at our meeting that other initiatives are being circulated in the state.

The JCRC statement on affirmative action will be useful in a number of ways. Firstly, it will help in the process of educating the Jewish community about the complex issues of affirmative action. Secondly, it establishes guidelines and limitations that will be helpful

in assessing specific proposals. Thirdly, the statement sets parameters for possible coalitional efforts aimed at maintaining strong intergroup relations. Finally, it reaffirms our community's continued support of that affirmative action which is truly aimed at equal opportunity for every individual while making clear our opposition to quotas and affirmative action plans in which unqualified or clearly less qualified applicants are chosen because of a preference based on race, ethnicity or gender.

The subject of affirmative action will continue to be debated actively in the general and Jewish community. The JCRC has a substantial collection of materials on affirmative action representing diverse viewpoints and a speakers bureau with articulate representatives of pro and con positions on the California Civil Rights Initiative. We are pleased to make these resources available.

Finally, I want to thank Debra Pell, chair of the Task force on Affirmative Action, Earl Raab, consultant, and all the task force members, who gave their time, their intellect and their flexibility to help produce a document that our community can be very of having developed. Their superb work helped set the tone for the consistently high level and thoughtful discussion that characterized our deliberations throughout the past six months.

## **Part II: Policy Statement**

The following statement was approved at the October 11, 1995 meeting of the Jewish Community Relations Council of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties. The JCRC represents more than 70 synagogues and Jewish organizations on public affairs issues.

This statement reflects the consensus view of the organized Jewish community and culminates six months of intensive and thorough examination. A broad cross-section of views were represented on JCRC's Task Force on Affirmative Action which shaped the discussions and draft statement. Among the synagogues, organizations, individual JCRC members and others active in the organized Jewish community and culminates six months of intensive and thorough examination. A broad cross-section of views were represented on JCRC's Task Force on Affirmative Action which shaped the discussions and draft statement. Among the synagogues, organizations, individual JCRC members and others active in the organized Jewish community there are dissenting views on some of the positions contained in the statement—both among

those who felt the statement went too far and those who felt the statement did not go far enough. On the statement as a whole, there is clear consensus both with respect to the content and the importance of the organized Jewish community addressing the issue of affirmative action given our community's direct stake in our country's commitment to equal opportunity and enforcement of civil rights laws.

The Jewish community has a critical stake in and an historic commitment to the democratic principle of a pluralistic society with equal opportunity for every individual, and in the American ideal of measuring people on the basis of their individual merit rather than their group identity. While the ideal of individual merit has never been fully realized because of subjective judgments and such factors as family background and social contacts, it remains a critically important goal of our society.

Discrimination in admissions, hiring and other aspects of the economic marketplace against anyone because of his or her race, color, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation is wrong, unjust and a violation of the principle of equal opportunity. We therefore strongly support stricter enforcement of anti-discrimination laws.

In addition, historical patterns of discrimination have fomented intergroup conflict which, if not addressed, can lead to political extremism and instability. Remedying such conditions must remain a very high priority.

Individuals have always started out with different capacities to compete in the marketplace because of varying personal, family and economic circumstances. Society has a responsibility to offer various forms of assistance, including special training and public school programs to permit individuals to discover and achieve their potential despite disadvantageous individual circumstances.

However, centuries of systematic discrimination against certain racial and ethnic groups and women meant that for those groups, anti-discrimination laws were not enough to ensure equal opportunity without additional action. The legacy of this discrimination has been to concentrate disadvantage and create sub-cultures of poverty in certain segments of the population which still require attention.

In order to provide equal opportunity, affirmative action aimed at enhancing the ability of these groups to compete has been and continues to be strongly supported by the Jewish community. Such affirmative action has included intensive recruiting of qualified candidates and increased education and training programs. It has also included

mechanisms such as a review of job and admission requirements to make sure that they were bias-free, and record-keeping and monitoring in order to measure the effectiveness of such programs. The JCRC is committed to active participation in new and ongoing efforts to heighten the urgency of reversing the legacy of discrimination and disadvantage.

We oppose quotas under any guise in hiring, promotion, contracts and admissions. However, we recognize the need in appropriate cases for court orders requiring an entity with a demonstrable record of breaking the anti-discrimination laws to engage in temporary policies to help remedy its own prior discrimination. We also oppose any affirmative action plans in which unqualified or clearly less qualified applicants are chosen because of a preference based on race, ethnicity or gender. Such voluntarily instituted affirmative action programs that foster, rather than remedy, discrimination should be terminated or redesigned. We believe that race, ethnicity or gender can be considered as *a*—but not the sole factor—in evaluating equally qualified applicants when an entity seeks to voluntarily engage in temporary policies to remedy its own bias or to promote the goals of diversity.