Editorial Analysis Assignment
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Article: "Will Brown Faces Again Be a Rarity?" by Jesus Mena

Jesus Mena, director of media relations for UC Berkley, wrote the article "Will Brown Faces Again Be a Rarity?" in the April 15, 1998 edition of the *Berkleyan*. This editorial offers various arguments as to why affirmative action is needed. I am going to first summarize the article. Then, I will analyze the kinds of arguments that he uses and discuss his premises and conclusions. I will also evaluate his arguments and show the fallacies that he uses.

The article begins with Mena flashing back to the past with an example from his past of the lack of minorities he encountered in college. He is a Chicano and only encountered one other Chicano after two weeks of college at Texas A&M. He includes this story to illustrate how few minorities were in college at that time. The article then discusses how UC Berkeley and UCLA are experiencing a drop in the amount of minorities admitted, even though Berkeley has been recognized for its diversity in the past. So, Berkeley and UCLA must at least maintain their present number of minorities. However, that is only a short-term solution. The problem is rooted in the unequal opportunities for minorities starting in kindergarten. Thus, Mena concludes that state public policymakers must even out the educational opportunities for minorities in K-12 education to counter cutbacks in college admissions that result from dropping affirmative action.

The first premise is a literal analogy. It states that in 1966, children from farm worker families felt alienated as the only Chicanos at Texas A&M. The evidence case and the conclusion case are linked because both colleges do not have many minorities.

This is a good example of the lack of minorities in college because it is a relatively similar example to the situation at UC Berkeley and UCLA. Mena's story is like the situation at UC Berkeley and UCLA because both had a very small number of minorities.

The next premise is that there has been a "dramatic drop in minorities admitted to the UC Berkeley and UCLA." It is discussing the status quo. This is what Mena's story is analogous to. But, a fallacy is committed through loaded language by using the words "dramatic," "underrepresented," and "extremely." This language is loaded because its only purpose is to sway the emotions. There is also an appeal to pity when it is stated, "the numbers are especially stressful." This statement seems to be appealing that pity is an argument for special treating. Thus, subtle wording is being used in this argument.

Mena goes on to say that the numbers of minorities currently there need to be preserved. This opinion is supported by Mena's story because if the number of minorities are not preserved, then the number of minorities will drop and the remaining minorities will be alienated. Once again, loaded language is used through the term "battle." This word sways emotion.

Next, the causal argument that the "dismal admissions numbers are partially a reflection of the poor academic preparation" displays loaded language because it uses the emotional term "dismal." It also seems to be poisoning the well because it prejudices the K-12 education system before it is even discussed. Clearly, it is not valid to "poison" the mind of the reader with preconceptions. It only weakens the argument. This causal argument also seems to be assumed without any argument. It should be explained how the cause leads to the effect, and that is not done here. It is a bad causal argument.

The next supporting statement is that a renewed public interest in education is needed to counter the budget cuts. This is an opinion of the author's, and it is assumed without any argument. I think that it needs to discuss why a renewed public interest would help. Mena should also say why this is the best solution to the problem.

Mena continues by stating that until opportunities are equalized we "need to revisit the constraints imposed on UC's admissions process." This is committing the black and white fallacy because no alternatives other than changing the constraints are considered. And, this statement is unsupported. This should have been made stronger by considering alternative actions and giving reasons and support for why this is the best way to equalize opportunities.

The next argument is an argument by analogy. Mena claims that Stanford and Harvard use affirmative action. While this claim is true, it seems to be committing the bandwagon fallacy. Just because Stanford and Harvard do it, it does not mean the UC Berkeley and Harvard should. Though, the author does do a good job explaining the linking principle between the evidence case and the conclusion case. It is stating that because Stanford and Harvard are good colleges using affirmative action and they are not admitting inferior students, that UC Berkeley and UCLA can use affirmative action and not admit inferior students.

Mena then uses a causal argument, stating that overall academic excellence improved when affirmative action was used. This commits the post hoc ergo procter hoc because it was not likely that affirmative action improved academic excellence. Just because the two things occurred sequentially in time, it does not mean that affirmative

action caused overall academic excellence. There is not any explanation of how that cause led to the effect. So, it is a bad causal argument overall.

Finally, the article is ended with a conditional argument saying that if leaders do not address these issues, then we are doomed to repeat history. This is an example of the slippery slope fallacy. There are no concrete links to show that this consequence will occur. The author is committing a black and white fallacy because no other alternatives are considered. We either are doomed to repeat history or we address these issues. Mena does not investigate any middle ground.

Throughout this article, the term affirmative action is used. It is a vague term because the meaning is not specific enough for the context of this article. Affirmative action should be defined in order to make the meaning of the phrase clear.

There is information needed to strengthen this argument. Mena should develop his arguments fully. The arguments could be bolstered by statistics, such as facts documenting differences in academic preparation based on geographical areas or median socioeconomic status and then linking poorer areas with poor college admissions across the board. Also, arguments by authority would strengthen the opinions that Mena states throughout the article. Objections and alternatives also need to be considered. Other proposals may solve the problem. Additional information would make the argument for affirmative action stronger.

Overall, the strength of the argument seems very weak. There are too many fallacies (laded language, appeal to pity, poisoning the well, black and white fallacy, bandwagon fallacy, post hoc ergo procter hoc, and slippery slope) to make this a strong argument. Mena also makes several statements (such as "dismal admissions numbers are

partially a refection of the poor academic preparation") without supporting them. Although I agree with the basic conclusion that affirmative action addresses a fairness issue due to poorer schools being unable to offer competitive preparation for elite universities, I think Mena's editorial is overly emotional and opinionated. An argument in favor of affirmative action could have been presented in a more neutral and fact-based manner with statements fully supported. The solution is not as clear-cut as Mena makes it out to be.

I was surprised when I analyzed this editorial since Mena is the director of media relations for UC Berkeley. I assumed he would write a good argument. However, I found many problems with his argument as I have already stated. Thus, I decided that since Mena is the director of media relations, he knows how to write an article for the media getting his point across, whether he has to use fallacies or not. After all, not everyone knows about fallacies and what makes I strong argument. I know that I did not know anything about it until I took this course. An average person reading this article may think that this editorial is a good argument in favor of affirmative action because they do not know any better. So, Mena probably wrote this article the way that he did because he thought that it would be good enough to appeal to the majority of people.