Speaking Out on Race Helps Advance Equality

To the Editor:

The furor over Prof. Lino Graglia’s comments is yet another example of how difficult it is to have productive discussions about race (“Texas Law Professor Prompts a Furor Over Race Comments,” news article, Sept. 16).

Mr. Graglia said that minority groups differ in the importance they attach to education and that this difference explains, at least in part, the fact that black and Mexican-American students are not academically competitive with white students at top universities. He has been denounced for, as university officials put it, uttering these “offensive and painful words.”

Yet no one suggests that Mr. Graglia is wrong on the facts. There are recognized cultural differences in attitudes toward education. That Asian-Americans, for example, have performed so well academically despite their status as a racial minority is not unrelated to the fact that Asian-American families tend to value education highly and motivate their children to achieve. It is not an accident that there is a National African-American Parent Involvement Day to encourage black parents to become more involved in their children’s education but not a comparable day for Asian-Americans.

Mr. Graglia’s sin was to suggest there might be causes other than discrimination for different racial outcomes. If he is right, part of the answer to the racial gap lies in the home. Pretending it is otherwise and silencing those courageous enough to identify the problem will impede racial equality.

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