



For Immediate Release
Monday, July 30, 2018

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21 Harvard Student and Alumni Organizations File Amicus Brief in Support of College Admissions That Foster Diversity

Harvard student and alumni organizations, represented by the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. ([LDF](#)), filed an [amicus brief](#) today in a Massachusetts federal court condemning a divisive lawsuit that seeks to eliminate the consideration of race in Harvard's admissions and threatens diversity at the college.

The brief, filed on behalf of twenty-one organizations representing diverse backgrounds and racial and ethnic heritages, asks the Court to follow Supreme Court precedent recognizing that universities can consider race in a multifaceted, holistic admissions process to create a diverse student body and denounces this lawsuit's attempt to pit historically marginalized groups against each other.

"The Supreme Court has repeatedly ruled that colleges have the right to consider race as one of multiple factors when reviewing the full spectrum of an applicant's identity and academic potential," said **Jin Hee Lee, LDF's Senior Deputy Director of Litigation**. "This lawsuit may claim to represent the interests of Asian American students, but in reality, it is an unabashed attempt to eliminate important efforts to foster diversity in college campuses to the detriment of all students, including Asian Americans."

The lawsuit against Harvard was filed on behalf of the group Students for Fair Admissions, an organization purporting to represent Asian American college applicants and headed by Edward Blum, a longtime foe of civil rights. Mr. Blum has been the force behind [several failed lawsuits challenging the consideration of race in university admissions](#).

The LDF brief, filed on behalf of Harvard student and alumni groups, asserts that not considering race as part of Harvard's admissions process would have devastating consequences for all Harvard students, including a fifty percent drop in the population of many students of color. The brief also states that admissions policies that are over-reliant on standardized testing, which are themselves racially biased, run the risk of systematically undervaluing the strengths and potential of many underrepresented applicants.

The 21 Harvard student and alumni organizations represented in the LDF amicus brief include the Harvard-Radcliffe Asian American Women’s Association, the Harvard-Radcliffe Black Students Association and Fuerza Latina of Harvard (full list below).

In support of the LDF brief, Harvard students and alumni from these organizations submitted declarations describing their experiences with racial isolation—and, at times, racial hostility—on campus and their commitment to inclusive admissions policies.

“[I]t is of [the] utmost importance that we stand for the principles of diversity and inclusion and that we resist the false narrative that is being spun by individuals who do not have the interests of the [Asian American Pacific Islander] community at heart,” **wrote the Harvard-Radcliffe Asian American Women’s Association.** “My race is integral to my identity and had [the consideration of race in] admissions been eliminated, I would not have been able to convey such a large part of who I am and what has shaped me.”

“Some [BSA] members who are STEM majors have particularly felt that they are treated as if they have a lot to prove and that students are less willing to collaborate with them,” **wrote the Harvard-Radcliffe Black Students Association.** “One thing that helped me...is the fact that there were other Black students who I could lean on or speak to about these experiences. Having a community of other Black students has been important to my academic wellbeing, particularly during the first year.”

“There have also been incidents where people don’t respect the Latinx presence on campus and it helps to have a support system to respond collectively,” **wrote Fuerza Latina.** “Our organizations have been able to come together to fight discrimination and hostility toward Latinx students, but if we didn’t have a critical mass of Latinx students, we wouldn’t necessarily be able to advocate for ourselves in that way and make people realize why that’s not okay.”

“Diverse learning environments enrich the college experience and better prepare students for success in the multiracial workplace and society we live in,” said **[Rachel Kleinman](#), LDF Senior Counsel.** “This lawsuit threatens to damage the important progress Harvard and other colleges and universities have made in building a diverse and inclusive student body.”

LDF has been a leading voice in the decades-long struggle for equitable college admissions policies, from its early efforts to desegregate colleges and universities throughout the Jim Crow South to its recent advocacy on behalf of Black students as amicus curiae in [Fisher v. University of Texas](#). In *Fisher*, the United States Supreme Court reaffirmed its longstanding position that universities may consider

race as part of a holistic, multi-faceted admissions policy due to the critical importance of diversity in higher education.

The Harvard organizations that joined the amicus brief are listed below:

1. Harvard-Radcliffe Black Student Association (“BSA”),
2. Kuumba Singers of Harvard College (“Kuumba”)
3. Fuerza Latina of Harvard (“Fuerza Latina”),
4. Native Americans at Harvard College (“NAHC”),
5. Harvard-Radcliffe Asian American Association (“AAA”),
6. Harvard-Radcliffe Asian American Women’s Association (“AAWA”),
7. Harvard Asian American Brotherhood (“AAB”),
8. Harvard Vietnamese Association (“HVA”),
9. Harvard-Radcliffe Chinese Students Association (“CSA”),
10. Harvard Korean Association (“HKA”),
11. Harvard Japan Society (“HJS”),
12. Harvard South Asian Association (“SAA”),
13. Harvard Islamic Society (“HIS”),
14. Task Force on Asian and Pacific American Studies at Harvard College (“TAPAS”),
15. Harvard Phillips Brooks House Association (“PBHA”),
16. Harvard Minority Association of Pre-medical Students (“MAPS”),
17. Coalition for a Diverse Harvard (“Diverse Harvard”),
18. First Generation Harvard Alumni (“FGHA”),
19. Native American Alumni of Harvard University (“NAAHU”),
20. Harvard University Muslim Alumni (“HUMA”),
21. Harvard Latino Alumni Alliance (“HLAA”)

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*Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation’s first civil and human rights law organization and has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. **In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF.***