

Dear Class of 2023,

This is it. This is the year. Senior year. Proms and farewells, but before all that: finals, SATs, and for those that can and want to, college applications. **When it's all said and done, you will be starting a new chapter of your life in a new environment, one that we hope challenges you and provides a diverse base of knowledge and people from which to learn and grow.**

Wherever you decide to apply, **affirmative action** plays an important role in shaping your college experience. Today, if you apply to a college with an affirmative action policy, that college has the option to [take your race or ethnic origin into account as one of many plus factors](#) to contextualize your achievements and consider your contributions to diversity. Historically, [affirmative action has provided educational opportunities to untold numbers of minority students](#), including many of your parents, and is still crucial for diversifying our universities and workplaces.

**Today, affirmative action, and the principles of equity, inclusion, and racial justice that underlie it, are under attack.** [Race-conscious admission policies remedy discrimination, but the Justice Department, under President Trump, is investigating these policies under the pretense that they themselves are discriminatory.](#) Ed Blum, the conservative strategist who persistently attacks race-conscious admissions policies that promote equity, as well as laws that protect minority voters, **will return to court this month to challenge Harvard's affirmative action policy.**

**We, the undersigned, fight for affirmative action because we believe that it is essential to our country's future.**

**1) We fight for affirmative action because we believe in a fair admissions process that provides equitable opportunities for everyone.**

From the founding of our country to the present, the cards have always been stacked against people of color. Starting with the First Peoples, whose land was stolen, and the African Americans who were snatched from their homeland and treated like chattel, to the brown bodies on whose back this country was built and continues to function, to the perpetual foreigners who labor silently on the margins until accused of espionage or terrorism, race has always determined how resources are distributed.

[Today, students of color, low-income students, and women continue to be held back by systemic discrimination, underfunded schools, language barriers, immigrant or refugee status, and harmful stereotypes.](#) **The consideration of race in the admissions process allows universities to look at applicants in context and to [identify the most promising candidates whose potential might be obscured because of racial barriers.](#)**

**2) We fight for affirmative action because it's good for students and the universities and colleges where they learn.**

Some of the best colleges in our country choose to have affirmative action policies because it allows them to consider an applicant's whole story when evaluating their strengths. [It doesn't make sense for colleges to ignore race when considering all other background characteristics.](#) In fact, for many of you, race is a defining feature of your story, and you deserve to be evaluated as the complex person that you are.

**Moreover, these colleges understand that diversity is critical to a 21st century education.** [Affirmative action promotes diversity, breaks down stereotypes, and improves the racial climate for everyone so that you and your classmates can learn and grow together.](#) To prepare for your future, you deserve the opportunity to interact with students from different backgrounds, who have diverse experiences, interests, and talents. That's what makes college a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and why affirmative action creates a better learning environment for all of you.

### **3) We fight for affirmative action because it is more urgent than ever to resist the white nationalist agenda.**

Make no mistake, an attack on affirmative action is an attack on racial justice, social mobility, communities of color, and immigrants and refugees. Just as the Trump administration ended Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), separated families at the border, and dismantled social security programs, its attack on affirmative action is part of its agenda to deny women, immigrants, and people of color educational opportunities, voting rights, and other key entryways to civic engagement. The lawsuit against Harvard's affirmative action policy is especially destructive because it uses Asian Americans as a [wedge group](#) to push its white nationalist agenda, despite the fact that Asian Americans not only [strongly benefit](#) from affirmative action, the [majority of them support it](#).

You and your classmates are our country's future, and by fighting for affirmative action, we are investing in that future. Affirmative action moves our country towards equity by recognizing racial disparities and playing a small but important role in expanding opportunities that were once only reserved for the white and the privileged. At this divisive moment in American history, we believe that our nation's future depends upon leaders who are diverse and have been exposed to the vast array of people and ideas that make America great.

**Therefore, we call upon you, our future, to join us in defending diversity. Show your support for affirmative action by posting on social media a [photo of yourself with this sign](#) using #DefendDiversity**

In solidarity,



- Yale Law OutLaws
- Harvard Black Alumni Society of Southern California

