

Admissions in the Courts, Ethnic Studies Still Missing at Harvard

So much has happened in the past month. From the push on **Ethnic Studies**, to the **Harvard admissions trial closing**, to the **UNC case**, to the **criminal admissions cheating scam**, we share with you some highlights below. Meanwhile, please watch for our Harvard Overseers and Director endorsements later this month, and get ready to lobby your friends!

ETHNIC STUDIES

Pressure continues to build for comprehensive Ethnic Studies at Harvard following last month's powerful student rally.

- On Feb. 12th, the *Washington Post* published this eloquent opinion piece, [Will Harvard continue to fail Asian Americans—or will it learn from the past?](#), by Renee Tajima-Peña '80, an Asian American Studies professor at UCLA and award-winning filmmaker. A Diverse Harvard member, Renee makes an incisive and moving case for Ethnic Studies, drawing on her personal history and involvement in the struggle for Ethnic Studies since the '70s.
- On Feb. 13th, the *Harvard Crimson* published a stirring [editorial](#) in support of Ethnic Studies, stating:

Ethnic studies is an established and essential discipline of research universities across the country. Harvard's lack of a department or center for this field places it woefully behind its peers and severely limits its capacity to be the leader in intellectual progress it claims to be.

- The following day, the *Crimson* [reported](#) that FAS Dean Claudine Gay said “she is working to recruit three professors who study ethnicity, after the loss of two tenure-track professors specializing in Asian-American studies. . . . The announcement came in the wake of letters to administrators and a protest . . . calling for a formalized ethnic studies program. . . .”

“I’m very aware of student interest and, frankly, needs in this area, and I believe that it’s all valid,” Gay said.

Dean Gay acknowledged that the departure of Assoc. Prof. Natasha K. Warikoo and Asst. Prof. Genevieve A. Clutario constituted a “big loss,” and that the new “young, early-career” recruits are not meant to replace them.

Meanwhile, President Bacow emailed the *Crimson* that “we have been focused on ensuring that any new program would have the faculty and resources essential to deliver it,” adding “we know ... there is more work to do and we will continue to make progress in the months ahead.”

- More recently, witnesses Sally Chen '19, Thang Diep '19 and Catherine Ho '21, who testified movingly in support of Harvard in the admissions trial, published this powerful essay in the *Crimson*: [We Testified. It's Time for Action](#). They laid out the ways in which Harvard is still failing its students in terms of diversity. They reiterate demands for Ethnic Studies, faculty and staff diversity, campus bias training, a multicultural center and resources for public service.

To join us and the Harvard Ethnic Studies Coalition as we continue to press for action, please respond to this email. All ideas and help appreciated!

HARVARD LAWSUIT CLOSING ARGUMENTS

Thanks to those of you who attended the final arguments in the Harvard admissions trial in Boston on Feb. 13th. As the *Boston Globe* reported, [In Harvard case, judge appears skeptical of plaintiffs](#).

See our NAACP Legal Defense Fund lawyer Jenny Holmes break down what happened in the courtroom in this brief [video](#). As [reported](#) in the Harvard Gazette, in Jenny’s closing statement, she cited student witnesses who said that “learning in a racially diverse student environment shaped their educational experiences” while helping them build solidarity, challenge assumptions, and dispel stereotypes. She called the lawsuit “an attack on Harvard’s ability to provide a racially inclusive and diverse educational environment from which all students benefit.”

In addition, Genevieve Bonadies Torres '08, a [Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights](#) attorney representing students and alumni, made brilliant use of application files in her [presentation](#). She argued that SFFA had “engaged in its own act of erasure” by using an incomplete statistical analysis and ignoring important information in applicants’ files.

For a fantastic, point-by-point dissection of SFFA's major allegations juxtaposed with evidence from the trial, read [Here are TEN reasons NOT to fall for the “Asian American Penalty” trap in admissions!](#) by Professors Margaret Chin '84 (witness and Diverse Harvard board member), OiYan Poon, Janelle Wong and Jerry Park. It contains a **new fact about the personal rating**:

the rating difference between Asian Americans and Whites is only 0.05 points (2.82 for Asian Americans vs. 2.77 for Whites).



Members of the 25 amici organizations meet at Lowell House with our LDF and Lawyers Committee counsel following the closing statements.

SFFA v. UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA at CHAPEL HILL

Diverse Harvard proudly joined Asian Americans Advancing Justice and over 60 Asian American groups and 25 professors on an amicus brief filed Mar. 4th in support of race-conscious holistic admissions at UNC.

This lawsuit, like the one against Harvard, is filed by conservative activist Ed Blum and his group SFFA to end race-conscious college admissions. Although the UNC case is brought on behalf of

white plaintiffs while the Harvard case has Asian plaintiffs, SFFA alleges that Asian Americans as well as whites are disadvantaged by UNC's race-conscious admissions policy.

Our [brief](#) argues that race-conscious admissions policies result in more equitable and integrated universities and enhance the educational experiences of all students.

HARVARD FOUNDATION

In February, the college announced [the merging](#) of the Harvard Foundation for Intercultural and Race Relations with the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, citing their overlapping missions. A new associate dean will be selected to direct this effort and will also oversee the Office of BGLTQ Student Life, the Office of Diversity Education and Support, the College's Title IX Office, and the Women's Center.

Not all of us are happy about this merger, since, as current students have pointed out, there is already inadequate support for students of color. The Harvard Foundation has always tried to play a social, cultural and political role on campus, providing funding for student group events that help increase racial and cultural awareness as well as spearheading the Humanitarian award, Portraiture Project, Cultural Rhythms programming, and Artist of the Year award. We hope to see Harvard strengthen rather than dilute the support that the Foundation provided under the late Dr. Allen Counter.

ADMISSIONS FRAUD

There are thousands of articles on this cheating scandal, and yet we have no words. While we are thinking about all the educational access and equity issues this fraud raises, we share with you below a few of our favorite pieces on the topic.

Finally, if you are in San Diego on Mar. 19th or 22nd, don't miss the award-winning documentary [Rocio](#) by Diverse Harvard member Dario Guerrero '16 at the [San Diego Latino Film Festival](#). An undocumented Harvard student, Dario accompanied his dying mom to seek treatment in Mexico and then was barred from returning to the US.

Have a great week.

Jane, Jeannie, Kristin, Margaret, & Michael

Jane Sujen Bock '81, Margaret M. Chin '84, Jeannie Park '83, Kristin R. Penner '89, & Michael Williams '81

Board of Directors, Coalition for a Diverse Harvard

Please **forward** this email to your friends and ask them to [join](#) the Coalition for a Diverse Harvard (diverseharvard.org) by signing up on our homepage.

Join our “Coalition for a Diverse Harvard” [Facebook Group](#).

Follow us on [Twitter](#).

Donate to the Coalition at diverseharvard.org/donate.

RECENT NEWS

[Record 43,330 Apply to Harvard College Class of 2023](#) | *Harvard Crimson*

Latinx, Asian American and First Generation applicants to Harvard are up, but disturbingly African American applicants dropped 4.9% from last year.

Lawsuit

[In Post-Trial Brief, NAACP Legal Defense Fund Defends Harvard's Admissions Policy](#) | *Harvard Crimson*

| *Harvard Crimson*

[Affirmative action lawsuit against Harvard in judge's hands](#) | *NBC*

"It's not just that SFFA has failed to provide a smoking gun, they failed to find evidence of a single victim of discrimination," said Seth Waxman, a lawyer for Harvard.

SFFA has previously said its 20,000 members include some Asian-Americans who were unfairly denied admission from Harvard, but none were called to testify at trial.

[Public Filings Reveal SFFA Mostly Funded by Conservative Trusts Searle Freedom Trust and DonorsTrust](#) | *Harvard Crimson*

['All the Black Kids at Harvard Are Rich,' and Other Dangerous Myths About Affirmative Action](#) |

Julie Park, *Education Week*

Recent research suggests that the best way to expand low-income students' opportunities to study at top colleges is not to ban race but to look at it alongside class.

[The Generational Divide on Affirmative Action](#) | OiYan Poon and Janelle Wong, *Inside Higher Ed*

Younger Chinese Americans, particularly those of college-going age, are much more likely to support affirmative action than their parents' generation.

Admissions fraud

[Dozens indicted in alleged massive case of admissions fraud](#) | *Inside Higher Ed*

"It wasn't enough to have greater knowledge of the system, more access to support, consistent access to expertise and multiple accommodations -- they felt they needed to criminally guarantee advantage."

[College Admissions Scam](#) | *MSNBC*

Michaele Turnage Young, one of the awesome NAACP Legal Defense Fund lawyers who represents Diverse Harvard and 24 other Harvard student & alum organizations in the admissions case, discuss how important it is to #DefendDiversity and the ability of students of color – who do not have the same opportunities as the powerful and wealthy – to access a higher education.

[Now that we see what stealing a college slot really looks like, can we stop making students of color feel like frauds?](#) | Theresa Vargas, *Washington Post*

All those people who have blamed poor brown and black kids for taking the spots of “more deserving” white kids through affirmative action should have been looking closer at who really didn’t earn their seats.

[These are the victims of cheating scandal I worry about](#) | by Asha Rangappa, CNN

As a former admissions dean at Yale Law School, I worry about another group of victims: future talented college applicants from underprivileged backgrounds who may opt out of reaching for the most selective schools, believing that the deck is already stacked against them.

Other news

[Two appointed to Harvard Corporation](#) | Harvard Gazette

Mariano-Florentino (Tino) Cuéllar '93 has been elected as a member of the Harvard Corporation starting in July. He is justice of the Supreme Court of California, a longtime leading member of the Stanford faculty, a Harvard Overseer – and an esteemed member of Diverse Harvard.

[Dolores Huerta to receive Radcliffe Medal](#) | Harvard Gazette

Co-founder of United Farm Workers will be honored for key contributions to labor, Latino, and women’s rights.