

Blum Speech: Boston October 14, 2018

My name is Edward Blum and I am the president and founder of Students for Fair Admissions. In 2014, Student for Fair Admissions sued Harvard and the Univ. of North Carolina in federal court alleging both school's admissions policies were unfair and unconstitutional. When we filed those lawsuits this organization only had about 100 members, today we have close to 23,000 members.

We could not have achieved this growth without the help of many of the people who sponsored this rally. So, on behalf of our 23,000 members, I would like to thank YuKong Zhou, SB Woo, Yingchou Liu, Alex Chen, Lin Yang, David Wang, Jessica Zhang and May Meng for the dedication and sacrifice you and your organizations have made to make today's event possible.

As you all know, tomorrow begins a 3-week trial that will expose Harvard's discriminatory policies targeting Asian Americans to the federal court and the American people. I'm going to tell you about those practices in a minute, but before that, I want to talk briefly about Harvard University.

Let me begin by saying there is far, far more to admire about Harvard than to dislike about Harvard.

From the Krokodiloes—Harvard's men's acapella group—to the Dana-Farber Institute at Harvard Medical School, this university is an American gem—one of the most important academic institutions in the world.

We are not here to bash Harvard, or any other university. We are here because Harvard's admissions policies are discriminatory. And we have petitioned the courts to compel Harvard to stop these unlawful practices.

As we all know, our country is unique. Unlike most nations, we Americans have diverse backgrounds and diverse histories.

Some of us here today trace our roots back to Ireland and Italy and Mexico where famine and poverty drove our ancestors to this country.

Some of us here today have forbears who came to this land shackled in slave ships from West Africa.

Some of us here today trace our roots back to the ghettos of Poland and Ukraine where the devastation of world war and the Holocaust brought our parents or grandparents to this country.

And some of us are here today because you fled the tyranny and repression of Tiananmen Square.

So, regardless of where you or parents or your great, great, great grand parents came from, we are here today to reclaim the cornerstone of America's civil rights movement.

And that cornerstone is the proposition that your race and ethnicity should not be used to help you, or harm you, in your life's endeavors.

Your race and ethnicity should not be a factor when you apply for a job or are considered for a promotion. Neither should race be a factor in determining which congressional district you should be assigned to; nor to strike you from serving on a jury.

And race and ethnicity should not be a factor when a student applies to a university like Harvard or the University of North Carolina or the University of Texas, or any university.

In a multi-racial, multi-ethnic nation like ours, the admissions' bar cannot be raised for some races, and lowered for others.

We do not believe that students are defined by their skin color, sex, or ethnicity. Your race may define how you look, but it does not define who you are.

Your skin color does not reveal your likes and dislikes, whether you are an outgoing person or more of an introspective one; a leader or more of a follower; or whether you are passionate about sports or passionate about modern jazz.

A student can change her grades, standardized test scores, AP classes and out of school activities. But she cannot change her race and ethnicity--those are immutable, cosmetic characteristics. Every one of us is a unique individual and we must be judged as such.

Let me be clear: The mission of Students for Fair Admissions is to end racial classifications and preferences in college admissions. This is not a controversial goal. The American people support us. In poll after poll, over 70% of Americans do not believe that a student's race should be a factor in the admissions process.

During the next three weeks, the court and the world will learn how Harvard has systematically discriminated against Asian-American applicants for years.

But, sadly, this is not a new phenomenon: The history of Harvard's holistic discriminatory practices goes back nearly 100 years. As dozens of historians have detailed, back in the 1920s, Harvard's leadership believed it had too many Jews because almost a quarter of all Harvard freshmen were Jewish.

In 1920, in a letter to a colleague, Harvard President Abbott Lawrence Lowell warned that the increasing number of Jewish students enrolling at Harvard would ultimately "ruin the college."

To solve the Jewish overpopulation problem, Harvard invented the "holistic" admissions system, which diminished an applicant's academic achievements in favor of subjective factors like "leadership" and "sociability." Within a year, holistic admissions criteria decimated Jewish enrollment.

Today, Harvard's discriminatory policies now target Asian-Americans.

How do we know this?

During the last 4 years of litigation, Students for Fair Admissions has analyzed 6 years of Harvard's admissions data; we have deposed about 30 Harvard officials; and we have reviewed thousands of emails and documents.

Here is what the evidence concludes:

First-Harvard intentionally discriminates against Asian-American applicants.

Second-Harvard racially balances its incoming freshman class to ensure a certain racial percentage for whites, Hispanics, African-Americans and Asian- Americans.

Third- Race is not a minor factor, but is a predominant admissions factor.

And finally-Harvard never made any good-faith effort to use race-neutral means to shape its freshman class.

Not only did our experts conclude that Harvard's admissions practices harm Asian-Americans, but so did Harvard's own internal experts. Yes, you heard that correctly. Harvard concluded it was discriminating as well.

In 2013, a year before SFFA filed this lawsuit, Harvard's internal think tank conducted a study that was disclosed to Harvard's senior administrators showing that Harvard's policies harmed Asian- Americans.

Rather than address the study's results, Harvard's leaders killed it and then buried it. It is one thing to be unaware of an injustice, but to have an internal report detailing discrimination and not do anything about it is simply unpardonable.

As disturbing as this is, there is one fact about Harvard's admissions policies that is even more upsetting.

And that is how Harvard's in-house admissions officials rate Asian-Americans in what is called the "personal rating."

Asian-American applicants are significantly stronger than all other racial groups in academic performance—such as grades, test scores, AP classes and the like. They also perform very well in non-academic categories and have higher extracurricular scores than any other racial group.

In addition, Asian-American applicants receive higher overall scores from alumni interviewers than all other racial groups. And they receive strong scores from teachers and guidance counselors—scores that are nearly identical to white applicants.

Yet Harvard's in-house admissions officials assign Asian-Americans the lowest personal score of any racial group.

Harvard consistently rated Asian-American applicants lower than whites, Hispanics and African-Americans on traits like positive personality, likability, courage, kindness and being widely respected.

This is gravely unsettling regardless of your position on race-based affirmative action. Most Americans have come to reject racial stereotypes like these as they should.

When you treat and judge individuals differently because of their race, it frays the social fabric of a college campus, which will ultimately fray the social fabric of a nation.

Let us always remember that a university is more than the sum of its ethnic parts. Students should celebrate their commonalities as much as their differences.

Let me close by saying that, regardless of the outcome of this trial, the movement to end racial classifications and preferences in college admissions will not end. I am confident that the next generation of leaders are in this very gathering here today and I ask that you commit to this worthy goal for the benefit of all Americans.

Thank you.