



BLACK MALE INITIATIVE CONVENING

on Fisher v. University of Texas

Hosted by The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity &
Todd Anthony Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male

At The Ohio State University
September 17, 2012

TALKING POINTS

Traditional merit-based college admissions policies reward those who are already advantaged.

College admissions policies that consider only traditional measures of merit like grade-point average and standardized test scores create an advantage for those who are already advantaged. Performance on high stakes admissions tests like the SAT and ACT is highly correlated with family income. For example, in 2009, students who reported their family income as greater than \$200,000 annually posted the highest average score on the SAT. For these students, high access to opportunity, generally evidenced by high SAT or ACT scores, is cumulative. Access to high-performing primary and secondary schools leads to high test scores that lead to heightened opportunity to attend selective colleges and universities.

Traditional, merit-based college admissions policies have a “backward” vision.

College admissions policies that do not consider holistic factors, including race, look backward; they place significant weight on the past accomplishments of applicants without fully considering the potential of students to achieve academically in the future and to contribute to their communities and to the Nation after graduation.

Stereotype Threat can depress the performance of African American students on high-stakes standardized tests.

Research conducted by Claude Steele and others supports the proposition that stereotype threat can influence the performance of African American students on the ACT, SAT, LSAT and other high stakes college entrance examinations. This means that standardized test scores are a less reliable predictor of future academic success for African American students than for White students.

Stereotype threat is a very complex and nuanced concept. In simple terms, it is an unconscious response to a prevailing negative stereotype about an identifiable group by a member of that group. For example: the statistical fact that African American students generally score lower than White students on standardized college entrance examinations like the SAT, ACT and LSAT gives rise to overly-generalized negative stereotypes about the collective cognitive ability of all African Americans when compared to all Whites. An African American student who is



Kirwan Institute

Celebrating 10 years at The Ohio State University

kirwaninstitute.osu.edu



BLACK MALE INITIATIVE CONVENING

on Fisher v. University of Texas

Hosted by The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity &
Todd Anthony Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male

At The Ohio State University
September 17, 2012

aware of this stereotype understands—consciously or unconsciously—that it can have negative consequences on judgments made not only about the student but on judgments made about all African Americans and that these judgments can limit opportunity. So, when confronted with a standardized college entrance examination (typically and incorrectly perceived as a test of cognitive ability, i.e., “intelligence”), the student believes that poor performance on the exam will reinforce the negative stereotype and create negative consequences for all African Americans. In a classic stereotype threat scenario, this fear creates such a high level of stress and anxiety that a student’s cognitive function may be impaired while taking the test and the student may perform below his or her actual ability.

Flexible, race-conscious admissions policies can energize the democratic mission of higher education.

Most institutions of higher education in the U.S., and especially highly selective college and universities, publically acknowledge a responsibility to prepare students for civic engagement and to support fundamental democratic principles. However, traditional admissions criteria have not focused on identifying students who have strong potential to contribute to these goals. Holistic review of college applicants creates an opportunity to gauge the potential of prospective students to achieve in these important areas.

Programs like the Texas Ten Percent Plan alone do not achieve desirable levels of African American student enrollment in selective colleges and universities.

While state college access policies like the Texas Ten Percent Plan do expand college access for some students, these plans alone do not achieve optimal levels of racial and ethnic diversity. For example, personnel at the University of Texas report that after year of experience with the Ten Percent Plan, minority students feel racially isolated on campus and majority students feel that the number of minority students in the study body is insufficient to achieve the benefits of a diverse learning environment.

Structural barriers to opportunity and implicit racial bias have depressed life chances of African American men and boys.

Structural barriers to success in critical opportunity domains including education, employment, housing, criminal justice and civic engagement, have severely limited the ability of African American men and boys to fully realize their potential and contribute meaningfully to their families, their communities and to the nation. While most White Americans harbor negative unconscious attitudes toward African Americans and other populations of color, Black men are especially hard hit by implicit racial bias. Widespread biased reporting on black crime and



Kirwan Institute

Celebrating 10 years at The Ohio State University

kirwaninstitute.osu.edu



BLACK MALE INITIATIVE CONVENING

on Fisher v. University of Texas

Hosted by The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity &
Todd Anthony Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male

At The Ohio State University
September 17, 2012

distorted depictions of Black men as irresponsible, untrustworthy and dangerous have created a racialized landscape in which Black men and boys are underrated, undervalued and overlooked.

Racial/ethnic diversity in higher education is a compelling national interest.

The Supreme Court recognized race-conscious policies in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978) and *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003). The Court has repeatedly held that student body diversity is a compelling state interest pursued through holistic race-conscious admissions policies. Research supports this position. Studies indicate that diversity in higher education has many positive consequences, including the following:

- **enhancing the learning environment in the classroom**
- **breaking down racial and ethnic stereotypes**
- **stimulating complex thinking**
- **cultivating a greater appreciating for the ideas of others**
- **preparing students to participate more fully in a pluralistic democratic society**

Contrary to prevailing stereotypes, African American students do very well at selective colleges and universities.

There is no tangible evidence to support the proposition that admitting African American students to highly selective colleges and universities stigmatizes these students. To the contrary, Black students do very well academically on these campuses as evidenced by these data on Black male graduation rates:

Highly-Selective Private Research Universities Six Year Graduation Rates for Black Males

Brown University : 85.7%
Columbia University: 77.5%
Harvard University: 93.5%
Princeton University: 88.9%
Stanford University: 88.0%
University of Pennsylvania: 91.2%

(Source: Shaun Harper. Black Male Student Success in Higher Education. 2012)



Kirwan Institute

Celebrating 10 years at The Ohio State University

kirwaninstitute.osu.edu



BLACK MALE INITIATIVE CONVENING

on Fisher v. University of Texas

Hosted by The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity &
Todd Anthony Bell National Resource Center on the African American Male

At The Ohio State University
September 17, 2012

Expanding access to higher education by means of holistic race-conscious admissions policies is an important pathway to overcoming racial isolation and breaking down structural barriers to opportunity that impact African Americans.

The social conditions that create racial isolation and impede access to opportunity for African Americans constitute a separate compelling state interest, beyond student body diversity, that justifies the application of narrowly tailored race-conscious remedies. Because higher education is a “gate way” to expanded opportunity in other critical life domains, reducing barriers to a college education can have profound positive consequences not just for historically underserved populations but for the entire nation. As Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres suggest in *The Miner’s Canary*, racial inequality is an indication that the entire society is out of balance.



Kirwan Institute

Celebrating 10 years at The Ohio State University

kirwaninstitute.osu.edu