

In November, California to weigh in on reversing ban on affirmative action

The Stanford Daily: Stanford University

July 13, 2020 Monday

University Wire

Copyright 2020 UWIRE via U-Wire All Rights Reserved

Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1341 words

Byline: Rachel Jiang

Body

Across the Bay Area, car parades line parking lots and city streets, signs calling for an end to Proposition 16 posted on the car windows.

In simple terms, Proposition 16 is a race-based policy in favor of affirmative action, explained Anthony Lising Antonio M.S. '92, an associate professor at the Stanford Graduate School of Education. The measure will only affect public universities, but the campus community has never been shy about debating affirmative action policies, particularly since the University filed an amicus brief last year in support of Harvard's practice of diversity review in admissions decisions.

Creators of the Proposition 16 measure hope to address the racial achievement gap within the educational system by repealing Proposition 209 - a bill established in November 1996 that "prohibited the state from discriminating against or granting preferential treatment on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, and public contracting."

While Antonio thinks that Proposition 16 will provide underrepresented students with opportunities for higher education, Stanford College Republicans President Stephen Sills '22 says that the bill is a result of a misinterpretation of the achievement gap in California and, therefore, does not support the action.

"When adjusted for socioeconomic class, the racial gaps in overall achievement in California narrow substantially," Sills said. "Thus, socioeconomic disparities, if anything, should be the focus of any intervention rather than race."

Sills added that Proposition 16 may result in a racial quota system, where college administrations must admit a certain number of students from each race, because he noticed that other universities that implemented affirmative action, such as the Ivy League schools - Harvard University, for example - have resorted to that system.

Undergraduate student Katelin Zhou '23 disagrees. Proposition 16 will not place a quota-system on California public universities, she said, because it does not do enough to make race the determining factor of someone's college admission results.

"[Proposition 16 is] just looking at your racial identity, and [college admissions officers are] using that as a singular factor, one of many other factors including socioeconomic status, your qualifications, everything in conjunction for a holistic admission process," Zhou said.

In November, California to weigh in on reversing ban on affirmative action

Zhou added that many individuals in opposition to Proposition 16 are misinformed about what the bill does, which results in concerns about administrators possibly deprioritizing meritocracy in admission decisions.

The Black Student Union President Mohammad Gumma '22 noted that putting race as a factor in the administration process should level the inequality among students from different backgrounds since some encounter more uncontrollable setbacks compared to others; therefore, meritocracy naturally favors privileged students.

"This whole notion of meritocracy is based on inequity because oftentimes, these students do not have access to a lot of the resources that their more privileged counterparts have access to," Gumma said. "That's not to say that these universities will suddenly be admitting students who are 'unqualified...' I just want these universities to make sure that they are being intentional about recruiting these underrepresented students."

"It's not enough to just say, 'oh I'm going to make sure that we have this number of this type of student,'" he added.

Sills, on the other hand, does not believe the policy will succeed in leveling the playing field between students of different race or class. He cites a 2012 statistic which says that at UCLA, Hispanic/Latino and Black students were more likely to graduate in four years after Proposition 209 had been placed rather than before its implementation, which was in 1996. Repealing the 1996 measure will likely set unprepared students up for more obstacles in college; this is known as college mismatching.

As a low-income Hispanic and Chinese American student, Sills has personally dealt with the sudden heavy course load he received at the start of his college experience and the process of adapting to those changes. Therefore, he believes that using race as a factor in college admissions does not address or solve the achievement gap.

Furthermore, Sills argues that Proposition 16 will overlook groups such as Asian Americans and potentially increase racial tensions if passed. Recent analysis by the San Francisco Chronicle found that the affirmative action fight resurfacing in California has divided the Asian American community, with some Chinese-American groups actively organizing against affirmative action and some in support of it.

Zhou says that the oppositions' rhetoric of bringing up the model minority myth in order to push for votes against the bill is rooted in misinterpretation and misinformation.

For these reasons, Zhou says that some Asian American communities oppose the bill out of concern that the bill may manifest discrimination against Asian Americans in the college admissions process. However, from personal experience, Zhou has never believed that she has been discriminated against for her race both in college and in the admissions process.

"It's really easy to take the model minority narrative and mold it [into college admissions and employment] to cultivate feelings of anger and prejudice among Asians and make them feel like they're the ones being discriminated against," Zhou said. "A lot of times, people trying to advance their own agendas like to take advantage of Asians' being upset about prejudice and [use] it to channel their anger into [voting against] affirmative action."

Overall, Antonio, Zhou, Gumma and Sills all think Proposition 16 is likely to be passed in November because of the recent support for it in the State Assembly voting. Antonio states that the policy is just the first step in addressing educational racism.

"I wouldn't expect a quick rapid uptick [of] representation in our colleges and universities because there's a lot of barriers that cause that underrepresentation [in] the K-12 system as well, which is related to other issues [such as] poverty," Antonio said. Proposition 16 is "a step in the right direction."

Antonio says that affirmative action may incite a psychological effect on underrepresented races applying for highly selective colleges.

In November, California to weigh in on reversing ban on affirmative action

"Loss of affirmative action sent a chilly message to students of color about them not being welcomed to the University of California; in particular, in applications dropped," Antonio said. "So removing that unwelcoming zone could have a positive psychological effect."

Gumma, Antonio and Zhou say that although affirmative action does not solve the root issue of educational inequality, these issues can be addressed through educational reform after Proposition 16 passes.

Gumma hopes that the bill may prompt further discussion intended to enact change.

"There's a lot that needs to be reformed in the education system, and I am hoping that [with] the momentum of the Black Lives Matter movement, there will be a shift in discourse that allows the public [and] legislators to enact change in all of those realms," Gumma said.

Contact Rachel Jiang at [racheljiang310 'at' gmail.com](mailto:racheljiang310@gmail.com)

.css-10w0hkr{margin:0 auto;width:100%;}@media (min-width:1100px){.css-10w0hkr{width:650px;}}

While you're here...

We're a student-run organization committed to providing hands-on experience in journalism, digital media and business for the next generation of reporters. Your support makes a difference in helping give staff members from all backgrounds the opportunity to develop important professional skills and conduct meaningful reporting. All contributions are tax-deductible. Support the Daily\$50\$200\$1,000OtherMake my donation a monthly donation. Get Our EmailsDigest Rachel JiangRachel was a high school intern for The Daily in summer 2019..css-qmqbsq{margin:0 auto;width:100%;}@media (min-width:1100px){.css-qmqbsq{width:600px;}}

Load-Date: July 14, 2020