

## Prop. 16 could boost racial equity among university faculty

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### Body

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Aug 21, 2020( CalMatters: <https://calmatters.org> Delivered by Newstex) In summary Repealing the ban on affirmative action will make it easier for public colleges and universities to target underrepresented groups for faculty positions. Come November, California voters will determine the fate of affirmative action again. What they decide will have a huge impact on higher education. In 1996, voters passed Proposition 209, banning public agencies from considering race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in hiring, admissions and contracting. This year, if Proposition 16 passes, it will undo the ban on affirmative action. Proponents[1] say doing so could greatly affect the ethnic diversity of faculty at public colleges and universities, who would have greater freedom in efforts to recruit and hire people of color.

They point to data showing that while a majority of students at the University of California, California State University and California Community Colleges are students of color, most faculty are white. Opponents argue that affirmative action is itself a form of racism and that repealing Prop. 209 would have a disproportionate negative effect on Asian Americans, who comprise the largest group of UC students, and hurt white contractors seeking government bids. While 69% of students at public colleges and universities in California belonged to Asian American, Pacific Islander, Native American, Latino, or Black communities, the same was true[2] for just 32% of the tenured faculty, a 2018 report by Campaign for College Opportunity, a California advocacy group, found. At the University of California, a third of tenured faculty were women even though more than half of students were women, the report said. 'Proposition 209 has had a devastating impact on ethnic equal opportunity,' said Charles Toombs, an Africana Studies professor at San Diego State University and president of California Faculty Association, the union of CSU faculty. 'It has had an impact on student recruitment and significantly it has had an impact on the hiring of faculty of color' at California's public colleges and universities. Bias within campuses Though all backers interviewed for this story said faculty diversity has been imperiled because of Prop. 209, some affirmative action supporters think university leaders use it as a scapegoat to paper over their own disinterest in diversifying the faculty. Melina Abdullah, a professor of Pan-African Studies at Cal State Los Angeles and co-founder of Black Lives Matter Los Angeles, said that recently the campus president and provost asked Black faculty to volunteer as mentors to Black student applicants while also calling and recruiting them to enroll at the campus — which aren't faculty roles, she said. Abdullah said the campus was relying on 'the sense of responsibility that Black faculty have to Black students, rather than investing institutional resources to recruit black students.' Meanwhile, she said campus leadership told her that there couldn't be any targeted recruitment of Black students because of Prop. 209. The ban on affirmative action, she said, has 'been specifically used to advance anti-blackness' as well as being used by 'institutions, including the Cal State system, to excuse their own anti-Black policies.' Dr. Abdullah says the affirmative action ban has 'been specifically used to advance anti-blackness.' Photo by Alexis Hunley for CalMatters In another instance, human resources barred her department from saying that they were looking for people who

## Prop. 16 could boost racial equity among university faculty

could specifically serve Black students, according to Abdullah, even if the job listing didn't call for a specific race for the candidate. The serving students line 'was regularly edited out of the search process,' she said. Michele Siqueiros, president of The Campaign for College Opportunity and a member of the Yes on Prop. 16 ballot measure committee that serves as leadership on the campaign, said public institutions under Prop. 16 could set faculty diversity goals for under-represented groups, something that currently can't be done. Keep tabs on the latest California policy and politics news 'I think folks are uncomfortable with the acknowledgement that perhaps you're discriminating against women when 70% of your faculty are male,' she said. All three public systems of higher education in California have endorsed overturning Prop. 209, as well as numerous unions, business groups and lawmakers, including U.S. senators Dianne Feinstein and Kamala Harris. Several California pro-sports teams have endorsed [3] Prop 16, as well. As of Aug. 20, the Yes on 16 side has raised more than \$3.2 million for its campaign, to just \$112,678 on the No side, according to the office of the Secretary of State. Proponents of affirmative action say a repeal of Prop. 209 can help repair some, though not all, of the damage wrought by systemic racism as it ravaged racial and ethnic communities for centuries. Siqueiros said California public colleges and universities today could do more to attract diverse faculty without outright asking for specific identity, such as placing job ads in affinity groups for Latino or Black professionals in higher education in addition to mainstream job boards. 'Unless we're intentional about wanting to recruit faculty of color and then specifically weight that in the hiring process, it's hard to imagine how we'll get to a more diverse faculty anytime in the near future.' Eloy Ortiz Oakley, chancellor of the California community colleges In a UC Davis survey of community college presidents and chancellors [4], several college leaders described 'unnecessary disqualifications of minority candidates for dubious reasons.' One CEO said that 'many faculty on committees do not proactively seek out candidates of color OR if there are candidates of color, they do not advance them.' Eloy Ortiz Oakley, chancellor of the California Community Colleges, said the community college system has a racism problem in hiring faculty, but also that it's not necessarily that simple. 'The hiring process has an inherent bias problem,' he said. 'Some scholars would argue that that is one and the same as racism.' Targeted faculty recruitment Backers of reinstating affirmative action in California say programs that specifically target under-represented groups in the faculty and school leadership are what's needed to have professors and deans resemble the diversity of the students they serve. 'I understand that that creates a lot of nervousness for some people,' Oakley said. 'But the fact of the matter is that, unless we're intentional about wanting to recruit faculty of color and then specifically weight that in the hiring process, then, it's hard to imagine how we'll get to a more diverse faculty anytime in the near future.' Oakley has in mind a hiring process that first establishes a need for a particular demographic group, such as women in the sciences or Black faculty in health programs. Then, after hiring managers pick the most qualified candidates, those who fit a campus need would receive added weight to their candidate profile. He also mentioned the idea of using state money to pay for a portion of an under-represented student's graduate studies in exchange for working as an instructor at a community college. Siqueiros said being able to direct financial resources to programs that specifically build the faculty ranks within an under-represented group is a smarter use of time and money than the current system. 'If I have a leak in one room of my house and water is coming in, I don't tear out the entire roof if the rest of the roof is in good shape. I fix that particular leak,' she said. 'We have to target our resources to ensure that we're addressing the shortage. The other side Prop. 209 emerged during a conservative time in California politics, when Republican Gov. Pete Wilson championed the ban on affirmative action as well as a constitutional amendment that would have blocked undocumented residents from accessing public services like medical care and school [5]. '(Affirmative action) is really the enemy of white people who are contractors and Americans of Asian descent who are trying to get into the University of California at Berkeley,' said Ward Connerly, President of Californians for Equal Rights, the group fighting to stop Prop. 16. 'What problem it was supposed to fix was literally the problem of my existence as a Black person who can think and be a scholar and be a teacher.' Tiffany Willoughby-Herard, UC Irvine professor Connerly made those remarks at a virtual fundraiser last week and was one of the central figures behind Prop. 209 when he was a member of the UC Board of Regents, a position he held until 2005. A land-use consultant, Connerly was also a long-time friend and consultant for Wilson [6], who appointed him to the board. Wilson, who ran a failed campaign for president in 1995, made ending affirmative action [7] a campaign plank. Connerly would go on to support ballot initiatives in other states to ban affirmative action. Last month he wrote in the Wall Street Journal [8] that calling the U.S. systemically racist 'is a false narrative that fuels racial paranoia, division and hatred.' But targeted hiring is a necessity in a society that sees itself as colorblind but is anything but, Prop. 16 backers say. Today's likely voters are more liberal and less white [9] than they were 24 years ago [10], and most of them didn't vote back then: Almost 80 percent of currently registered voters did not vote in 1996, according to voter data firm Political Data, Inc.

## Prop. 16 could boost racial equity among university faculty

Developing diversity through partnerships With affirmative action banned, public colleges and universities have had to find roundabout ways of recruiting more underrepresented students and faculty. One such program is a partnership[11] between the UC system and historically Black colleges and Universities. Started in 2011, it offers undergraduates at HBCUs entry into short research programs at UC campuses. The hope is that those same students will then be more likely to attend UC graduate schools. Data suggest the program is working: Black students who have gone through the initiative and are admitted to a UC doctoral program are much more likely to enroll at the UC than other Black students who are admitted. Jessica Millward, a UC Irvine associate professor of history, and Tiffany Willoughby-Herard, a UC Irvine associate professor of African American studies, received a UC-HBCU Pathways Grant[12] to partner with Morgan State University, a public and historically black research university in Baltimore. Both professors described Prop. 209 as inflicting a lot of pain and hurt, marshalling the specters of racial oppression that have haunted the state and country for generations. 'What problem it was supposed to fix was literally the problem of my existence as a Black person who can think and be a scholar and be a teacher,' said Willoughby-Herard. Their project invites[13] several undergraduate students from HBCUs to develop digital archives chronicling activist movements and the key actors in them. The program encourages students grappling with contemporary issues of racism and equity to 'take what's going on in their head and put it into kind of a political and scholarly language' that they can pursue in graduate school and beyond, said Millward. 'There's just too much of a culture on the campuses of being willing to not see Black and Brown students as having a lot of promise,' said Willoughby-Herard. 'So that's really what this program tries to undo and to make sure that students of promise get to be able to access the opportunities that their peers are accessing.' Support in-depth reporting that matters As a nonprofit newsroom, we rely on the generosity of Californians like you to cover the issues that matter. If you value our reporting, support our journalism with a donation. [ 1]: <https://calmatters.org/justice/2020/06/affirmative-action-california-aca5-webe/> [ 2]: <https://collegecampaign.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2018-Left-Out-Executive-Summary-Final.pdf> [ 3]: <https://voteyesonprop16.org/news/the-warriors-giants-as-49ers-sharks-quakes-and-roots-agree/> [ 4]: [https://education.ucdavis.edu/sites/main/files/ucdavis\\_wheelhouse\\_research\\_brief\\_vol5no3\\_final\\_0.pdf](https://education.ucdavis.edu/sites/main/files/ucdavis_wheelhouse_research_brief_vol5no3_final_0.pdf) [ 5]: [https://ballotpedia.org/California\\_Proposition\\_187,\\_Illegal\\_Aliens\\_Ineligible\\_for\\_Public\\_Benefits\\_\(1994\)](https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_187,_Illegal_Aliens_Ineligible_for_Public_Benefits_(1994)) [ 6]: <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1996-03-31-tm-53137-story.html> [ 7]: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1995/09/30/gov-wilson-quits-presidential-campaign/e1c2bcb9-27f3-433d-b579-e892d4338f63/> [ 8]: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/america-isnt-a-racist-country-11595628914> [ 9]: [https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/JTF\\_VoterProfilesJTF.pdf](https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/JTF_VoterProfilesJTF.pdf) [ 10]: <https://ca-times.brightspotcdn.com/08/c3/82a8919e4b098f2301898b647ed1/43120439.pdf> [ 11]: [https://www.ucop.edu/uc-hbcu-initiative/\\_files/faculty-grants/uc-hbcu-rfp.pdf](https://www.ucop.edu/uc-hbcu-initiative/_files/faculty-grants/uc-hbcu-rfp.pdf) [ 12]: <https://www.ucop.edu/uc-hbcu-initiative/> [ 13]: <https://sites.uci.edu/activiststudiowest/>

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