| 1  | IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES              |
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| 3  | CRYSTAL D. MEREDITH, :                                 |
| 4  | CUSTODIAL PARENT AND :                                 |
| 5  | NEXT FRIEND OF JOSHUA :                                |
| 6  | RYAN MCDONALD, :                                       |
| 7  | Petitioner :   |
| 8  | v. : No. 05-915  |
| 9  | JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD :                               |
| 10 | OF EDUCATION, ET AL. :                                 |
| 11 | x  |
| 12 | Washington, D.C.                                       |
| 13 | Monday, December 4, 2006                               |
| 14 |  |
| 15 | The above-entitled matter came on for oral             |
| 16 | argument before the Supreme Court of the United States |
| 17 | at 11:04 a.m.  |
| 18 | APPEARANCES:   |
| 19 | TEDDY B. GORDON, ESQ., Louisville, Ky.; on behalf      |
| 20 | of the Petitioner.                                     |
| 21 | GEN. PAUL D. CLEMENT, ESQ., Solicitor General,         |
| 22 | Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.; as            |
| 23 | amicus curiae, supporting the Petitioner.              |
| 24 | FRANCIS J. MELLEN, JR., ESQ., on behalf of the         |
| 25 | Respondents.   |

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| 1  | PROCEEDINGS  |
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| 2  | (11:04 a.m.)   |
| 3  | CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We'll hear argument             |
| 4  | next in 05-915, Meredith versus Jefferson County Board |
| 5  | of Education.  |
| 6  | Mr. Gordon.  |
| 7  | ORAL ARGUMENT OF TEDDY B. GORDON                       |
| 8  | ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER                            |
| 9  | MR. GORDON: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it              |
| 10 | please the Court:                                      |
| 11 | Crystal Meredith wanted to do what most moms           |
| 12 | and dads do all across this country. She wanted to put |
| 13 | her son's hand in hers and walk around the corner and  |
| 14 | enroll her son in school.                              |
| 15 | But the enrollment, there was a barrier, and           |
| 16 | the pickaxe, that barrier was person satisfied as a    |
| 17 | quota. There were seats within the school. It wasn't   |
| 18 | at capacity. It wasn't near any one of the percentages |
| 19 | or tipping percentages that the quota system in        |
| 20 | Jefferson County public schools applied. But she was   |
| 21 | not allowed in.  |
| 22 | JUSTICE GINSBURG: Was that because she                 |
| 23 | applied 4 months late? If she had applied before the   |
| 24 | deadline in March, would you be here? Would there be   |
| 25 | any issue?   |

- 1 MR. GORDON: Well, of course, Justice
- 2 Ginsburg, she moved into the system in August. When she
- 3 moved into the system, she was assigned to a school
- 4 called Breckenridge-Franklin, which was an all year
- 5 round school. Then she was -- her choice was managed
- 6 and she was sent an hour away from where her other
- 7 school is. She applied by transfer, which is the system
- 8 that you use.
- 9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Where was she living
- 10 before?
- 11 MR. GORDON: I think she was living in
- 12 Florida, and she moved into Kentucky.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: So she -- that was --
- 14 August was the first opportunity she had to apply?
- MR. GORDON: Yes. So that's across the
- 16 board. Anyone that moves in, they are -- there is a
- 17 cluster school or an attempt school, and if you are not
- 18 -- a majority of the time you are not allowed there
- 19 because of your race. In other words, they want to
- 20 assign children to schools that don't have the greater
- 21 percentages of either African-American or Caucasian. So
- 22 in Bloom Elementary, although it was 67-33 -- and keep
- 23 in mind in kindergarten, according to their own rules
- 24 and regulations, didn't even apply. The plan was so
- 25 inflexible --

1 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But she, she could 2 have -- if she had been there at the deadline, the child 3 would have been admitted to -- if she had been there in 4 March instead of August? 5 MR. GORDON: But the deadline applies to 6 that school which presumably is closest to one's 7 residence. Now, whether or not you get into that school or don't get into the school still depends on the quota. 8 9 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Well, we're past that. 10 When she didn't get the assignment that she requested for her son --11 12 MR. GORDON: Sure. 13 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- did she appeal that? 14 MR. GORDON: She filed a transfer. The 15 transfer was denied. And at that time, litigation had 16 commenced and because litigation had commenced -- and 17 routinely these appeals are denied. All of her efforts 18 were futile. 19 JUSTICE GINSBURG: How about for first 20 grade? Did she make an application for first grade? 21 MR. GORDON: Me understanding is that she did. That was denied, because the only time Joshua got 22 23 into --24 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And that's in the record, 25 that she made an application for the first grade?

- 1 MR. GORDON: I believe it is. I believe it
- 2 is. In either event, if she didn't it would have been
- 3 futile because we had already made her the third amended
- 4 complaint on behalf of all the parties, and we had asked
- 5 for injunctive relief within the litigation. But Joshua
- 6 did not get into the school because of -- until they
- 7 moved. They had to move a block away. So if you live
- 8 in one block and you can't get into that school, your
- 9 choice is managed. The plan was clearly inflexibility
- 10 and it didn't apply to kindergarten anyhow, but it still
- 11 caused our Joshua to go an hour away from his home.
- 12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Do you have a claim
- 13 for damages as well.
- MR. GORDON: Yes, Your Honor.
- 15 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: With respect to this
- 16 plaintiff?
- 17 MR. GORDON: Yes, Your Honor. I believe
- 18 it's the third amended complaint, the May 2nd complaint,
- 19 and there was a request for \$25,000 damages.
- 20 And within these schools, in other words,
- 21 this honorable Court has never applied, other than in
- 22 remedial, has never applied compelling interest in a K
- 23 through 12 setting. In fact, those rights are not
- 24 co-extensive. The school -- this honorable Court has
- 25 previously stated in, for example, the Hazelwood case,

- 1 which was a First Amendment right case, that that didn't
- 2 apply to K through 12, or should it be 1 through 12
- 3 setting.
- 4 And in the Hazelwood case, that was a basic
- 5 First Amendment right and of course the First Amendment
- 6 right was exactly what Justice Powell championed as
- 7 academic freedom within the Bakke case. So clearly
- 8 Bakke and Grutter are distinguishable. This falls into
- 9 Gratz, where you clearly have a quota, not less than 15
- 10 or greater than 50 percent, is totally inflexible as
- 11 applied to our --
- 12 JUSTICE GINSBURG: How does it compare with
- 13 the system that was in effect from, what was it, 1975
- 14 until 2000?
- MR. GORDON: I'm sorry. It's the same
- 16 remedial program that -- this Court has found even in
- 17 Dowd that when the remedial program has achieved its
- 18 result we should no longer carve out that exemption
- 19 under the Equal Protection Clause.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Do you think that there's
- 21 something of an anomaly there, that you have a system
- 22 that is forced on the school, that it doesn't want it,
- 23 works for 25 years, and then the school board doesn't
- 24 have to keep it any more, but it decides it's worked
- 25 rather well, so we'll keep it.

- 1 What's constitutionally required one day
- 2 gets constitutionally prohibited the next day. That's
- 3 very odd.
- 4 MR. GORDON: Well, I take issue that it
- 5 worked very well. In other words, did the Jefferson
- 6 County --
- 7 JUSTICE GINSBURG: The board decided it
- 8 liked the way things were going, so it kept it or
- 9 something close to it.
- MR. GORDON: Well, of course Brown versus
- 11 Topeka Board of Education was time applicable. If you
- 12 use time applicable now for the Jefferson County Public
- 13 Schools --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: I'm talking about the
- 15 plan that they've had for 25 years, and they decided to
- 16 keep it.
- MR. GORDON: And in the Hampton case, which
- 18 I won, all right, they didn't go to any race-neutral
- 19 alternatives at all. As Justice Kennedy pointed out --
- 20 I'm sorry.
- JUSTICE SOUTER: Mr. Gordon, in responding
- 22 to Justice Ginsburg's question, don't you have to deal
- 23 with the fact that this Court said in the second Swann
- 24 case that the -- that a school district, particularly a
- 25 school district like Swann which had been in violation,

- 1 had been found in violation, had the same interest after
- 2 unitary status had been attained in maintaining the
- 3 unitary status as it had in reaching unitary status
- 4 beforehand; that if those interests are identical why
- 5 doesn't it follow that the means to achieve those two
- 6 interests, unitary status from segregation in one case,
- 7 preservation of unitary status in the other, are
- 8 reasonable if they are identical?
- 9 GENERAL CLEMENT: Well, Justice Souter, this
- 10 Court over and over again has said once a remedial plan
- 11 is accepted there should be race-neutral alternatives
- 12 under the narrow and tailored requirement. What this
- 13 school board did after I won --
- 14 JUSTICE SOUTER: Race-neutral alternatives
- 15 for what? To accomplish what?
- 16 MR. GORDON: To accomplish the same means.
- 17 In other words, what they could have done, as
- 18 Justice Kennedy pointed out, was put more magnet
- 19 schools, more traditional schools, have more open
- 20 enrollment.
- 21 JUSTICE SCALIA: Mr. Gordon, isn't it the
- 22 case that once you've achieved unitary status, which
- 23 means that the effects of past intentional
- 24 discrimination have been eliminated, the only way you
- 25 can lose unitary status is to discriminate

- 1 intentionally? Isn't that right?
- 2 MR. GORDON: Certainly. That's the Dow
- 3 case, that says you no longer --
- 4 JUSTICE SOUTER: And isn't there a
- 5 distinction between unitary status and unitary
- 6 condition? Unitary condition is a descriptive
- 7 situation. It describes a district in which there is,
- 8 in fact, enough of a racial mix so that there is no
- 9 credible claim either that there is de facto or de jure
- 10 segregation; isn't that correct? There is such a thing
- 11 as unitary, a unitary condition?
- MR. GORDON: Certainly.
- 13 JUSTICE SOUTER: And is the preservation of
- 14 a unitary condition a legitimate or indeed a compelling
- 15 governmental objective?
- MR. GORDON: In Hampton, this -- our Court
- found that it was unitary status as opposed to unitary
- 18 condition.
- 19 JUSTICE SOUTER: Uh-huh.
- MR. GORDON: If you want to go with unitary
- 21 condition, then I still think you go back to Brown and
- 22 you say has it worked. In other words, let's make it
- 23 time applicable. Does this honorable Court --
- JUSTICE SOUTER: What do you mean, it
- 25 doesn't work? I don't understand.

- 1 MR. GORDON: It hasn't worked. It just
- 2 absolutely hasn't worked. So we've decided --
- JUSTICE SOUTER: I don't understand what it
- 4 is that hasn't worked.
- 5 MR. GORDON: Why do we have to choose
- 6 between diversity and educational outcome? I thought it
- 7 was supposed to be both. Why can't we have diverse --
- 8 why can't we have them both. It's not diversity or
- 9 educational outcome. It's diversity and educational
- 10 outcome. For 30 years in this country --
- 11 JUSTICE SOUTER: I think that's what your
- 12 friends on the other side are arguing.
- 13 MR. GORDON: No. The friends on the other
- 14 side are arguing that there's some type of improvement
- in educational outcome solely because you sit black
- 16 children next to white children.
- JUSTICE BREYER: Not an improvement exactly,
- 18 but maybe from the Constitution's point of view. That
- 19 Constitution wanted, as they said in the Slaughterhouse
- 20 cases, to take people who had formerly been slaves and
- 21 their children and make them full members of American
- 22 society. And part of that was that the State couldn't
- 23 insist that they go to separate schools.
- Now, the question from a constitutional
- 25 point of view that you're being asked is how could that

- 1 Constitution which says that this is intolerable, that
- 2 segregated school, and insist that the school boards in
- 3 Swann and elsewhere take the black children and white
- 4 children and integrate them? How could the Constitution
- 5 the day that that decree is removed tell the school
- 6 board it cannot make that effort any more, it can't do
- 7 what it's been doing, and we'll send the children back
- 8 to their black schools and their white schools?
- 9 That I take it is why the Court in Swann
- 10 said explicitly that you could use race as a factor in
- 11 the public schools when the school board so chooses.
- 12 Now, that's the general question that I think
- 13 Justice Ginsburg began and Justice Souter was following
- 14 it up. And I would appreciate your response.
- MR. GORDON: My response is that you have
- 16 those series of cases that say once you've achieved the
- 17 unitary status, you know longer get to carve out that
- 18 exemption to the Fourteenth Amendment, and if we're
- 19 going to carve out these exemptions to the Fourteenth
- 20 Amendment, if we're going to say we're going to not
- 21 apply Gratz where it's a quota system and we are solely,
- 22 without any type of individual holistic review applied
- 23 to these kids, then there should be some improvement in
- 24 --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: How would you apply a

- 1 holistic review to a kindergartner?
- 2 MR. GORDON: Well, of course this system
- 3 didn't apply to kindergarten anyhow. But the answer is
- 4 it's not. You have to decide.
- 5 JUSTICE GINSBURG: I can understand an
- 6 approach to an applicant for an elite school and so you
- 7 judge it on all these merit factors and other factors.
- 8 But for a child entering the first grade, I don't
- 9 understand this individualized holistic approach. What
- 10 else is there other than that the child is of a certain
- 11 age and therefore will enter a certain grade?
- 12 MR. GORDON: That it would violate your
- 13 ruling in Gratz --
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: I want to know -- you
- 15 said that there are alternate, alternative means, so I'm
- 16 asking what they are.
- MR. GORDON: Out of Hampton, there was no
- 18 race-neutral -- race alternative means used. For me, I
- 19 would use all these millions of dollars. I would reduce
- 20 teacher-student ratio. I would -- I would give
- 21 incentive pay to the better teachers. I would more
- 22 magnet schools, more traditional schools. We presuppose
- that we're going to have bad schools and good schools in
- 24 this country. I don't think we can no longer, longer
- 25 accept that.

| 1   | We can no longer accept an achievement gap               |
|-----|--|
| 2   | of 25 to 30 points by the majority of African American   |
| 3   | kids in Jefferson County, Kentucky, and throughout this  |
| 4   | country by the fourth grade. Educational outcome is the  |
| 5   | only key, the only key to unlock the chains of poverty.  |
| 6   | JUSTICE GINSBURG: And it's not that white                |
| 7   | children and black children are no longer sitting        |
| 8   | together on the same school benches?                     |
| 9   | MR. GORDON: Then let's make sure they go to              |
| LO  | the better schools. In Jefferson County, Kentucky,       |
| L1  | racial politics is involved when we had so much white    |
| L2  | flight. African Americans in Jefferson County,           |
| L3  | Kentucky, the largest percent go to the worst performing |
| L 4 | schools. The lowest percent go to the better performing  |
| L5  | schools. That can't be constitutional. That can't be     |
| L 6 | discriminatory, and that can't be an exemption under the |
| L7  | Fourteenth Amendment and Equal Protection.               |
| L8  | I'd like to save a little bit, the remainder             |
| L9  | of my time, Your Honor.                                  |
| 20  | CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.               |
| 21  | General Clement.   |
| 22  | ORAL ARGUMENT OF PAUL D. CLEMENT                         |
| 23  | ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES AS AMICUS CURIAE          |
| 24  | SUPPORTING THE PETITIONER                                |
| 25  | GENERAL CLEMENT: Mr. Chief Justice, and may              |

- 1 it please the Court:
- 2 Petitioner's son was denied the opportunity
- 3 to transfer from Young Elementary School to Bloom
- 4 Elementary School solely on the basis of his race.
- 5 JUSTICE STEVENS: General Clement, can I ask
- 6 you a question that's prompted really by your argument
- 7 in the last case. I wonder about the purity of the
- 8 motive that's required. Supposing you had a city like
- 9 Chicago with a neighborhood school system and in one
- 10 neighborhood there was a school that was 100 percent
- 11 African American, both student body and faculty, and up
- on the North Side there's a school that's 100 percent
- 13 white, both students and faculty. Would it be
- 14 permissible for the school board to decide that it would
- 15 be healthy for both schools to have five African
- 16 American schools in the North Side school and five white
- 17 teachers in the South Side school?
- 18 GENERAL CLEMENT: Justice Stevens --
- 19 JUSTICE STEVENS: And then order that, hire
- 20 teachers to do that?
- 21 GENERAL CLEMENT: I think I'd have to -- I
- 22 mean, I think it would depend --
- JUSTICE STEVENS: The only purpose is racial
- 24 integration.
- 25 GENERAL CLEMENT: I think if you build into

- 1 the hypo that the only purpose was race and then it was
- 2 done in a way that made it express that the teachers
- 3 were going to be moved, that you were basically going to
- 4 have five and five, you were going to have a quota at
- 5 the two schools on the basis of race, I would say that
- 6 that would be unconstitutional.
- 7 I would think, though, that there are many
- 8 ways you can accomplish similar objectives without
- 9 making it so explicit. And I do think that in this
- 10 context, I mean, there is an independent constitutional
- 11 value in not having these kind of express racial
- 12 classifications drawn.
- 13 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I understand, and I'm just
- 14 wondering whether in your view that independent value
- 15 could ever be trumped by the obvious countervailing
- 16 value of having some African Americans see some white
- 17 teachers and vice versa?
- 18 GENERAL CLEMENT: Oh, but I think that's the
- 19 point, which is that is an important objective, but I
- 20 have little doubt that that can be accomplished without
- 21 the kind of five by five quotas.
- JUSTICE BREYER: You have doubt -- you have
- 23 little doubt. Are you an educational expert? I mean,
- 24 the -- it seems to me from what I read, that there is a
- 25 terrible problem in the country. The problem is that

- 1 there are lots and lots of school districts that are
- 2 becoming more and more segregated in fact, and that
- 3 school boards all over are struggling with this problem.
- 4 And if they knew an easy way, they'd do it.
- 5 So I don't know whether this is exactly the
- 6 only way to do it or not. I do know courts are not very
- 7 good at figuring that out. And I guess that's why the
- 8 Court previously has said it is primarily up to the
- 9 school district. What's your response?
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Whatever it takes.
- 11 GENERAL CLEMENT: Justice Breyer, if I could
- 12 be clear, though, what I was saying in response to
- 13 Justice Stevens' question was really focused not on the
- 14 broader problem, but specifically with respect to
- 15 faculties. And I think that one is a little easier in
- 16 the sense that I don't know of any school districts that
- 17 have tried to maintain the kind of express quotas in
- 18 teaching that he was indicating. I'm not here to tell
- 19 you that this problem is simple to solve. I'm here to
- 20 tell you, though, that I think the Constitution provides
- 21 an answer.
- 22 JUSTICE STEVENS: Just say some. We want
- 23 to -- we're going to make a decision there will be some
- 24 white teachers and some African-American teachers in the
- 25 other. And we're going to do it no matter -- if the

- 1 Constitution permits it. And that's our only motive.
- 2 GENERAL CLEMENT: Well, Justice Stevens, let
- 3 me tell you what I certainly think they could do, which
- 4 is to say, look, you know, we don't have any balance in
- 5 these two faculties. What we're going to do is we're
- 6 going to mix some of them up, we're going to do it in a
- 7 way that looks at a variety of factors, including who is
- 8 good with young kids, who is good with older kids.
- 9 JUSTICE STEVENS: My example is 100 percent
- 10 motive to avoid 100 percent segregation.
- 11 GENERAL CLEMENT: And I think if what they
- 12 end up doing at the end is not only a hundred percent
- 13 motive, but a racial classification, then I think runs
- 14 afoul of the Constitution.
- 15 JUSTICE STEVENS: Just some, any without
- 16 violating the Constitution.
- 17 GENERAL CLEMENT: Just to be clear, our
- 18 answer to the hypothetical a hundred percent motivation,
- 19 no racial classification, is that it is still okay.
- 20 Now, some members of the Court may disagree with us on
- 21 that. But what I would say is it probably doesn't have
- 22 that great an import in practice, because although it is
- 23 easy to come up with the hypothetical that race is the
- 24 absolute and sole motivating factor, I think in this
- 25 context in particular, I mean, nobody -- you know,

- 1 nobody is trying to do this solely for a race-based
- 2 motive. In this context, they also have an educational
- 3 goal.
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: General Clement, do
- 5 you know how Joshua would have been assigned prior to
- 6 the establishment of unitary status in this case?
- 7 GENERAL CLEMENT: He would clearly have been
- 8 assigned to one school, and one set of schools on the
- 9 basis of his race.
- 10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: You don't know
- 11 whether that would have been the magnet or the so-called
- 12 resides school or somewhere else?
- 13 GENERAL CLEMENT: No, I quess I don't. And
- 14 maybe I'm missing something. But I think that -- you
- 15 know, the dual school system predated the court ordered
- 16 decree, which is part of where we have gotten to with
- 17 resides schools and the like. If I can come back to the
- 18 facts of this case, I think it's important to recognize
- 19 that he was denied transfer to Bloom, even though there
- 20 were empty seats available at Bloom school.
- 21 So if he had been an African-American, he
- 22 would have been allowed to transfer to Bloom. Instead,
- 23 he was prevented. And there was an empty seat sitting
- 24 there in that school. And that's why I think this case
- 25 does prevent a very stark racial quota.

1 JUSTICE SOUTER: May I ask you this, and I 2 think this applies to the case we have got, as well as 3 to Justice Stevens' hypothetical. You said in 4 Justice Stevens' -- in answer to Justice Stevens' 5 hypothetical, that they could achieve a result, 6 legitimately achieve a result of racial mixture within 7 the respective faculties of these schools if they took 8 other things in addition to race into consideration. 9 You mentioned ability as teachers and so on. 10 But at the end of the day, the object of 11 doing this, which Justice Stevens' hypo assumed, and I think the object of doing it which your answer assumed, 12 was the achievement of racial mixture in the faculties. 13 14 My question is: Why do thy have to hide the 15 ball by saying, oh, we're going to consider these other 16 things, ability to teach, educational credits, whatever 17 you could come up with when at the beginning and at the 18 end, the objective is to achieve a racial mix? 19 Why can't they do that candidly and employ a 20 criterion that candidly addresses that objective? 21 GENERAL CLEMENT: Well, Justice Souter, there are several responses. One is that the 22 23 Constitution puts a particular premium on avoiding 24 express racial classifications. 25 JUSTICE SOUTER: And it has developed that

- 1 concern in cases in which the obvious use of race was to
- 2 hurt or to stigmatize. Here, there is stigmatization
- 3 going on as between black and white, when we say there
- 4 is a value in mixing them up.
- 5 Therefore, why should that same concern
- 6 about referring to race at all be applied in this case.
- 7 GENERAL CLEMENT: Well, Justice Souter, you
- 8 may have developed that jurisprudence in cases where it
- 9 was clear there was stigma going on, but you have
- 10 extended it in Croson and in Adarand across the board.
- 11 And I have to say --
- 12 JUSTICE SOUTER: We have extended it in
- 13 cases in which benefits were being denied. In
- 14 Justice Stevens' hypothetical, and so far as I know in
- 15 the kindergarten system in these cases, no educational
- 16 benefit was being denied.
- 17 GENERAL CLEMENT: I think --
- 18 JUSTICE SOUTER: Nothing was being rationed.
- 19 GENERAL CLEMENT: Well, I think choices were
- 20 being denied. And I think you made the distinction
- 21 earlier between an educational -- guarantee of some
- 22 educational opportunity and a choice. But --
- JUSTICE SOUTER: But that is simply another
- 24 way -- when you say it is the choice that's being
- 25 denied, and that has to be the focus of the analysis,

- 1 that is simply another way of saying you may never use
- 2 the means of race-conscious distribution to achieve the
- 3 educational objective. You're saying the same thing in
- 4 a different way.
- 5 GENERAL CLEMENT: That may be,
- 6 Justice Souter. But what I guess I would say is the
- 7 logic of your argument would certainly require
- 8 reconsideration of the Gratz case. And this Court in
- 9 that context thought that individualized consideration
- 10 even if it was going to be very difficult in the context
- of the University of Michigan's 25,000 admissions to the
- 12 undergraduate program, this Court said individualized
- 13 consideration was part of the constitutional guarantee.
- 14 JUSTICE SOUTER: In Gratz, the
- 15 characteristics of individuals that could be considered
- 16 were arguably relevant to a distribution decision.
- 17 Here, the sole point is not to achieve a quota by
- 18 relaxing other standards. The whole point is to achieve
- 19 a value which comes from mixing the races, from
- 20 distribution.
- 21 And, therefore, why is it appropriate to
- look to other things as opposed to looking at that
- 23 candidly, if that is a legitimate objective?
- 24 GENERAL CLEMENT: Because I think,
- 25 Justice Souter, if you think it is an important value to

- 1 have a degree of integration in the schools, well, I
- 2 think you can take race neutral means that will get you
- 3 a degree of integration in the schools. What I think is
- 4 troubling, and what happens in cases like this --
- 5 JUSTICE SOUTER: But you may use those race
- 6 neutral means only for the purpose of achieving that
- 7 mixture. I take it that's the assumption of your
- 8 answer.
- 9 GENERAL CLEMENT: That's right.
- 10 JUSTICE SOUTER: The objective is fine. The
- 11 important thing is simply to hide the ball.
- 12 GENERAL CLEMENT: But if you decide that
- 13 candor is an affirmative good in the use -- in the race
- 14 area, I think what you get is necessarily what you have
- 15 here, which is strict racial bands. 50, 15 percent.
- 16 That's not a degree of integration. It is a clear
- 17 effort to try to get the individual schools to mimic the
- 18 overall demographics --
- JUSTICE BREYER: Why is -- I'm trying to
- 20 find out -- I understand what you think of Gratz. We
- 21 can agree or disagree about that. But the overall view
- 22 of the Constitution, that interpretation that you have
- 23 in your mind, if it really forbids it, no use of race, I
- 24 mean, basically -- all right? Think -- go back to
- 25 Cooper versus Aaron. Go back to the case where this

- 1 Court with paratroopers had to use tremendous means to
- 2 get those children into the school. That's because the
- 3 society was divided.
- 4 Here we have a society, black and white, who
- 5 elect school board members who together have voted to
- 6 have this form of integration. Why, given that change
- 7 in society -- which is a good one -- what -- how can the
- 8 Constitution be interpreted in a way that would require
- 9 us, the judges, to go in and make them take the black
- 10 children out of the school?
- 11 See, my objection to your approach to the
- 12 Constitution is primarily a practical one.
- 13 GENERAL CLEMENT: Well, I understand that,
- 14 Justice Breyer. But I think the answer to that is that
- 15 the lesson of history in this area is that racial
- 16 classifications are not ones where we should just let
- 17 local school board officials do what they think is
- 18 right.
- 19 JUSTICE BREYER: Are you prepared to just
- 20 say, all right, they can do it some, just be careful
- 21 about it? How far will you go with that?
- 22 GENERAL CLEMENT: I think everybody concedes
- 23 that strict scrutiny is going to apply here.
- JUSTICE BREYER: All right. So you're
- 25 saying we'll do it some, just be careful about it?

- 1 GENERAL CLEMENT: No, we would -- you know,
- 2 I think we would have to look at the details of the
- 3 plan. That's what narrow tailoring meant. And I think
- 4 that's what -- you know, Justice Kennedy made the point
- 5 in his opinion in Grutter that the problem with
- 6 approving the first blunderbuss opportunity that you see
- 7 to use race in a context is that then you deprive the
- 8 courts of any role trying to refine matters, and seeing,
- 9 maybe the racial situation would be narrowly tailored,
- 10 but it is sure not these 50-15 bands.
- 11 JUSTICE STEVENS: Judge Kozinski thought the
- 12 real problem here was we should not deify strict
- 13 scrutiny. That's what's caused all the problems.
- 14 GENERAL CLEMENT: And Justice Stevens, he
- 15 probably could have cited two of your opinions for that
- 16 proposition. But you know, the rest of us do have to
- 17 work with --
- 18 JUSTICE STEVENS: It is often true that
- 19 sometimes doctrines do have unintended consequences when
- 20 you push the logic of extremes. There is no doubt about
- 21 that.
- 22 GENERAL CLEMENT: There's no doubt about
- 23 that, but the rest of us do have to work with this
- 24 Court's precedents --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: And they also have

- 1 unintended consequences when this Court ignores them.
- 2 GENERAL CLEMENT: Absolutely. And it also
- 3 has some real world consequences when we decides we're
- 4 not going to apply the normal scrutiny we would to
- 5 racial classifications just because we've made some -- I
- 6 don't know based on what judgment that in this case, it
- 7 is benign, so we can trust the local school officials.
- 8 JUSTICE STEVENS: Well, it isn't that we've
- 9 made a judgment, the local school board has made a
- judgment which has a lot of experience under both
- 11 systems.
- 12 GENERAL CLEMENT: There's a lot of
- 13 experience in Brown, too, and those were local school
- 14 boards, too. And I think the lesson is --
- 15 JUSTICE SCALIA: Do we know the race of the
- 16 school board here? I mean, that was not -- how do we
- 17 know these are benign school boards? Is it stipulated
- 18 that they are benign school boards?
- 19 GENERAL CLEMENT: I missed that in the joint
- 20 stipulation, Justice Scalia. I would like to say one --
- 21 if I could make one point here, which is, I really do
- 22 think that it's worth looking at how this operates in
- 23 practice. And the fact that it leaves seats effectively
- 24 fallow in schools. Because that really marks it as a
- 25 quota. And it's interesting, when that same district

- 1 court judge --
- 2 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Was that how it worked
- 3 under the plan that was forced on the school district?
- 4 I thought it was roughly the same plan?
- 5 GENERAL CLEMENT: It was, Justice Ginsburg.
- 6 But I think there's a difference when you move past
- 7 unitary status. It's interesting. In the very case
- 8 where the court, Hampton II, where the same district
- 9 court found unitary status, he then because the Equal
- 10 Protection Clause was not shielded by the decree, had to
- 11 apply it to the use of these same racial bands in the
- 12 context of magnet schools.
- And what did this same district court judge
- 14 find there? He found they operated, quote, as a hard
- 15 racial quota. Because the effect of these 50-15 bands
- 16 was to keep hundreds of seats at Central High School, a
- 17 popular magnet school empty, and away from
- 18 African-American students because the district wanted to
- 19 maintain its predetermined racial balance.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Am I right in thinking
- 21 that the government in 2000 opposed terminating this --
- the compulsory plan?
- 23 GENERAL CLEMENT: You mean the United States
- 24 government?
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: Yes.

| 1   | GENERAL CLEMENT: Or the school board? They               |
|-----|--|
| 2   | actually both opposed, which is something shows you      |
| 3   | something of the anomalies that you can get from this    |
| 4   | situation, which is the school board wanting to continue |
| 5   | its practice of using these racial guidelines actually   |
| 6   | opposed the finding of unitary status. I would say,      |
| 7   | though   |
| 8   | JUSTICE GINSBURG: I thought it was the                   |
| 9   | United States?   |
| LO  | GENERAL CLEMENT: Yeah, we had some specific              |
| L1  | objections in which we thought that two of the green     |
| L2  | factors were not satisfied. That argument was rejected   |
| L3  | by the district court.                                   |
| L 4 | If I can go back to the judge's finding                  |
| L5  | about the magnet schools, what is so interesting is the  |
| L6  | same judge finds the same guidelines to be a hard racial |
| L7  | quota as to the magnet schools, but not as to the        |
| L8  | neighborhood schools. Why does he make that              |
| L9  | distinction? Because he finds that the neighborhood      |
| 20  | schools are basically equal, and therefore, denying a    |
| 21  | student an opportunity to attend to one rather than      |
| 22  | another was not an injury of constitutional magnitude.   |
| 23  | But I would have thought it is far too late              |
| 24  | in the day, and the Chief Justice suggested this as      |
| 25  | well, to say that just because two schools are basically |

- 1 equal, you can deny a student the right to attend one,
- 2 and assigns one and only one based on his race. Thank
- 3 you.
- 4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you,
- 5 General Clement.
- 6 Mr. Mellen?
- 7 ORAL ARGUMENT OF FRANCIS J. MELLEN, JR.
- 8 ON BEHALF OF THE RESPONDENTS
- 9 MR. MELLEN: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it
- 10 please the Court:
- 11 This case presents a story of a community
- 12 that once maintained racially segregated schools, that
- 13 desegregated those schools only when a court ordered it,
- 14 and that today maintains racially integrated schools
- 15 with broad community support.
- 16 This case presents a story of a board of
- 17 education that replaced a desegregation decree with a
- 18 student assignment plan that works, that stopped the
- 19 white flight that was the result of the desegregation
- 20 decree and has stabilized enrollment in our public
- 21 schools. This case presents a success story and it's a
- 22 success that was achieved in compliance with this
- 23 Court's strict scrutiny test.
- 24 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Does this case present the
- 25 story where the meaning of Brown versus Board of

- 1 Education is you can never take race out of politics?
- 2 MR. MELLEN: I think, Your Honor, that Brown
- 3 is very much distinguishable. In Brown, the Topeka
- 4 board maintained two systems of schools. And admission
- 5 to those schools, admission, not assignment, was based
- 6 solely on race. That stigmatized the black children.
- 7 It sent the message that the white race was dominant and
- 8 superior and that the black race was inferior. That
- 9 caused great harm to those black students and this Court
- 10 properly remediated it.
- 11 JUSTICE SCALIA: And this doesn't? I mean,
- 12 this which is somehow based on the notion that a school
- that is predominantly black or overwhelmingly black
- 14 cannot be as good as a school that is predominantly
- 15 white or overwhelmingly white? That doesn't send any
- 16 message?
- 17 MR. MELLEN: The plan, Your Honor, is not
- 18 based solely on that supposition. This plan is based on
- 19 the supposition that a school that is racially
- 20 identifiable, and that would include a white racially
- 21 identifiable school, does not provide to the students in
- 22 that school the compelling benefits that our board
- 23 believes are presented by racial integration.
- The compelling benefits, some of which are
- 25 the benefits that this Court identified in Grutter, from

- 1 the racial diversity that was a byproduct --
- 2 JUSTICE SCALIA: You're talking about white
- 3 flight, you're not talking about black flight. And
- 4 what's going on here is makes sure that there are a
- 5 certain number of white students or as high a proportion
- 6 as you can get. In schools that would be otherwise be
- 7 overwhelmingly black. And it seems to me if you are
- 8 appealing to stigmatization, that -- that is based on an
- 9 assumption that it seems to me is stigmatizing.
- 10 MR. MELLEN: This plan -- and the Federal
- 11 courts have held for years school districts do have an
- 12 interest in avoiding white flight. And As I said, this
- 13 plan has prevented -- has stopped white flight and has
- 14 stabilized enrollment in our schools.
- But this -- this plan was adopted, Your
- 16 Honor, for the purpose of providing the compelling
- 17 benefits of racial integration, some of which this Court
- 18 identified in Grutter, some of which the District Court
- 19 found were not present in the University of Michigan Law
- 20 School case, but are present in an elementary and
- 21 secondary system of schools. For example, the District
- 22 Court found that this plan makes our public schools more
- 23 competitive and attractive and results in broader
- 24 community support for those schools.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: I, I think that's probably

- 1 true. I think it is also probably true that the people
- 2 in your community and the people on your school board
- 3 are acting in the utmost good faith. And that what they
- 4 have done is going to help the education of many
- 5 students.
- The question is whether or not we can say
- 7 that an insincere school board, people that want to play
- 8 the race card, who want to play the race trip, the --
- 9 the race chip, that want a system in which they can use
- 10 race for political advantage, can do this based on the
- 11 color of the individual child's skin. That's what's
- 12 involved here.
- 13 MR. MELLEN: I don't think that's what is
- 14 involved in this case, Your Honor, because the District
- 15 Court found that the board's motives were indeed
- 16 legitimate and that there was no basis --
- 17 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I'm conceding that. The
- 18 Constitution assumes that this might not always be the
- 19 case. Are we going to look at the sincerity of the
- 20 school boards, school by school board, school board
- 21 member by school board member?
- 22 MR. MELLEN: I don't think that would be
- 23 proper for the courts to do that, Your Honor, but the
- 24 other issue that's presented by these cases is whether
- 25 the use of race is narrowly tailored. And the District

- 1 Court found in this case that it was, was for a variety
- 2 of reasons. So I think that this case does not, Your
- 3 Honor, present the hypothetical that you suggested and
- 4 in other cases with different factors --
- 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But it, but it presents
- 6 the principle that this Court is confronted with. If we
- 7 for the first time say that a system that has achieved
- 8 unitary status. So that the courts no longer have the
- 9 authority or the need to supervise them, can then turn
- 10 around and use individual skin color as a basis for
- 11 assignment, we've never said that. And that takes us on
- 12 a very perilous course.
- MR. MELLEN: You've never said it, Your
- 14 Honor and the question has never been presented. A
- 15 similar question was presented in the University of
- 16 Michigan Law School case. And this Court held the use
- of a racial classification to satisfy a compelling
- 18 interest and in a narrowly tailored manner --
- 19 JUSTICE KENNEDY: In the university cases
- 20 this Court ran as far away as it could from using racial
- 21 quotas. It talked about the fact that there was an
- 22 individualized assessment. At, at issue was a
- 23 university student who could understand the reasons for
- 24 being rejected on, on the grounds of race, race being
- 25 one criteria. That isn't this case.

1 MR. MELLEN: That's not this case, Your 2 Honor, because our board asserts a different compelling 3 interest. The compelling interest asserted by the 4 Michigan Law School was viewpoint diversity. A 5 different kind of -- it's a byproduct of that. 6 This Court asserts an interest in -- this 7 board, I'm sorry, asserts an interest in racial integration and we believe that there are compelling 8 benefits from racial integration and that this board 9 10 provides them to all students, both black and white. 11 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Once again, once again, one of the rationales for the law school cases was a 12 13 First Amendment rationale. And you, and I think 14 properly so, say that this is, this is not your 15 interest. I agree with you. But that means that that 16 case is completely inapplicable to help you. 17 MR. MELLEN: I don't think it's completely 18 inapplicable, Your Honor, because this case presents the same basic doctrinal question that was presented in 19 20 Grutter, whether a Government agency can use race as a 21 classification with a compelling interest with narrow tailoring. This Court in Grutter identified several 22 23 benefits of racial diversity. Some of those benefits 24 are presented in the elementary and secondary school 25 context. And we have additional benefits that are

- 1 presented by racial integration.
- JUSTICE SOUTER: Mr. Mellen, here is a
- 3 question I should have asked friends on the other side.
- 4 But I think it is raised by Justice Kennedy's question,
- 5 so let me put it out.
- 6 Are there circumstances under which there is
- 7 reason to suspect the motivation of school districts
- 8 when they come up with a plan in effect to require a
- 9 mixing of the races in the schools that is more or less
- 10 tailored to the relative percentages in the communities?
- 11 Is -- are there circumstances in which that would be
- done for malign as opposed to benign purposes?
- MR. MELLEN: I think it could be, Your
- 14 Honor. And this Court has said --
- 15 JUSTICE SOUTER: And what -- give me some,
- 16 or give me or an example.
- 17 MR. MELLEN: Your Honor, I'm not sure I can
- 18 think of one because I come from a community with a long
- 19 history of, of not doing that.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: Easy. Easy. Take a school
- 21 district that is overwhelmingly minority. And --
- 22 overwhelmingly black, if you will. And a school board
- 23 that reflects that. And in which by reason of
- 24 residential patterns, the white schools, despite the
- 25 same expenditure of money, same level of teaching and

- 1 everything else, the white schools are better schools.
- 2 And the school board could decide we would
- 3 like our race to get into those better white schools.
- 4 Not because we want mixing. We just want, want them to
- 5 get into those schools.
- 6 Wouldn't that be a situation in which the
- 7 board could then come up with a -- you know, these good
- 8 schools ought to have 80 percent blacks in them? I
- 9 would not consider that a benign objective.
- 10 MR. MELLEN: There might be, Your Honor,
- 11 under those circumstances a compelling interest in doing
- 12 that. The question would be whether it is narrowly
- 13 tailored. But --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: I don't think there's a
- 15 compelling interest in doing it at all. They're doing
- 16 it for a racially selfish reason. They want their
- 17 constituency, they want the 80 percent of black
- 18 students, to be in the better schools. You consider
- 19 that a valid interest, and a non-racial interest?
- MR. MELLEN: No. No, Your Honor. Of course
- 21 with that explanation, I do not.
- JUSTICE SOUTER: Do you think the school
- 23 board in that case would use the clumsy means of racial
- 24 integrational mixing as opposed simply to devoting more
- 25 money to the black schools?

- 1 MR. MELLEN: I would certainly think, Your
- 2 Honor, that a wise school board would use other methods
- 3 to achieve that result. Yes.
- 4 JUSTICE SOUTER: I would think so, too.
- 5 JUSTICE BREYER: Why did you say -- in
- 6 truth, maybe I missed it. In your response to
- 7 Justice Kennedy, I think you said, when he asked, that
- 8 this Court has never said that the explicit use of race
- 9 by a K through 12 school board was constitutional, and I
- 10 thought the Court had explicitly said that in Swann.
- 11 MR. MELLEN: I, I --
- 12 JUSTICE BREYER: I thought that, that
- 13 Justice Powell explicitly said it. I that Chief Justice
- 14 Rehnquist had explicitly said it. I thought if you went
- 15 back in sense to the slaughterhouse cases, you'll find
- 16 in 1872, this Court thought that the primary objective,
- 17 the primary objective of that Fourteenth Amendment was
- 18 to take people who had been formerly slaves and to bring
- 19 them into this society, and that all of phrases of that
- amendment should be interpreted with that objective in
- 21 mind. I mean, it didn't say that explicitly there, but
- 22 it seems explicitly and implicitly this Court has said
- 23 that.
- MR. MELLEN: Well, I agree, Justice Breyer.
- 25 And I misspoke, I used one word incorrectly. I said --

- 1 I should have said this Court has not held. I agree
- 2 with General Clement that Swann was dictum, but a very
- 3 strong dictum. And we do think it applies here.
- 4 Dictum.
- 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, I think -- I think
- 6 we were communicating. Swann was a case where there was
- 7 de jure discrimination. Bakke was a university case.
- 8 This is a different case.
- 9 MR. MELLEN: It is indeed a different case,
- 10 Your Honor. We do not --
- 11 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And it's, and it's a
- 12 troubling case.
- MR. MELLEN: We do not contend, Your Honor,
- 14 that the purpose of this plan is to remediate past
- 15 discrimination against black students. This plan is
- 16 intended to provide benefits to both black and white
- 17 students.
- 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So your arguments do
- 19 not depend in any way on the prior de jure segregation?
- 20 MR. MELLEN: They do not, Your Honor. We
- 21 would agree that we stand on the same footing as the
- 22 Seattle district, as a unitary district this case needs
- 23 to be measured against whether a board has a compelling
- 24 interest and -- or board feels quite strongly that there
- 25 is compelling interest for the racial classification

- 1 that's employed in --
- 2 JUSTICE BREYER: What about the other part?
- 3 Because I think the Solicitor General -- I hope, I don't
- 4 want to put words in his mouth -- but I think he agrees
- 5 that Brown held out the promise of an equal education,
- 6 that the country worked for 35 or 40 years to try to get
- 7 a degree of integration, and that maintaining it is
- 8 important. I think the Government agrees with that.
- 9 They think this case goes too far. And in that I think
- 10 he's referring to narrow tailoring. It isn't narrowly
- 11 tailored enough. So I would appreciate knowing why you
- 12 think it is.
- MR. MELLEN: We think it is, Your Honor, for
- 14 the very reasons that the District Court held it is.
- 15 The District Court addressed each of these points
- 16 regarding narrow tailoring which this Court identified
- in Grutter, looked at them very carefully and concluded
- 18 that it is narrowly tailored. One of that issues that's
- 19 already been discussed this morning is individual
- 20 consideration. We agree with the position that the
- 21 Circuit Court took in the Ninth Circuit that in a
- 22 situation in which the compelling interest is racial
- 23 integration, that it makes no sense to take into account
- 24 other background characteristics of students other than
- 25 their race.

1 JUSTICE KENNEDY: If it were to become 2 relevant, would this record show -- this is the school 3 district -- and this would be in the regime of the 4 Court-ordered desegregation plan, because you are just 5 recently emerged from that -- that the school district 6 has tried means other than race conscious, of race 7 classification in order to obtain the diversity benefits 8 you seek? 9 MR. MELLEN: The school district has, Your 10 Honor. In fact this plan uses those --11 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And were those magnet schools? And could you tell me about that? 12 13 MR. MELLEN: Magnet schools, Your Honor. 14 And with respect to history, Your Honor, it is somewhat 15 complex, because although the Court ruled in the Hampton 16 case in 2000 that the degree was dissolved then, the 17 board honestly felt beginning in 1981 that the decree 18 had been dissolved. And so the board in 1984, 1991, 19 1996 made what it thought were voluntary modifications 20 to the plan. 21 Beginning in the late 1980s, the board began 22 to introduce more choice into the system including 23 magnet schools, magnet programs. The board uses race 24 neutral lotteries to determine enrollment in some 25 schools. But the board feels and it feels very strongly

- 1 based on conversations that board members and staff
- 2 people have had with other school districts that have
- 3 tried race-neutral measures including Charlotte
- 4 Mecklenburg, Wake county and San Francisco -- that
- 5 race-neutral measures alone will not do the job and the
- 6 experience in those districts indicates that they will
- 7 not do the job.
- 8 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But your starting place
- 9 was the plan that was compulsory, that was forced on the
- 10 school district in 1975? That is basically the same
- 11 kind of plan?
- MR. MELLEN: Well, Your Honor, I would say
- 13 that the starting point was that plan. The board has
- 14 modified it considerably since then to make assignments
- 15 more stable and predictable, to make the use of race
- 16 more narrowly tailored. It is in concept the same plan,
- 17 because it has some of the features, but the board has
- 18 added many features that that plan did not have.
- 19 The 1975 desegregation decree was really
- 20 quite a blunt instrument and that's why it was so
- 21 controversial in the community. That's why there was
- 22 massive white flight. This plan, this board has very
- 23 wisely modified that plan to make it much more
- 24 acceptable to the community so that we stopped the white
- 25 flight. We stabilized our enrollment. We have a

- 1 community now that very broadly, the public opinion
- 2 surveys show, that supports racial integration whereas
- 3 in 1975, they were opposed to it, sometimes violently.
- 4 This is as I said at the outset a success
- 5 story.
- JUSTICE GINSBURG: What would happen if you
- 7 couldn't use this system?
- 8 MR. MELLEN: And that would depend, Your
- 9 Honor, on what this Court said we could not use.
- 10 We do know that four of our schools, magnet
- 11 schools are now not subject to racial guidelines because
- of the District Court's decision in the Hampton 2 case.
- 13 One of those schools, Central High School, is far
- 14 outside the racial guidelines. It has a black
- 15 enrollment of about 83 percent. At two of those other
- 16 magnet schools black enrollment has declined. It's
- declined by about by about a third in two of those
- 18 schools. And that is only in the space of a few years.
- 19 Our school board staff has conducted some
- 20 hypothetical scenarios as to what would happen without
- 21 the racial guidelines. Some hypothetical scenarios
- 22 involve choice. Some involve purely neighborhood
- 23 schools. All of those scenarios show substantial
- 24 resegregation, particularly in elementary schools.
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Do any of those study the

- 1 possibilities of the system in which you elect to go
- 2 into a system where race counts?
- MR. MELLEN: Some of those scenarios, Your
- 4 Honor, did have some degree of choice.
- 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Are they written out
- 6 anywhere we can see them? Or are there articles on
- 7 this?
- 8 MR. MELLEN: They are not in the record in
- 9 this case, Your Honor. They were in the record in the
- 10 Hampton case, so if you read the Hampton 2 opinion you
- 11 will see that the district court included a lengthy
- 12 footnote in which he basically summarized those
- 13 scenarios.
- JUSTICE SCALIA: If you say your plan has
- 15 the overwhelming support of the community, does
- 16 "community" mean those parent who have children in
- 17 the schools?
- MR. MELLEN: Some of the --
- 19 JUSTICE SCALIA: It seems to me that ought
- 20 to be the really -- the people who are the objects of
- 21 this experiment. Do they think it's doing --
- MR. MELLEN: They do indeed, Your Honor.
- 23 Those surveys were surveys by the University of Kentucky
- 24 Research Center of parents.
- 25 JUSTICE SCALIA: And did the parents'

- 1 satisfaction with it break out along racial lines? Or
- 2 was it evenly divided?
- 3 MR. MELLEN: It was fairly evenly divided,
- 4 Your Honor. One of our expert witnesses said that --
- 5 well, both of them said that they were quite surprised
- 6 that the findings were so positive. One of the expert
- 7 witnesses said that unquestionably this is a community
- 8 that values diversity.
- 9 JUSTICE SCALIA: Where is that?
- 10 MR. MELLEN: That's the testimony of Edward
- 11 Kiefer, Your Honor, from the university of Kentucky. He
- 12 was responsible for the survey --
- JUSTICE SCALIA: And he's talking about the
- 14 parents of students in the school?
- 15 MR. MELLEN: That's correct, Your Honor.
- 16 That's -- there are some other surveys, I believe, that
- include the entire community. But I think you'll see in
- 18 the record some that are parents only.
- 19 I would like, Your Honor, Justice Ginsburg,
- 20 to respond very briefly to some of the facts concerning
- 21 Joshua, because you asked about that. There is nothing
- 22 in the record that says that Ms. Meredith moved into the
- 23 district in Florida just when she showed up at
- 24 Breckenridge-Franklin. With respect to her appeal, in
- 25 fact the litigation had not commenced when she would

- 1 have had an opportunity to file an appeal. The
- 2 stipulation of facts says that she did not apply for
- 3 Joshua for the first grade.
- Now, Ms. Bloom -- excuse me. Ms. Meredith
- 5 -- and this is not in the record because it took place
- 6 after the record was closed -- but Ms. Meredith
- 7 reapplied for a transfer after Joshua finished the first
- 8 grade. That transfer was initially denied. She
- 9 appealed. The transfer was granted and Joshua does now
- 10 attend Bloom. I think that's relevant because the
- 11 Solicitor General made an argument in his brief that
- 12 this plan allows the student to be trapped in a school.
- 13 We would certainly not agree that an assignment to any
- one of our fine schools could be a trap. But in any
- 15 event, students can reapply each year and that has
- 16 happened. It happened here in the case of Joshua --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: Can you tell me, how is
- 18 race used? Do the administrators have discretion in the
- 19 weight they will give to it on a case by case basis?
- MR. MELLEN: I don't think exactly, Your
- 21 Honor. Race is used, as the district court found,
- 22 really as the final factor, a tipping factor. Residence
- 23 comes into play. Choice comes into play. Lotteries in
- 24 some schools come into play.
- 25 JUSTICE KENNEDY: I'm not sure how to ask

- 1 the question: Is it used fairly evenly across the board
- 2 when it is the tiebreaker?
- MR. MELLEN: We don't used the word
- 4 "tiebreaker," Your Honor. The record indicates --
- 5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: To tip the tipping point,
- 6 whatever.
- 7 MR. MELLEN: The record indicates that race
- 8 would be the dispositive factor in no more than 2 to 3
- 9 percent of the choice applications.
- 10 JUSTICE KENNEDY: That means -- that leads
- 11 to the question of why do they need it?
- MR. MELLEN: I think they need it, Your
- 13 Honor, because it sets a boundary. It defines what
- 14 racial integration means. If staff had come to this
- 15 board with a plan that said, our goal is racial
- 16 integration --
- JUSTICE KENNEDY: So it's symbolic that race
- 18 counts?
- 19 MR. MELLEN: I don't think so, Your Honor.
- 20 I think it simply sets the outer limits within which our
- 21 process of choice and other methods of assignment works.
- 22 Without that boundary, it could be transgressed one
- 23 student at a time.
- The guidelines I think are very much like
- 25 the little boy in the Dutch story who put his finger in

- 1 the dike because a few drops of water were coming out.
- 2 He knew it would become a flood eventually if he didn't
- 3 do that. We think that is exactly the case here, that
- 4 without these guidelines one student at a time could
- 5 transgress them and ultimately we would have a
- 6 resegregated school system.
- 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: Mr. Mellen, I've been
- 8 looking at Dr. Kiefer's testimony. Is this what you're
- 9 referring to: "There was remarkable agreement among
- 10 every group in Jefferson County Public Schools about how
- 11 desirable having diversity in the schools was"?
- MR. MELLEN: That's correct, Your Honor.
- 13 JUSTICE SCALIA: I have no double about
- 14 that. I mean, if you're going to ask anybody, you know,
- 15 do you prefer integrated schools or would you prefer
- 16 lily-white schools, nobody is going to say give me a
- 17 lily-white school. Of course nobody's going to say
- 18 that.
- 19 I was asking whether the parents whose kids
- 20 can't go to the schools they want to go to, including
- 21 the neighborhood schools, do they like this particular
- 22 system of achieving the racial diversity? Is there any
- 23 testimony about that?
- MR. MELLEN: The great majority do, Your
- 25 Honor. And I think if you look at the University of --

1 JUSTICE SCALIA: Black and white alike? 2 MR. MELLEN: Black and white alike, in large numbers. No plan, Your Honor, can be --3 4 JUSTICE SCALIA: How do we know that? MR. MELLEN: Again, Your Honor, the 5 University of Kentucky survey, which is in the record --6 7 JUSTICE SCALIA: It is in the record? MR. MELLEN: -- broke it down by race among 8 parents. It asked whether guidelines were proper. It 9 10 asked whether assignment on socioeconomic status would be preferred. There are a lot of questions in that 11 survey and I think you might find --12 13 JUSTICE SCALIA: It's not in your joint 14 appendix here? 15 MR. MELLEN: It's not in the joint appendix. 16 It's an exhibit, I believe, to the stipulation of facts, 17 Your Honor. 18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: There were questions 19 earlier about the status of the particular plaintiff. 20 You're not challenging standing or raising mootness, are 21 you? 22 MR. MELLEN: No, we're not, Your Honor. We're not challenging standing. We're simply saying 23 24 that Ms. Meredith did not suffer undue harm within the 25 meaning of this Court's decisions and that parents as a

- 1 whole and students as a whole do not suffer undue harm.
- 2 There have questions in the first case about
- 3 an end point. I might address that briefly. We believe
- 4 that the use of race in this plan is self-limiting in
- 5 several respects. If racially segregated housing in
- 6 Jefferson County continues to decline, which it has
- 7 somewhat since the 1970s, and the board has reason to
- 8 believe that the presence of racially integrated schools
- 9 during that period contributed to that -- there are
- 10 several amicus briefs that were filed in this case that
- 11 set forth research that supports that conclusion. If
- 12 racially segregated housing continues to decline and if
- 13 this plan meets its purpose of diminishing racial
- 14 stereotypes and promoting better cross-racial
- 15 understanding throughout the community, we can foresee a
- 16 time when this board will not see a reason to use this
- 17 plan or may modify it further to make it even less
- 18 restrictive.
- 19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: In a time horizon
- 20 longer or shorter than the 25-year time horizon that was
- 21 discussed in Grutter?
- MR. MELLEN: I can't predict the future,
- 23 Your Honor. I can say it could be shorter for another
- 24 reason. That is that this plan is inherently subject to
- 25 democratic review by elected school board and by the

- 1 voters. It could end sooner than that if the board and
- 2 the voters change their minds. I can't predict whether
- 3 it might end longer than that. I can only say that this
- 4 board has a long history of modifying the plan. As I
- 5 said, they modified it in 1984, 1991, 1996, 2001. It's
- 6 in the very nature of how a board of education works
- 7 that they continue to tinker with things.
- 8 JUSTICE GINSBURG: If the attitude is the
- 9 one that this board has taken, then the same reasons
- 10 would exist for the plan as long as there is segregation
- 11 in housing.
- MR. MELLEN: I wouldn't limit that, limit it
- 13 to that, Your Honor. I think that an important factor
- 14 are racial attitudes in the community. I think that
- 15 this board feels that the plan does serve to ameliorate
- 16 racial stereotypes, promote cross-racial understanding.
- 17 Our community still has a long way to go in that
- 18 respect. We do have some racial issues in Jefferson
- 19 County. But we believe this plan helps them. And in
- 20 the future a board may look at our community, may look
- 21 at how racial relations work in our community, and may
- 22 well decide that, even though housing is still somewhat
- 23 segregated, we can do without this plan or again we can
- 24 modify it to make it less restrictive, which in fact the
- 25 history of this plan shows that this board has done.

- 1 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, what would this board
- 2 have to have in order for it not to be temporally
- 3 limited in your opinion? Any plan can be changed in the
- 4 future. So why does the fact that this can be changed
- 5 in the future make it a plan that has a temporal
- 6 limitation?
- 7 MR. MELLEN: Well, Your Honor, it does not
- 8 have fixed temporal limitation of 25 years or 10 years.
- 9 As I said, that's not how school boards operate. But it
- 10 is inherently subject to review on a temporal basis
- 11 because each time we have a school board election the
- 12 plan potentially is in play, and it could be modified at
- 13 any time in that sense.
- I see that my time is almost up. If there
- 15 are no further --
- JUSTICE STEVENS: May I just. Was there a
- 17 petition for a rehearing en banc in this case?
- 18 MR. MELLEN: There was, Your Honor, in the
- 19 Sixth Circuit, and it was denied.
- JUSTICE STEVENS: Were there any votes in
- 21 favor of the en banc rehearing?
- MR. MELLEN: Your Honor, as I recall the
- 23 Sixth Circuit's order, it said that no judge asked for a
- 24 rehearing en banc.
- 25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: THE COURT: Thank

1 you, Mr. Mellen. 2 Mr. Gordon, you have 2 minutes remaining. 3 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF TEDDY B. GORDON 4 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER 5 MR. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice. 6 First of all, to respond to one of the 7 questions that was asked, it's very important that it is 8 equally consistent in the 1992 plan to effectuate or to prevent white flight that the plan itself was changed to 9 subjugate African American kids to the worse performing 10 11 schools. If you find that equally consistent, then you 12 have a question of whether or not illegitimate notions 13 of racial inferiority applied or racial politics applied 14 15 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Excuse me. I didn't 16 understand it. 17 MR. GORDON: Well, in the '92 plan and from 18 that point on, which I showed, which was held in the 19 Hampton plan, in the Hampton case -- in other words, in 20 the Hampton case I proved, or the facts proved or the 21 plaintiff proved, that African American kids were denied 22 entrance into the better schools solely because of race. 23 Within the vacuum of that case, there was 24 also proof that showed the largest percent of African 25 American kids were sent or denigrated or subjugated to

- 1 the worse performing schools rather than the best
- 2 performing schools. That becomes the question of racial
- 3 politics and racial animus, and that's what the '92 plan
- 4 did. And what it did to attract -- or prevent white
- 5 flight, was have less African American kids go to the
- 6 better performing schools on the entire K through 12
- 7 setting.
- 8 That can't be what this Court wants to carve
- 9 out as an exemption to the Equal Protection Clause. The
- 10 Equal Protection Clause, that's on neutral parchment
- 11 with black ink. There's no percents. There's no box to
- 12 check. We can't have this in our school system, to have
- 13 another 25 or 30 years in our school system, which will
- 14 perpetuate racial isolationism because it does nothing
- 15 to stop the achievement gap. There were race-neutral
- 16 alternative tracks.
- 17 All I can say is that, may this day be the
- 18 embryonic beginning of Dr. King's dream, as paraphrased,
- 19 that all children are now judged by the content of their
- 20 character and their education, not by the color of their
- 21 skin.
- 22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.
- The case is submitted.
- (Whereupon, at 12:01 p.m., the case in the
- 25 above-entitled matter was submitted.)

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