Aadi S, Jacob H, Joel M, Pranav G **Slide #1: Intro:**

Aadi: Hello, my name is Aadi.

Jacob: I’m Jacob.

Joel: I’m Joel.

Pranav: And I’m Pranav.

Aadi: And today we will be discussing the increasingly prevalent debate surrounding affirmative action.

**Slide #2 (Jacob): Context**

In 1970, before affirmative action policies became rooted in college admissions, white students made up [91% of college enrollment](https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/1970/demo/p20-215.pdf). As shown in this graph, by 2020, the percentage of white students dropped to [50%](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cha). Similarly, black students now account for about 12% of college enrollment and Hispanic students for 20%. This data paired with a 2013 University of Washington study shows that the admission of students of color declined significantly at schools located in states that limit or ban affirmative action practices, demonstrating how affirmative action promotes diversity.

// [Transition: But what exactly is affirmative action, and why is it so significant?]

**Slide #3 (Aadi): Significance/Background**

Introduced by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, affirmative action, as defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is “the use of policies, legislation, programs, and procedures to improve the educational or employment opportunities of members of certain demographic groups (such as minority groups, women, and older people) as a remedy to the effects of long-standing discrimination against such groups."

**Slide #4 (Joel): The Problem**

Despite the fact that affirmative action was intended to increase diversity in college campuses, it instead has been frequently misused, as many employees have charged their employers with illegal discrimination, and major corporations have faced lawsuits alleging such practices. In fact, affirmative action has distinct historical, ethical, social, and even economic effects, especially on statistically overrepresented minorities, who face the disadvantage of being a statistical majority but not the ethnic majority.

**Slide #5 (Pranav): RQ**

This brings us to our research question: To what extent does affirmative action affect the professional opportunity of statistically overrepresented minority groups?

**Slide #6 (Aadi):** **Historical Significance**

Affirmative action has always been a subject of great debate. Zachary Bleemer, an Assistant Professor of Economics at the Yale School of Management, stated “Since at least the 1970s, many universities have implemented affirmative action…intending to facilitate socioeconomic mobility…” Despite this, affirmative action policies have instead been used to limit the number of qualified applicants from overrepresented groups from joining certain academic institutions and from reaching higher job opportunities, which is seen in the shortage of Asian Americans at the executive level of Silicon Valley’s tech companies, despite their abundance in the general workforce.

**Slide #7 (Aadi): Political Unrest**

In the past, these effects have been quite controversial. Although in the first major case against affirmative action, it was established that universities could use race as a factor in admissions, the Supreme Court banned quotas, describing them as a form of racial discrimination. Since then, 9 states have banned affirmative action entirely. Today, support for legal opposition, such as the lawsuit filed by Edward Blum’s Students for Fair Admissions against Harvard University ~~and the University of North Carolina,~~ is growing stronger. [Transition: Next, Pranav will talk about the ethical implications of the effects of affirmative action on these minorities.]

**Slide #8 (Pranav): Ethical Lens**

The sad truth of the matter is that affirmative action negates our ability to fix the issues created by racial discrimination. This is because affirmative action is inherently racist in its methodology because it targets specific races and gives them an advantage over the competition. Although historic racism still impedes many groups ability to succeed academically, groups like Asians, have the same “disadvantage” as groups deemed to have benefited from racism. This has led many Asian communities to believe colleges inherently discriminate against Asian applicants by putting them through quotas while their underrepresented classmates with oftentimes lower merit are accepted.

**Slide #9 (Pranav): Ethical Lens (continued): (no cap)**

This slide shows data from Pew Research that reflects the sentiment of the American people in regards to their stance on affirmative action.

// ~5 min

**Slide #10 (Joel): Social Lens**

Affirmative action was originally introduced to level the playing field for African Americans by making up for past injustices. However, affirmative action quickly departed from the ideal of a color-blind society. Instead affirmative action causes reverse discrimination, as it causes racial preferences that work to hinder “qualified” overrepresented groups. This focus on differences leads to divisiveness which harms the goal of creating a culturally diverse nation that works together seamlessly and instead creates a society in which ethnicity is the defining experience.

**Slide #11 (Joel): Ethnicity Based Admissions**

Data from the New York Times showed that Asian-American applicants outperformed white applicants in academics and extracurriculars. Investigations into admissions offices noted substantial evidence that Asian-Americans faced higher hurdles than less academically qualified candidates of other races, and that rejection of Asians is driven by affirmative-action policies aimed at favoring more preferred racial minorities. Now, qualified Asian students are losing scarce opportunities against more favored minority groups.

**Slide #12 (Jacob): Economic Lens**

Intro: This EdSource graph shows the percentages of high school graduates and CSU enrollments of different races. In the green section, the number of Asian high school graduates has remained the same but the number of Asians enrolled in CSU schools has gradually decreased. A peer-reviewed journal entry by Jane Hyun-Joo attributes this decrease to Asian Americans being viewed as “model minorities”, based on their perceived success and overrepresentation in prestigious colleges, not needing the assistance other minority groups might. Because of this stereotype and overrepresentation, they are no longer viewed as minorities and don’t feel the intended effect of affirmative action.

**Slide #13 (Jacob): College Admissions**

A Journal of Policy Analysis and Management study found that the Asian American UC admissions rate decreased 7% when affirmative action policies were implemented. Similarly, a Brown University study found that when affirmative action policies were used in the public sector, the number of Asians in these jobs decreased 3%. Furthermore, SOMs also find it harder to climb the chain of employment, especially when it comes to executive or leadership positions, voiced by Margaret Chin, from Hunter College, who stated: “over 35% of Asian workers were in professional industries but had minuscule representation in executive positions”. Affirmative action makes getting into top colleges and getting high-paying jobs harder for statistically overrepresented minorities, greatly hindering their professional opportunities.

**Slide #14 (Pranav): Proposed Solution #1**

[Transition: It is important to understand how affirmative action could be changed to better accommodate all affected parties.] One solution is to switch out race based affirmative action for policies aimed to help economically challenged people. This is more suitable, as it helps the least fortunate in terms of economic condition while being a more universally accepted idea than race-based affirmative action. However, although income-based affirmative action is statistically more effective in reducing poverty, it does not accomplish the task of solving racial discrimination in underrepresented communities.

**Slide #15 (Jacob): Proposed Solution #2**

Another possible solution would be eliminating affirmative action entirely, which would aid Asians by taking race out of the admissions decision and only going off of academics and activities. However, this would cause underrepresented groups to lose much of their opportunity. According to Zachary Bleemer for UC Berkeley, “The total enrollment of Black and Hispanic students at the University of CA declined around 800 students per year after 1998 when affirmative action policies were stopped”. This shows that other minority groups greatly benefit from affirmative action and outright eliminating it would hurt them greatly, limiting the solution by putting us in the same situation, just with different minority groups being harmed. This would cause an imbalance and a lack of diversity in schools and businesses in the future.

**Slide #16 (Aadi): Proposed [Final] Solution #3**

Based on these potential solutions, we propose fusing these solutions into a three-step process for universities' holistic admissions processes and other affirmative action programs to implement in order to lessen the impact of an unbalanced system on the more disadvantaged side of the statistical majority or minority. This process would involve a combination of the elimination of the race-based affirmative action system, the creation of a class-based affirmative action initiative, and the implementation of a merit-based support program.

By eliminating race-based affirmative action, members of statistically overrepresented minority groups will no longer be overtaken by others who may have not had the same achievements or who may have not have put in the same effort as they did. However, this also creates the issue of minorities being disadvantaged due to them not having the same institutional framework to support them as majority groups.

**Joel**

Thus, the implementation of a class-based affirmative action system would offset this disadvantage, allowing those who may not have the same opportunity to be compared to others with a similar level of opportunity, also giving them a higher opportunity for financial aid.

This, in conjunction with the creation of a merit-based support program, would allow those with notable achievements to gain notice for their proficiency without being overtaken by those without a similar skill level. In order to be fair, rather than taking individual circumstances into account, which the other two aspects of this process already do, this could be implemented by introducing “auto admission” to a certain percentile of applicants based on highly selective factors, such as field related experience, contributions, and awards.

**Slide #17 (Pranav): Call to Action**

We urge authority figures to replace race-based affirmative action with class-based affirmative action, and allow for merit-based recognition. The implementation of policies involving these aspects is necessary to allow for fair and equitable programs that allow everyone to have an equal professional opportunity.

**Slide #18 (Jacob): Onwards**

The next slides are the images and works cited in our presentation.