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## **American Sociological Association Response to the Supreme Court’s Decision on Affirmative Action**

After centuries of systemic oppression, historically marginalized racial groups in higher education were finally granted opportunities during the Civil Rights era, leading to significant expansion of social mobility for these groups over time. However, on June 29, 2023, the United States Supreme Court rendered a 6-3 decision to dismantle race-based affirmative action. Affirmative action, among other strategies, aimed to address the historical lack of equal opportunities in a nation marred by its denial of access to racial minorities and women in institutions of higher education and the workplace. The American Sociological Association (ASA) disagrees vigorously with the majority opinion and the reasoning behind it given that the accumulation of disadvantages based on race throughout American history cannot be undone without proactive policies and practices aimed at rectifying past discrimination and exclusion.

Sociological research has demonstrated that social policies incorporating diverse racial groups into major societal institutions have driven social change and progress. The Court's decision overlooks the fact that educational disparities, resulting from unequal conditions in K-12 schools across the country and the deliberate exclusion of racially minoritized students in the previous century, were the very catalyst for recognizing the rights of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian students to pursue educational opportunities at the nation's most esteemed colleges and universities.

The opposition to race-based affirmative action now reveals a belief that the issues of the past have been adequately resolved—a premise that contradicts many social science findings. It ignores the fact that persistent and enduring racial disparities in educational and other resources cannot be rectified fully without addressing race directly. Race-neutral, colorblind strategies, akin to California's Proposition 209 and those in eight other states, already have led to a precipitous decline in not only the diversity of the student populations in the nation's most selective colleges and universities but also even starker underrepresentation in various other

domains of life such as the workplace, hospitals and doctor's offices, law firms, boardrooms, and leadership. A strong relationship between the lack of diversity among doctors and nurses and racial disparities in healthcare is documented heavily, for example.

Moreover, higher education serves a purpose that extends beyond developing human capital for individual success and group-based mobility. Sociology offers an understanding of the critical interplay between educational and social capital. Another fundamental goal of education is to foster critical thinking, civic awareness, and social cohesion among society's members. Without sustained interaction and contact among diverse individuals, future generations will likely be deprived of ample opportunities to develop empathetic understanding and acceptance of those who differ from themselves. They may lack the skills to find common ground amidst a sea of diverse ideas and worldviews. And they may struggle to uphold shared national values of equality, liberty, and justice for all.

The ruling against affirmative action carries significant implications for the civic and overall well-being of a multiracial democracy. As a learned society, the ASA remains dedicated to the production of research and knowledge, as well as the promotion of policies and practices that create ample opportunities for our society to fully embrace social equality and justice.

Race-based affirmative action was one of several effective means to realize this social vision.