

Asian Americans and Affirmative Action: We Will Not Be Your Wedge

Here's why...

Race-Conscious > Race-Blind

What is Merit?

Merit is subjective -- we all have different definitions. Is an applicant who is accomplished in music more meritorious than a star tennis player? A prolific writer? What about a person that got a 4.0 GPA and held down a part-time job versus a person that got a 4.0 GPA and had lots of private tutoring help?



The distance you run depends on where your starting line is...



Both these people **TIED** in a 400-meter race.

The race-blind conclusion: these two are equally impressive

BUT...what if...

one person actually started 50 meters behind the other.



Wouldn't we consider the person who covered a greater distance in the same amount of time more impressive than the person who started ahead?

People's starting lines are pushed farther and farther back based on institutional racism.

Ignoring race would be like giving bikes to the people who are already closest to the finish line-- not only perpetuating the unfairness, but exacerbating it.

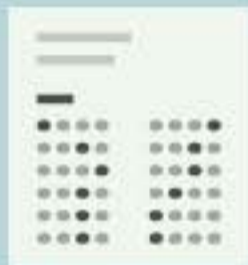
Numbers Alone Cannot Measure Merit



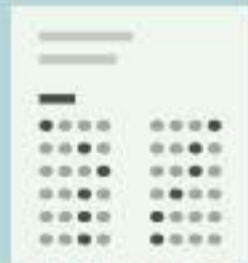
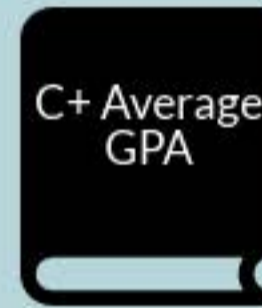
Highly-Ranked
Public High School



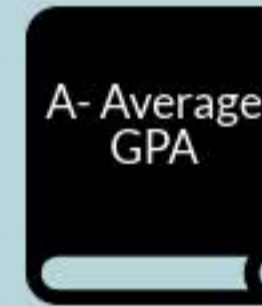
College of Choice



SAT SCORE
1450



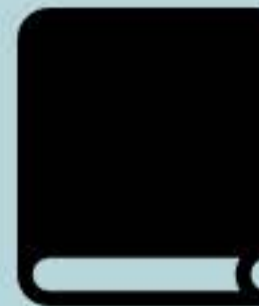
SAT SCORE
1395



Research shows that SAT scores are actually pretty bad predictors of college success.



SAT scores are not neutral-- statistics show that test results correlate to racial background, further magnifying racial inequities.



GPA can be a better measure of merit, but it is not objective and can be completely different across different schools.

At best, SAT scores and GPA can only provide information about a student's minimal qualifications. These numbers don't reveal much about a student's potential.

Competition is Fierce

Highly selective universities have too many qualified applicants to choose from.



Harvard rejects

1 in 4 students

with perfect SAT scores



UPenn and Duke reject

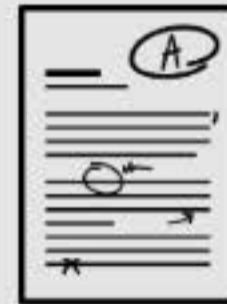
3 out of 5

high school valedictorians

Harvard could fill its incoming class

TWICE

with high school valedictorians

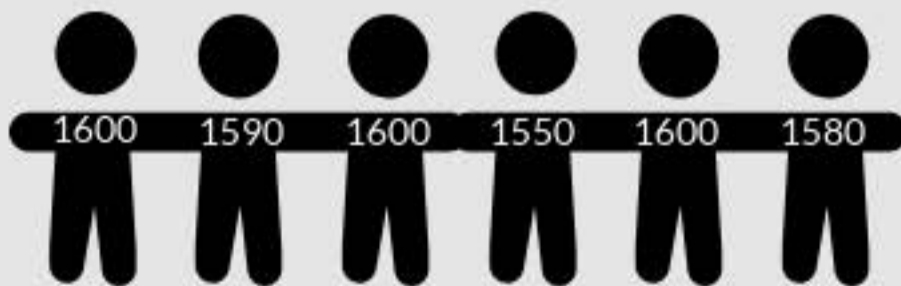


50% of applicants with
perfect SAT scores

were rejected from Princeton in 2015

Princeton also rejected

82% of valedictorians

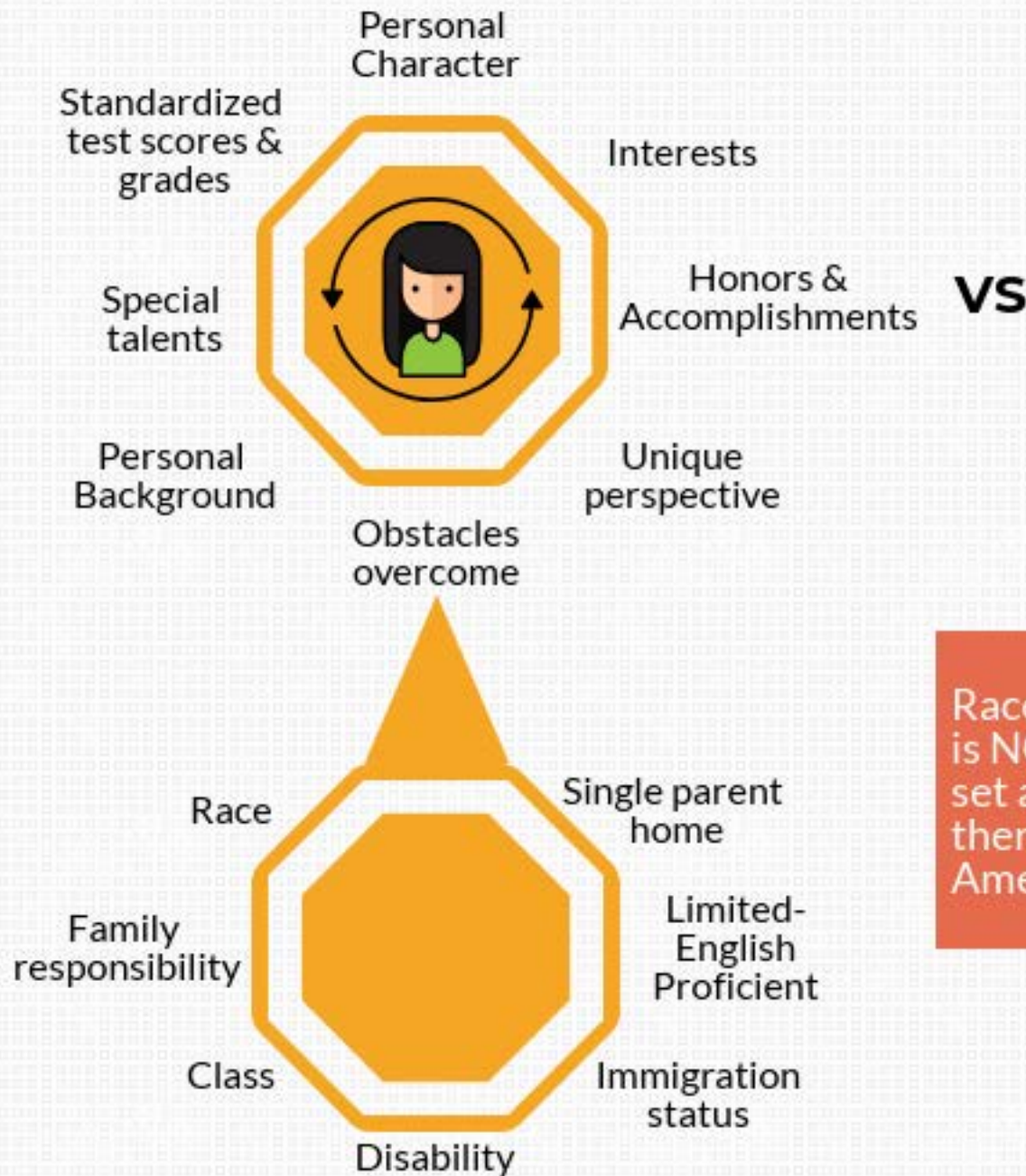


We can't take all these high test scorers. There's too many of them!

Even if GPA and test scores were good measures of merit, they would not be adequate as the only selection tools. Highly selective schools would still need **ADDITIONAL** criteria because there are too many highly qualified applicants.

Holistic Review: A Better Way to Measure Merit

Holistic review considers each person in their entirety to determine their potential to provide unique contributions to the world.



Standardized test scores & grades



VS

Race as a consideration in holistic review is NOT a quota system. There are no seats set aside for applicants based on race, and there is no cap on admissions of Asian Americans.

Holistic Review Cannot Be Holistic Without Race

Eliminating race from consideration in holistic review erases a core component of students' identities.



Chris A.

18 year old student

Los Angeles, CA USA

Seeking college within 100 miles of Boston, MA



About Me

- Middle-class home
- Was bullied at school because of race
- Fluent in Mandarin and English
- Translated for parents since first grade
- Worked at family's Chinese restaurant
- 3.9 GPA
- 1490 SAT score
- 1st place prize in Chinese speech competition

Hm...it looks like Chris has excelled academically, overcome adversity, and has unique passions that would be a good fit for our school.



Considering race in the admissions process means that race is looked at in context of an applicant's life and background, just like schools consider class, limited-English proficiency, geographic location, disability, and other circumstances that provide insight into the applicant's ability to overcome adversity and maximize their potential.

We have to ignore everything about this student's race and Chinese heritage. When you take all of that out, nothing stands out about this applicant.



It does not make sense to refuse to consider race while considering all other background characteristics

because race still matters in America.

What About Class Instead Of Race?



Isn't considering class enough to address educational disparities?

No, because racism still exists



Despite being inextricably intertwined, class and race are not the same

More than 60 years ago, the Supreme Court ruled that 'separate is not equal.' However, school segregation persists. In fact, it has actually increased in the past few decades, driven largely by residential segregation that isolates Black and Brown students in segregated schools. As a result, students of color are often relegated to under-resourced schools and school districts where the odds for success are already stacked against them.



Even in well-resourced schools, biased standardized testing, implicit bias from teachers and school staff, punitive discipline, police brutality, and school arrests lead to school pushout and poor graduation rates for Black and Brown students.

The realities of race and racism have to be considered in order to understand and address these disparities.

Class is changeable; race is not

Unlike class, race is a characteristic that is unchangeable. Rich or poor, the reality of race and racism in America shapes people's life experiences and the perspectives they bring to a classroom.

Race acts independently of class. Even for children raised in the same neighborhood whose parents earn similar incomes, Black boys fare worse than white boys in 99% of America. In fact, Black children raised in wealthy families still earn less than their white counterparts as adults and are more likely to **BECOME POOR** than **STAY WEALTHY**.



Race-neutral affirmative action does not work!

After affirmative action was repealed in California's public universities in 1998, the state invested millions into class-based diversity initiatives. Twenty years later, the public university system **STILL has not reached the same levels of racial diversity** it had under affirmative action.

Other Minorities Are Not "Taking" Asian American Seats

Getting rid of affirmative action at Harvard won't result in more Asian American students getting in.

Applied into Harvard class of 2021

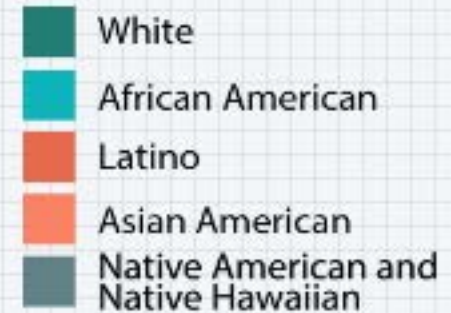


21.8% Asian American

Admitted into Harvard class of 2021



22.2% Asian American



Eliminating all African American and Latinx applicants from the admissions pool would only increase admission chances of white and Asian applicants by 1%.

How do we know Asian Americans are not being penalized for their race?

Simple: Asian American applicants make up the same proportion of the applicant pool and the admit pool.



A Legacy of White Advantage

White students:

- Disproportionately receive systematic advantages in the admissions process through legacy programs, early admissions, and wealth preferences.
- Make up an overwhelming majority of legacy students. Legacy students receive significant advantages in the admissions process at 75% of elite research universities and virtually all liberal arts colleges.
- Have easier access to early admissions programs, which have much higher acceptance rates than the regular admissions cycle (17.1% versus 5% at Yale).

In 2017, Harvard's incoming class was nearly one-third legacy students!

They are **3 times more** likely to get into Harvard than non-legacy students

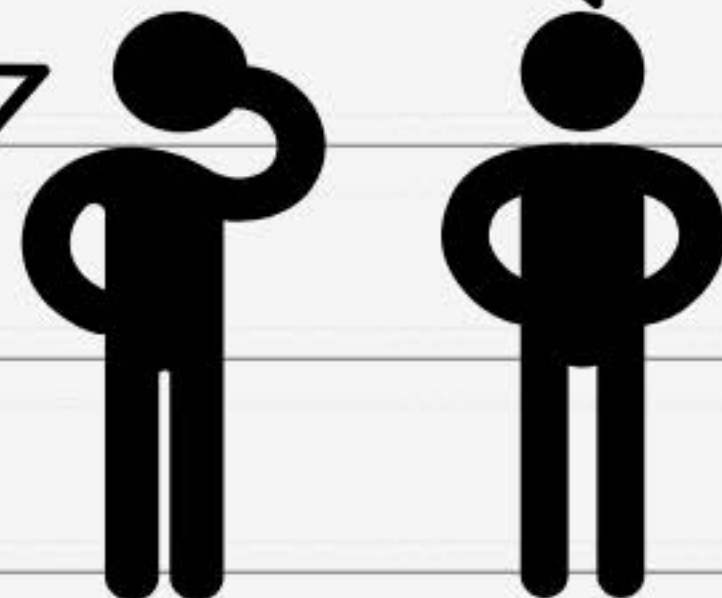
Wealthy white students are overrepresented at elite schools

At 38 colleges in America, including five in the Ivy Leagues, more students came from the richest 1% of the U.S. population than the entire bottom 60%.

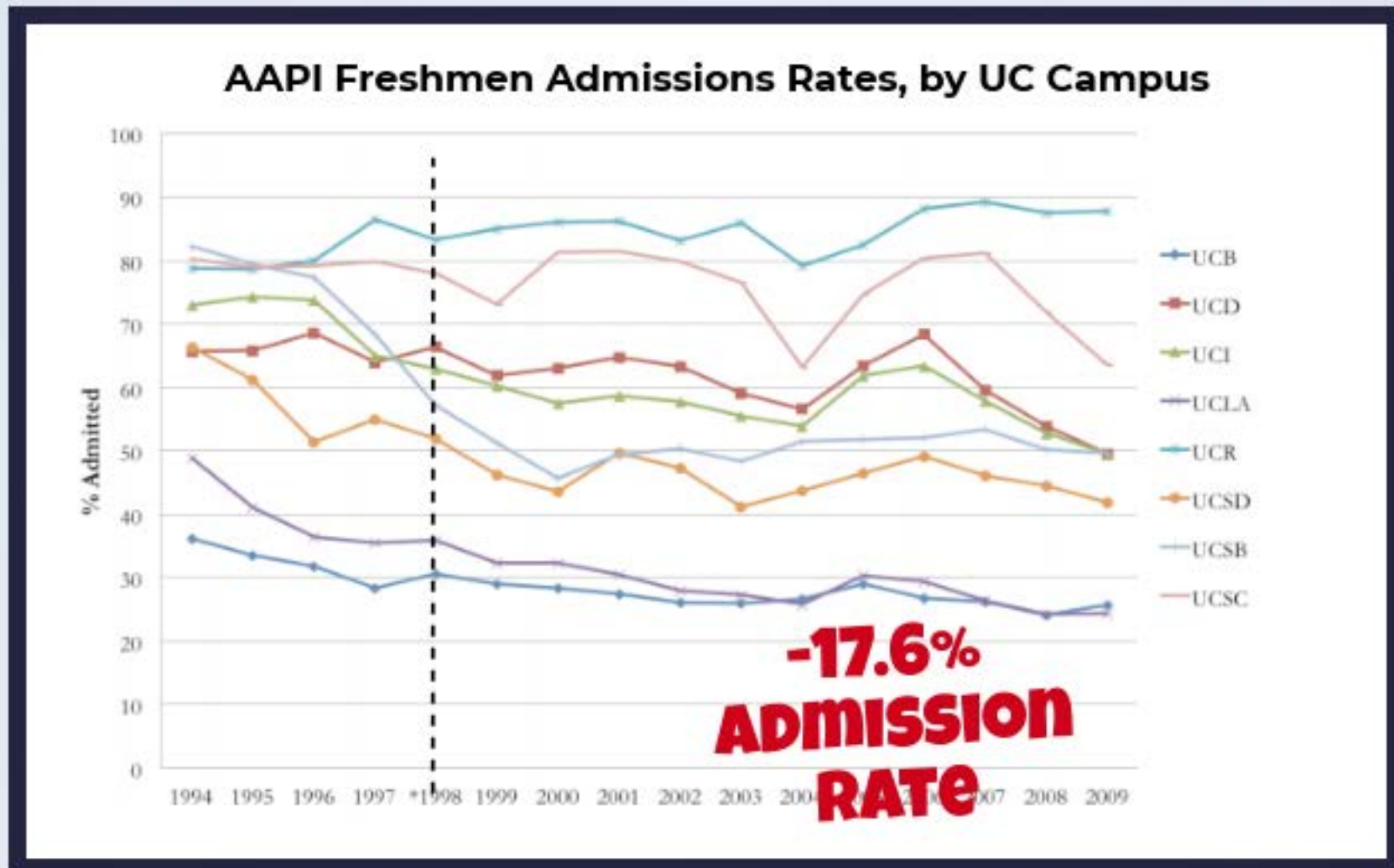
Programs like legacy admissions, early admissions, and wealth preferences overwhelmingly benefit wealthy white applicants.

My family has gone to Harvard for generations. There's no way I won't get in.

I'm so worried...I don't know if I'll get into Harvard.



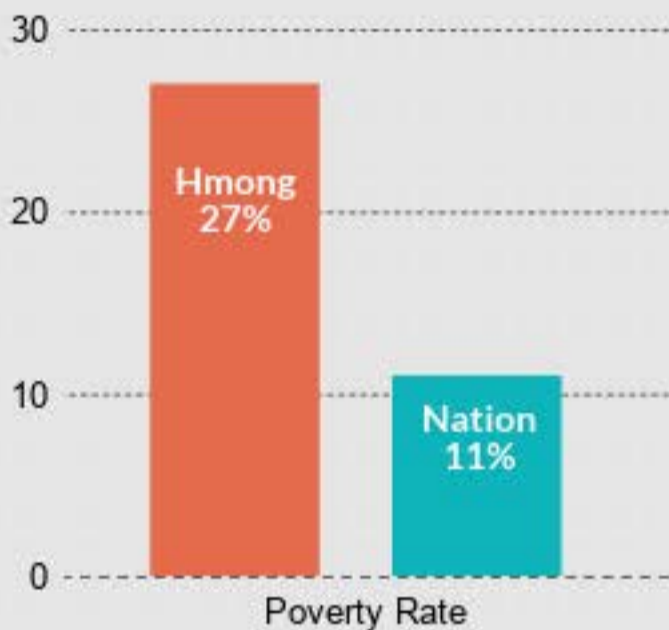
Affirmative Action Actually Benefits Asian Americans



Since affirmative action policies were prohibited in California's public universities in 1998 (Prop 209), Asian American admissions rates have **DECLINED** more than the general admission rates except at UC Riverside.

Asian Americans Need Affirmative Action

Students from the most underrepresented AAPI subgroups, such as Vietnamese, Cambodian, Hmong, Guamanian, and Samoan communities, all have lower than average access to education due to factors ranging from historical trauma (including war, displacement, and legacies of colonialism) to lack of access to information and language support.



Despite the model minority myth, Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, and Hmong communities have poverty rates above the national average.

The **27% poverty rate** of the Hmong community is **more than two times** the national rate of 11%.



These same communities also have some of the highest percentages of adults without a basic high school diploma...

...some as much as 40% above the national average.



College attendance rates for these communities are also lower than the national average.

In 2016, college enrollment for 18 to 24-year-olds was around **41% nationally** but only **21%** for Pacific Islander communities.

Fewer than **15%** of Cambodian, Hmong, and Laotian American adults have a bachelor's degree.

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders still need race-conscious admissions to access higher education.

Beyond College: The Bamboo Ceiling



College is only the beginning of a young person's future. The path to success is long and filled with roadblocks.

Asian Americans benefit from and need affirmative action to reach higher levels in their professional careers.



Before Prop 209 repealed affirmative action programs in public employment and contracting in California, they...

Significantly increased the participation of AAPI construction firms, who made up 20% of the industry but previously received less than 1% of government contracts



Helped AAPIs achieve more labor force parity in civil service jobs



...and benefited Asian Americans across many different fields.

Today, across America, Asian Americans still...

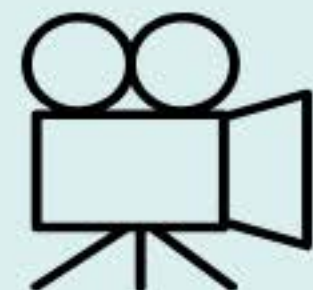
Are underrepresented in management and leadership positions



Report high rates of feeling that their careers have stalled (63% of men and 44% of women)



Are underrepresented in non-technical fields, including government, arts & entertainment, humanities, construction...the list goes on!



Therefore...



We understand that race still matters in America. The reality of ongoing racism and racial segregation shapes our life perspectives and impacts access to higher education. Because of this, we support race-conscious admissions policies like the one at Harvard as an essential step towards educational equity and inclusion, not just at Harvard, but on every college campus.

Resources:

<https://www.advancingjustice-la.org/affirmative-action>



ASIAN AMERICANS
**ADVANCING
JUSTICE**

This infographic was created by Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles.