

Why you should **DECLINE TO SIGN** MCRI's Anti-Affirmative Action Petition

- ⇒ This petition threatens to reverse the progress our society has made towards equality for women and minorities in education and employment.
- ⇒ This petition would resegregate the Univ. of Michigan and other colleges & universities throughout the state.
- ⇒ This petition would nullify the US Supreme Court decision in *Grutter v. Bollinger* -- a decision even President George W. Bush applauded.
- ⇒ This petition is so divisive and dangerous the Michigan Republican Party opposes it.
- ⇒ This petition would *outlaw all affirmative action* for women and minorities in Michigan.

■ This petition is duplicitous and deceptive.

The "Michigan Civil Rights Initiative" is a fraud. The entire effort is an attempt to hoodwink the population of Michigan. The rightwing wishes to sugarcoat the poison by calling it a "civil rights initiative" when its aim is to overturn the laws and the programs that the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s secured in Michigan.

Despite the fact that MCRI has hired black signature gatherers to circulate their petitions, this is a racist initiative. The signature gatherers are being paid \$1 per signature and are desperate people who are prepared to sell out civil rights to make a buck.

The leaders of this effort, including Jennifer Gratz, the racist who sued the University of Michigan undergraduate school against its affirmative action policy, say publicly that they support affirmative action. (!) *This is a hypocritical lie. The petition never mentions the term "affirmative action" despite the fact that the rightwing's entire purpose is to outlaw all affirmative action in Michigan* as was done with identical proposal language in California in 1996 with the notorious Proposition 209. They say they support outreach programs knowing full well that the California State Supreme Court has barred outreach programs as a supposed violation of Proposition 209.

■ This petition is an attack on our progress towards equality.

Ward Connerly and a far-right fringe of Michigan's Republican Party are gathering signatures on a petition in an attempt to nullify the US Supreme Court's June 23, 2003 decision upholding affirmative action at the University of Michigan Law School (*Grutter v. Bollinger*). If the rightwing succeeds, this initiative would outlaw all affirmative action for women and minorities in Michigan. This attack will divide and embitter our state. If it succeeds, it would resegregate the University of Michigan and the other colleges and universities in Michigan. *Even conservative Republican president George W. Bush applauded the US Supreme Court decision upholding affirmative action in Grutter v. Bollinger that this proposal seeks to nullify.*

The rightwing must collect 317,757 signatures to get this attack on the gains of the civil rights movement onto the November 2006 ballot in Michigan. If they succeed in Michigan, they will bring this racist attack to every state in the nation.

Our society has made precious progress toward equality and integration; affirmative action has been critical to the progress that we have achieved so far. Women now earn approximately 73 cents to a man's dollar. This is way up from before affirmative action, but it is obvious that we still have a long way to go.

In the University of California system after affirmative action was banned, the percentage of new-hires for tenure-track

positions who were female dropped by close to a third; the percentage of new-hires for tenure-track positions who were black, Latina/o and Native American dropped by close to half! Even before this attack in the University of California, when affirmative action was in place, women were radically underrepresented both among tenured faculty and as new-hires when compared to the gender breakdown of people receiving doctorate degrees.

Structural inequality, segregation and discrimination still needlessly squander the talent and intelligence of millions of young people. Michigan is now one of the most educationally and residentially segregated states in the nation. We do not need to move backward toward more segregation and racism. We need active measures like affirmative action to be moving in the right direction -- away from institutional racism and sexism.

■ This petition aims to drive black, Latina/o and Native American students out of Michigan's universities.

The University of Michigan administration made clear during the *Grutter v. Bollinger* trial in federal district court that **black student enrolment would drop by 75% if the University were barred from using affirmative action.** Now, with affirmative action policies in place, black, Latina/o and Native American students are still substantially underrepresented. The college-age population of Michigan is almost 20% black, while black students account for only 5.9% of the University of Michigan's current fall 2004 class. If this anti-affirmative action initiative is allowed to succeed, it would drive black, Latina/o and Native American students out of our school; **it would resegregate the University of Michigan.**

The purpose of the anti-affirmative action initiative is to drive minority students out of U of M and other colleges and universities in Michigan. The concentrated attack on minority students at U of M already succeeded in decreasing minority applications to the University of Michigan by 23% before this fall. Ward Connerly's anti-affirmative action initiative and petition campaign have partially succeeded in its segregationist objectives even before any vote by making the environment at U of M so hostile to minority students.

The standardized test scores and grade point averages that serve as admissions criteria for the University of Michigan and other selective schools in the country were proven in federal district court to capture and even to amplify bias against minority applicants. There is an unearned advantage to being white in today's America. That advantage expresses itself both in the job market and in our education system -- without affirmative action, this institutional bias operates fully with no counterweight. That would not be a step toward "equality" as the rightwing claims, but a step toward more racism and inequality.

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What they say...

The truth...

☞ The rightwingers say they are for a “meritocracy” and that eliminating affirmative action will help achieve that aim.

The actual effect of this proposal would be to **exclude the majority of fully qualified black, Latina/o and Native American students from admission to the University of Michigan** and other colleges and university in our state. **That is not “meritocracy”.** It would **resegregate the University of Michigan**. In the *Grutter v. Bollinger* trial, *all sides* conceded that *all the minority students admitted into the University of Michigan Law School were fully qualified*. Even the anti-affirmative action lawyers who sued the University of Michigan in the name of Jennifer Gratz and Barbara Grutter conceded that these fully qualified minority students would be barred without affirmative action admissions programs. **Without affirmative action, institutional inequality stifles merit.**

☞ The rightwingers circulating the petition to outlaw all affirmative action for women and minorities say that they are for equality.

Outlawing affirmative action programs **will increase inequality** -- between women and men and between the races. Treat people equally from day one and you will not need anti-discrimination remedies like affirmative action. Patterns of discrimination operate unchecked in the absence of active policies like affirmative action. Affirmative action is a step toward fairness and a step in the direction of judging people on the basis of “merit” by offsetting the unfair disadvantage that comes along with not being white and male in our society.

Racism is a reality. Sexism is a reality. As long as racism and sexism exist, we will need active policies like affirmative action to offset the damage they do.

☞ They say that they stand in the tradition of Martin Luther King.

Martin Luther King *supported* affirmative action! He lived his life for integration and equality. The use of his image and words to push the resegregation of higher education is a disgusting and shameful act of hypocrisy.

☞ The rightwingers say that everyone should be treated the same.

We must start with reality. Both bias and unearned privilege exist today; pretending that this is not true and outlawing the policies designed to offset that problem would simply exacerbate an already very bad problem. Race would be a much greater factor in college admissions and in our society as a whole if affirmative action were outlawed.

☞ “My [white] friend didn’t get into University of Michigan because of affirmative action.”

Black students are still dramatically underrepresented at the University of Michigan even with affirmative action in place. Black students are less than 8% of the U of M student body, while the college-aged population of Michigan is almost 20% black. We have not yet achieved equal opportunity in American education. We must move forward; this petition will take us backward toward segregation.

☞ “I support affirmative action just not ‘racial preferences’”.

That’s a lie. The same ballot language in Ward Connerly’s California Proposition 209, which passed in 1996, *outlawed all affirmative action – including outreach programs!* “Racial preferences” is just the racists’ term for the programs that offset the *real* preference this society shows white people and men every day.

☞ “I support socio-economic affirmative action not race-based affirmative action.”

Racism and sexism are a reality in America – ignoring them will make things worse not better. Counterposing race-based affirmative action with socioeconomic affirmative action is just the racists’ way of sounding less elitist. Poor and working class white people, both men and women, have benefited from affirmative action policies. The affirmative action program that Jennifer Gratz forced the University of Michigan to abandon included socioeconomic affirmative action.

☞ “The real problem is K-12 education.”

K-12 education in America is segregated and unequal. Resegregating higher education will make that much worse and will move our whole society backward toward more segregation and more marginalization of minorities. The same rightwing forces attempting to ban affirmative action in higher education are attempting to ban all desegregation programs in K-12 schools. People attempting to justify their campaign to outlaw integration programs for higher education by talking about the inequality in K-12 education play the part of arsonists lecturing the fire department. With people like this hypocrisy knows no limits.