

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

We, the Asian Pacific Coalition (APC) at the University of California – Los Angeles (UCLA), are a collective of twenty-four Asian American and Pacific Islander organizations. We are the official voice of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (API) community on campus. Through our Principles of Unity, a code by which our coalition organizes by, we affirm the right to higher education for all communities, especially those who have historically been denied full access.

In particular, we are writing in support of the formerly proposed California Senate Constitutional Amendment (SCA) 5 – a legislation that asks voters to consider repealing Proposition 209's ban on the use of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in California public education programs.

SCA 5 was introduced by California State Senator Edward Hernandez on December 3, 2012. After passing in the Senate and reaching the Assembly, it was recently referred back to the Senate for re-examination on March 17, 2014 because of pressure from several Chinese American lobbyists.

Recently, many news outlets have published reports regarding Asian American attitudes towards affirmative action and SCA 5. However, many of these have only depicted a narrative of stern opposition, when in fact, it is only a small population of highly privileged Chinese Americans that are attempting to speak on behalf of all API communities. It is extremely disappointing to witness this phenomenon while other API groups remain invisible and voiceless.

We seek to clarify that the mainstream narrative does not represent our communities and that we will not allow our voices to be rendered irrelevant. These reports perpetuate the model minority myth and continue to divide communities of color on crucial community issues.

As a coalition comprised of several ethnic API groups, APC emphasizes that affirmative action policies are, contrary to misconceptions, beneficial for APIs. Through the implementation of Proposition 209, race-blind admissions have been detrimental to all communities of color. Additionally, admission rates of APIs have actually decreased at five out of the eight UC campuses with race-blind admissions.

It is imperative to continually clarify that Southeast Asians, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders – whom all fit under Asian American racial categorization – are groups that experience some of the lowest college attendance rates. In a report compiled by Asian Americans Advancing Justice, 40.3% of Southeast Asian and 50.2% of Pacific Islander students between the ages of 25-34 have not attended college. Some of the misconceptions of affirmative action are maintained by this lack of disaggregated data, which consequently masks these disparities.

Furthermore, the low representation of African American and Latina/o students at our higher education institutions is especially disturbing. As concluded by a 2012 study made by the Higher Education Research Institution at UCLA, under-representation of any community creates a detrimental effect on campus climate, which has salience in daily activities. At UCLA, we have experienced the consequences from a lack of diversity through the continuance of racialized hate crimes on campus.

In promoting unity and cooperative interaction amongst different communities, we stress the importance for members of the API community to work in solidarity with other communities of color. While affirmative action has been framed centrally as an African American and Latina/o issue, APIs are stakeholders in this issue as well. Nonetheless, we must utilize our voices and act beyond self-interest – in which case, to understand the oppressive histories that others have experienced.

While SCA 5 is currently halted, we have the responsibility to continue advocating for educational change through other initiatives. Rather than focusing solely on admissions, we must further demand change from the state, specifically with its larger disinvestment in California's public education system.

To increase educational opportunity, the state must commit to promoting diversity and inclusion, sustaining retention and recruitment programs, providing visibility for underrepresented and underserved groups, and ensuring affordability for all students. These are all issues that California students grapple with, and in identifying them, we must advocate for larger efforts for equitable change.

Therefore, in recognizing the right to higher education for all students, we demand that our state legislators remain committed to enacting policies that reflect the diversity of California. Additionally, we affirm the student voice as one that must be acknowledged and included in the discussion of this legislation.

Thus we call upon members of our campus community – as well as those beyond – to advocate in solidarity for equitable educational opportunity. In working towards this vision, we are committed to cross-community building and supporting policies like SCA 5 that benefit all communities of color, including Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

Signed,

The Asian Pacific Coalition at UCLA

<http://advancingjustice-la.org/advancing-educational-opportunity>

<http://heri.ucla.edu/briefs/urmbriefreport.pdf>

<http://www.heri.ucla.edu/PDFs/pubs/TFS/Special/Monographs/BlackUndergraduatesFromBakkeToGrutter.pdf>

Who we are

What we're writing about: SCA 5

What is SCA 5 and affirmative action

misconceptions from mainstream media and chinese american orgs

How they affect APIs in higher education →

[http://advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/AAPIs%20and%20Affirmative%20Action%20Fact sheet.pdf](http://advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/AAPIs%20and%20Affirmative%20Action%20Fact%20sheet.pdf)

Underrepresented APIs

Why we are in support → deconstructing model minority, beyond self-interest, equitable access for all communities

Call for other API orgs/people/leaders to see our reasoning and to also be in support