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**ASIAN AMERICANS DEFENDING AFFIRMATIVE ACTION FILE PAPERS TO JOIN HARVARD
LAWSUIT**

*Prospective Asian American and Pacific Islander Students Represented by Asian Americans Advancing
Justice-Los Angeles*

LOS ANGELES - Yesterday, Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles (Advancing Justice-LA) joined the lawsuit challenging Harvard's race-conscious holistic admissions policy by filing papers on behalf of two prospective Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Harvard applicants who support affirmative action.

“Advancing Justice-LA and the students chose to get involved in this case because the vast majority of Asian Americans support affirmative action and have historically benefitted greatly from the consideration of race,” says Nicole Ochi, supervising attorney at Advancing Justice-Los Angeles. “We refuse to be used as a wedge by outside players stoking the insecurities of newer Asian immigrants, provoking them to lash out at the very programs that have helped communities of color gain access to higher education. In our current political climate where racism and bigotry continue to be normalized, it is more important than ever to acknowledge that race still matters and should not be the only aspect of an applicant's story that is excluded from consideration in the admissions process.”

In 2014, Edward Blum orchestrated the lawsuit against Harvard claiming that its race-conscious admissions policy intentionally discriminated against Asian Americans. The case is also the first time that Asian Americans have been overtly recruited and placed as the primary challengers of a race-conscious admissions policy. In the Fisher, Grutter, Gratz, and Bakke cases, the plaintiffs featured were white and usually female. On Blum's Project on Fair Representation website, the image of an Asian American student is featured next to the caption: Were you denied admission to Harvard? It may be because you're the wrong race.

Blum is the architect of a series of lawsuits designed to eliminate the consideration of race in admissions and voting, rolling back decades of progress on civil rights. This past summer the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the consideration of race in Fisher II as one factor in a holistic admissions policies. In their decision, the court acknowledged that the empirical data demonstrates that race-neutral alternatives do not result in the same levels of diversity and that Asian Americans do not necessarily lose out under affirmative action.

The current case against Harvard is the first time that a private university's affirmative action policy has been challenged and could lead to another fight before the Supreme Court. Under a Trump administration, there is a

high likelihood that the Supreme Court would rule less favorably on the issue.

“Part of the Ivy League obsession of some Asian Americans may be rooted in a sense of insecurity about our place in America. However, we know that in real life, an Ivy League pedigree is not enough to stop people from screaming at us to ‘go home’ or to stop U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement from picking us up or stop TSA from racially profiling and escorting us off an airplane. Thus, if we are trying to use education as some sort of shield against discrimination, it isn’t working,” said Jason Fong, a high school senior and Harvard applicant. “I got involved in this case because I feel it’s important for Asian Americans like myself to ask why we aren’t doing more to fight against racism directly. And as someone who has benefitted greatly from being educated in an environment with great diversity in race, class and thought, I believe diversity is a valuable criteria for any campus to embrace.”

“Opponents of affirmative action continue to peddle the myth that affirmative action hurts Asian American students by placing quotas on their admissions into elite colleges in favor of African American and Latino students. This is an absolute lie,” says Ochi. “Quotas, in fact, have been unconstitutional for decades.”

Advancing Justice-LA and the students seek to join the case as special “amicus plus” status along with the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice, and pro bono counsel Arnold & Porter, who represent a diverse group of Asian, African American, Latino, and Native American prospective and current Harvard students. With “amicus plus” status, the students in this case will have an opportunity to file an amicus brief at any dispositive juncture in the case, participate in oral argument, and submit evidence, which greatly amplifies the students’ voice beyond typical amicus standing.

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Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles is the nation’s largest Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) legal and civil rights organization and serves more than 15,000 individuals and organizations every year. Founded in 1983 as the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, Advancing Justice - LA’s mission is to advocate for civil rights, provide legal services and education, and build coalitions to positively influence and impact Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and to create a more equitable and harmonious society. Through direct legal services, impact litigation, policy analysis and advocacy, leadership development and capacity building, Advancing Justice - LA seeks to serve the most vulnerable members of the AANHPI community while also building a strong AANHPI voice for civil rights and social justice.

