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WHAT WILL BE THE VERDICT: THE COLUMBIA TRAGEDY AFFIRMATIVE ACTION?

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President Bush filed a brief with the Supreme Court in hopes that the affirmative action admission policies at the University of Michigan would be declared unconstitutional.

In Michigan's undergraduate and graduate schools, minority candidates were given extra points in a formula to decide whether they could be admitted.

In 1973, Alan Bakke, a white student, sued after he was denied admission to medical school at the University of California at Davis, saying minorities less qualified than him were admitted. In 1978, the Supreme Court ruled the university could not hold a quota of places for minorities.

The University of Michigan Law School says it not only as the right to use race in recruiting students, but also the responsibility.

"We take race into account as a factor among many in order to pursue the educational benefit of diversity," university lawyer Liz Barry told CNN in 1998.

A federal appeals court in May upheld the university's law school admissions process after being sued by Barbara Gutter and two other applicants in 1995.

"I strongly support diversity of all kinds, including racial diversity in higher education. But the method used by the University of Michigan to achieve this important goal is fundamentally flawed," President Bush proclaimed in his nationally televised address.

"Michigan's program is virtually the same as those of selective universities across the country," said Lee C. Bollinger, who was president of the University of Michigan when the litigation began.

Although the president's statements pleased the Republican Party, it came at a time when the Republican Party was in turmoil over racially charged statements by Senator Trent Lott of Mississippi. The Democratic Party quickly denounced the administration's position on affirmative action, claiming that it portrays the true measure of President Bush and his party.

Professor Richard Lempert, professor of law and sociology and faculty associate in the Institute for Social Research's Survey Research Center, says there are many misconceptions that lead people to conclude affirmative action should be abolished. For example, he says of one of the

arguments against affirmative action is the belief that all students now "have the same potential for learning so blacks can succeed if they work hard."

Lempert notes that many schools attended by disadvantaged groups do not have the same number of Advanced Placement (AP) courses, which are given extra weight in the admissions process. Further, he says there is no evidence that grade point averages or test scores are predictors of success later in life.

Lempert says the first step in defending affirmative action is to recognize that "diversity is not a common cultural value in our society." He says the University "has an interest in exposing students to persons who look different than they do, regardless of viewpoints, backgrounds, etc.," but society in general does not share this concern.

He says one needs to look at history, including very recent events, to find additional support for affirmative action. Racial profiling, newspaper articles about minorities receiving inferior health care even though insured, and the payout of some 54 million dollars by Denny's restaurants for racist treatment of customers are recent evidences that discrimination and injustice still exist.

"Growing up in the '50s with Little Rock, it's a world I find immoral, intolerable, and I don't want to go back to it," says Lempert.

Colin Powell, Secretary of State, also believes that race should play a role in university admissions.

"It is important to take race into consideration, if you must," says Powell about achieving diversity within a school.

"I wish it was possible for everything to be race-neutral in this country, but I'm afraid we're not yet at that point where things are race-neutral," Powell says on CNN's "Late Edition."

Although some may find affirmative action to be unconstitutional, the rejected white students are only experiencing what blacks experienced earlier in time.

Supreme Court justices will be asked to decide whether a state has a "compelling interest" to promote a diverse student body, or whether the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment forbids giving one ethnic group or culture special advantages over another.

Arguments for this case will be heard beginning April 1. The decision of the court is expected this June.

Information in this article was taken from other sources: <http://www.cnn.com>, <http://www.umich.edu>.

Shuttle commander Rick D. Husband, Pilot William C. McCool, Payload Commander Michael P. Anderson, Mission Specialists David M. Brown, Kalpana Chawla and Laurel Clark and Israel's first astronaut, Ilan Ramon, were on board.

In memory of those who dared to do what others only dream about

Those brave souls that reached for the stars
Six Americans and the first Israeli astronaut
were on board the Space Shuttle Columbia when it broke
apart and fell to the ground.
All seven astronauts died pursuing not only their dreams
but the dreams of all of us.



Photo and poem courtesy of www.funpages.com

COLUMBIA EXPLOSION AFFECTS CAMPUS

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On the morning of February 1, 2003, seven individuals who were living their dreams saw them end tragically as the space shuttle Columbia exploded over Nacogdoches, TX. This tragedy has shocked the world, but one administrator at Elizabeth City State University can personally relate to the explosion that took place over the skies of East Texas.

Dr. Jean Holt, Director of Student Life at Elizabeth City State University remembers the sights and sounds of the space shuttles taking off or arriving back in Florida and the impact that it had on the residence that lived near the Kennedy Space Center.

"We use to watch the launches of the space shuttles from our front yard. We lived 40 to 50 miles away from Cape Canaveral Fl... the launches were always impressive."

One memorable launch occurred nearly 17 years ago and resulted in the tragic explosion of the Challenger.

Dr. Holt recalls her family's reaction to the tragedy.

"It was unreal; there were many that were glued to the television, and we just couldn't believe it."

After learning of the recent tragedy, Dr. Holt immediately called her friend in Texas. Her friends told her about the loud sound of the explosion that they heard over the houses that morning and the "feelings of sadness" that overcame the community.

*The Staff of The Compass and the
Language, Literature, and
Communications Department would like to
extend their sincere sympathies to those
who lost loved ones in the Columbia Shuttle
Tragedy.*