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“No African Americans take to the streets in protest to demand Whites to love us more. We demand a behavior change!” Rev. George C. Gilbert, Jr.

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Minneapolis Police Scathing Report Exposes Racist and Unconstitutional Policing

An investigation by the Justice Department found systemic abuses by the police that “made what happened to George Floyd possible,” the attorney general said.

The report calls for an overhaul of the force. Here’s what to know.

The Justice Department on Friday released a damning account of systemic abuses and discrimination by the police in Minneapolis, the result of a multiyear investigation that began after the

murder of George Floyd in police custody ignited protests across the country.



In an 89-page report, investigators laid out repeated instances of the police engaging in unlawful discrimination against Black and Native American people, as well routinely failing to take arrestees’ health complaints seriously and violating the First Amendment rights of demonstrators and journalists at protests.

“The patterns and practices we observed made what happened to George Floyd

possible,” said Attorney General Merrick B. Garland, who ordered the investigation in April 2021.

The Justice Department found there was “reasonable cause to believe” that police officers engaged in a “pattern or practice of conduct that deprives people of their rights under the Constitution and federal law.”

Among many other examples of discrimination by officers, investigators outlined an episode in which an officer said his goal was to wipe the Black Lives Matter movement “off the face of the earth.” Mr. Garland added that officers often used some version of the line, “You can breathe, you’re talking right now,” when placing citizens in chokeholds.

The city has agreed to negotiate a court-enforced agreement that, if enacted, would require a sweeping overhaul of the city’s police force, which has faced an exodus of officers and a lack of community support since the death of Mr. Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, in May 2020.

Here are the details:

- Among 19 police shootings from January 2016 and August 2022, federal investigators found that “a significant portion of them were

unconstitutional uses of deadly force,” with officers sometimes shooting “without first determining whether there was an immediate threat of harm to the officers or others.”

- A separate state investigation completed last year also described widespread abuses by Minneapolis police officers. Here’s what it found.
 - The police in Chicago, Baltimore and several other U.S. cities have previously been accused of civil rights violations by the Justice Department and entered court-enforced agreements known as consent decrees. Here’s how they have affected law enforcement in other cities.
 - The death of Mr. Floyd led to a national wave of protest and unrest, and resulted in rare criminal convictions for the officers involved. But even before his murder, the Minneapolis police had faced protests and accusations of excessive force. Here’s what to know about the department’s history.
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Defending Racial Equity: The impact of U.S. Supreme Court rulings on our shared vision

A just and equitable world is every child's birthright.



This summer, the U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS) released a series of rulings that will have a generational impact on the work of racial equity in this country. SCOTUS upheld a key provision of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the constitutionality of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). At the same time, SCOTUS struck down race-conscious admissions at Harvard and the University of North Carolina.

These cases are part of a concerted effort to undo policies, practices, and remedies that address systemic racism. For all who are dedicated to advancing our country's journey toward racial equity, this is an important moment to engage. We will continue to update this page with information about the cases, resources on the impact of the decisions, and WKKF grantee reflections.

Supreme Court blocks Biden student loan forgiveness

By John Kruzel



The U.S Supreme Court handed President Joe Biden a painful defeat on

Friday, blocking his plan to cancel \$430 billion in student loan debt - a move that had been intended to benefit up to 43 million Americans and fulfill a campaign promise.

The Democratic president denounced the 6-3 decision - powered by the court's conservatives and written by Chief Justice John Roberts - and announced fresh steps to provide relief for student loan borrowers using a different approach.



The court sided with six conservative-leaning states - Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and South Carolina -that objected to Biden's student loan forgiveness. Its ruling dealt a blow to the 26 million borrowers who applied for relief after Biden announced the plan in August 2022 and represented a political setback for Biden. "Today's decision has closed one path. Now we're going

to pursue another," Biden said at the White House, announcing steps being taken under a law called the Higher Education Act. "I'm never going to stop fighting for you. We'll use every tool at our disposal to get you the student debt relief you need - and reach your dreams."

Roberts derided the Biden administration's argument that the loan forgiveness program - a move linked to the national emergency arising from the COVID-19 pandemic - was merely a modification of an existing program and noted that such broad action would require clear congressional approval.

"The secretary's plan has 'modified' the cited provisions only in the same sense that the French Revolution 'modified' the status of the French nobility - it has abolished them and supplanted them with a new regime entirely," Roberts wrote, referring to U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. "From a few narrowly delineated situations specified by Congress, the secretary has expanded forgiveness to nearly every borrower in the country," Roberts said.

The court's three liberal justices dissented. The court acted on its final day of rulings in its term that began in

October. The ruling invoked the "major questions" doctrine, a muscular judicial approach that gives judges broad discretion to invalidate executive agency actions of "vast economic and political significance" unless Congress clearly authorized them in legislation. The conservative justices previously used this doctrine to invalidate other Biden policies including pandemic-era eviction protections for residential renters and his COVID-19 vaccination-or-testing mandate for large businesses.

A CAMPAIGN PROMISE

Biden's plan fulfilled his 2020 campaign promise to cancel a portion of \$1.6 trillion in federal student loan debt but was criticized by Republicans who called it an overreach of his authority and an unfair benefit to college-educated borrowers while other borrowers received no such relief.

Under the plan, the U.S. government would forgive up to \$10,000 in federal student debt for Americans making under \$125,000 who obtained loans to pay for college and other post-secondary education and \$20,000 for recipients of Pell grants to students from lower-income families.

The administration said the plan was authorized under a 2003 federal law called the Higher Education Relief

Opportunities for Students Act, or HEROES Act, which lets the education secretary "waive or modify" student financial assistance during war or national emergencies.

Biden and his Republican predecessor Donald Trump both relied upon the HEROES Act to repeatedly pause student loan payments and halt interest from accruing to alleviate financial strain on student loan borrowers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cardona said the Education Department now has finalized an income-driven loan repayment plan that cuts monthly payments to zero for millions of low-income borrowers, saves all other borrowers at least \$1,000 annually and stops runaway interest that leaves borrowers owing more than their initial loan. The department, Cardona said, also will provide a 12-month transition period to help borrowers successfully return to repayment without falling into delinquency or default. It will help borrowers avoid the harshest consequences of missed, partial or late payments like negative credit reports and having loans referred to collection agencies, Cardona added.

Biden, who is seeking re-election next year, criticized Republican elected officials who opposed his plan.

"They had no problem with billions in pandemic-related loans to businesses - including hundreds of thousands and in some cases millions of dollars for their own businesses," Biden said. Some 53% of respondents supported Biden's debt relief, with 45% opposed, in a March Reuters/Ipsos U.S. poll.



The major questions doctrine arises from an approach favored by many conservatives and business groups to rein in what they view as excesses of the "administrative state." They object to what they consider accumulated power by the executive branch without proper checks by the courts and Congress. Justice Elena Kagan, in a dissent joined by her two fellow liberals, derided this doctrine as "made-up." "Small wonder the majority invokes the doctrine," Kagan wrote. "The majority's 'normal' statutory interpretation cannot sustain

its decision. The statute, read as written, gives the Secretary broad authority to relieve a national emergency's effect on borrowers' ability to repay their student loans." Two individual borrowers opposed to the plan's eligibility requirements also sued but the justices dismissed their challenge on Friday due to a lack of legal standing.

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Confessions of an Affirmative Action Baby

How an “undeserving” kid like me got admitted to Stanford

By Greg Palast, June 29, 2003

There’s no way you’d been reading this — and I could not write this — if it weren’t for affirmative action. And there’s no way on earth I could have gotten accepted to fancy-ass schools including Columbia, Stanford, Chicago, UCLA and Berkeley — without affirmative action. Because I flunked basic English. But, thanks to affirmative action, “undeserving” me got into all those fine ruling class finishing schools. And if you don’t like it, if you think my writing career cheated a worthier and wealthier young man out of his pre-ordained slot, well, f— you! Now, a tiny opening into membership into the ruling class has been closed with a guillotine. Today, the Supreme Court issued its ruling banning any consideration of race in admissions to Harvard and the University of North Carolina — and, by so ruling, every school in the USA.

The ruling is ugly, cruel, racist and flat-out un-American — though possibly the impetus for correcting some decayed forms of affirmative action which are neither affirmative nor active. Stay with me on this. Let me explain using my own story of escape from L.A.’s East Valley, the dead-end barrio of Sun Valley-Pacoima. In 1968, UCLA held a test for “gifted” kids that would allow them to enter the university before they finished high school. By pure luck, I happened to have friends at Beverly Hills High whom I was going to meet to just hang out. I was told to meet them at UCLA where I found them about to take this early admissions test. The test was well-advertised at Beverly Hills High, at University High and at a couple of other high schools where the morbidly wealthy send their kids. No one ever even mentioned the program at my school — then populated mostly by Chicanos and “Okies” (dustbowl refugees).

I had nothing to do while waiting for my friends, so I said, “Give me a test!” The surprised proctors reluctantly handed me the papers. And I aced it. At least on paper, I was a smart kid. But, my English wasn’t worth a can of spam. I stone-cold flunked the “Subject A” exam of basic grammar and

spelling, a requirement to enter the University of California. Apparently, Pacoima Spanglish is not Standard English. But, after a call to my high school's principal who explained, "That any of our students can speak English at all is a big deal," a dean at UCLA waived the requirement, taking "affirmative action" to pretend I had passed the test. And if you don't like that, f— you again!

At my high school, all boys were required to take "shop" classes to learn to operate a wood lathe, draft blueprints and how to pick radishes (so we could be gainfully employed as permanent "braceros.") At Beverly Hills and "Uni," the kids had calculus and Advanced Placement Physics and French lessons — in France. I couldn't compete. But thanks to affirmative action, admissions gatekeepers looked the other way. (And, in 1968-69, with the planet on fire from Watts to Vietnam the prestige schools were bringing in kids they thought would be grateful enough to not make trouble. We proved them wrong.) But even before today's decision, a kid like me would have a tough time qualifying for affirmative action as the court's Bakke (1978) and Grutter (2003) rulings gutted the core purpose of affirmative action: to give those without privilege a

fighting chance to get a piece of the privilege. Instead, real educational handicaps were set aside for a crude concept of "racial diversity." Schools stopped recognizing society's crippling of opportunity for poor Black, Hispanic and White kids — and replaced it with approval of plans by the ruling class to put a little chocolate in their milk. "Diversity" became a head-count of skin tones.

The Ivy League loved those rulings — because they allowed the privileged to hold on to their privileges. So, a Barack Obama, with a PhD mom and a Harvard economist dad, counts as "diversity." No one questions that Obama was a stellar student, but it was hardly creating an opening in the ruling order to admit another "legacy" student. As today's decision notes, Harvard's final "lop" as they call it for choosing students has only four criteria. Number one is "legacy status" — i.e. is daddy a member of the club. Then there is that other "legatee" George W. Bush, who famously crowed that he got into the elite Phillips Academy Prep School and admitted to Yale despite his abysmal grades. Here's a photo of him giggling as he says, "As I like to tell C students. You too can become President!"

I would note that the plaintiffs in today's case did suggest that eliminating "legatee" spots — almost all reserved for the white and wealthy — would radically increase racial diversity. I'm sure the ruling class was more than thrilled that the Court did not ban the legacy grift that preserves the mating rituals of the scions of the rich. I remember a dean of students at the University of Chicago telling me about the confidential phone number, "which we keep only for big donors to call if they need to get someone admitted."

So the Right wing has come up with allegedly "race neutral" prescriptions for college admissions. By law, admission to the prestigious University of California campuses is principally determined by your "grade point average." Sounds fair, race and class neutral. But an 'A' in an Advanced Placement class is worth 5 points, while an 'A' in other classes is worth only 4. At my school for pre-designated losers, we had only one single AP class — while Bevvvy and Uni had dozens. A straight-A student at my school would lose a shot at UCLA to a Beverly Hills mediocrity loaded up with AP classes.

The Classroom Class War

American education is a war zone — where battlefield success is measured by the prestige schools you've attended, connections to the powerful and their wallets and their Rolodexes, to their "networking opportunities," and entry into the gene pool for the landlords of our planet. "Getting in" — is everything. Getting left out is everything too, if you're left out. Ask Steve Paddock. (We'll get to Steve.) In other words, it's bigger than race. It's about the war that cannot speak its name: class war. The ruling class doesn't mind "diversity" if it doesn't threaten their rule.

Today's decision, like Bakke and Grutter, continues the unprovoked assault by the haves on the never-will-haves. I recognize that the issue of class is going out of style. In those virtue-signaling lawn signs that say, "In this house, we believe that love is love, no person is illegal, women's rights are human rights etc.," nice liberal homeowners announce their blessing for same-sex marriage, for immigration, and a woman's right to abortion. But as the great social critic Thomas Frank notes, there's no place on those signs for, "In this house we believe every worker deserves a good

union paying job.” Lost your job to NAFTA? Sorry, no more room on our sign.

In our long-overdue recognition of historic wrongs, we’ve left out the working class, especially the working poor. “Working class” and “working poor” is not, at least from the signs, an “intersection” of oppression. One classmate at my sucky high school, Steve Paddock, impoverished son of an escaped convict, was a real math whiz. He didn’t know about early admissions tests. He ended up dumped into our local college. He was brainy enough to know he’d been cheated, watching the “legatee” mediocrities close the door in his face. And brainy enough to figure out the complex ballistics to kill 56 people in Las Vegas from a notable distance. Not every frustrated white kid becomes a killer. But an awful lot of them will put on MAGA caps.

Race, Class and “Neutral” Admissions tests

Let’s talk about “race” neutral admissions policies. Elite schools put much value on “extra-curricular activities.” My daughter got into a top arts and film school with a scholarship for her portfolio and academic scores. She was talented and no doubt she

deserved it. But how many 16-year-olds at my old school even have a portfolio? Mom and dad made sure she enrolled in weekend classes at the Parsons School of Design — and attended a deluxe private school to overcome her dyslexia. (The breathtakingly high tuition was paid by the government after we sued. How many kids can call on daddy’s lawyers to boost their educational opportunities?) And let’s not forget the private SAT tutor. Now, consider my Associate Producer, the hip-hop artist Jevin Lamar. His “extracurricular activity”? He waited tables and washed dishes at a Steak & Brew in a Dayton, Ohio, dead-end zone. No one got him an internship with the ACLU, no French lessons in France.

Let’s not gloss over the fact that even the most privileged Black person faces brutal discrimination. A dark-skinned person with a doctorate is still likely to be shunted to subprime loans, to subprime neighborhoods, to subprime you-name-it. Racism is baked into America the way flour is baked into bread. To ignore it is to cruelly continue it. Racism has stained America up and down the economic totem pole. It cannot be ignored and requires correction. By shifting affirmative action’s focus to income,

we give a hand up to the wounded of the class war and will assist most students of color who are the legatees of systemic impoverishment.

My life as a “less-qualified” student

“Affirmative Action” is slandered as a system to make room for people who don’t deserve to be there; students, like me, who are “less qualified” by dint of a lower test score, an embarrassing lack of advanced placement classes. Kind of like requiring every NBA team to have one player in a wheelchair. Affirmative action is not an attack on Meritocracy, on letting the swiftest win. But when the starting gun shoots a hole in one runner’s leg, it’s not a fair race. But we can’t heal the wounds of class war simply by balancing out the runners’ by skin tone. My white daughter had privileges my African-American AP could have never dreamed of. But then, what opportunities are denied Obama’s kids? Would their inclusion on a school roster indicate “diversity”?

One solution comes, surprisingly, out of Texas. University of Texas admits students in the top 10% of their graduating class — a good step toward leveling out differences of both race and class. And how has affirmative

action worked out? I can tell you only about the case of this author who flunked basic English. I was given an “undeserved” slot at a top university, and given the elite’s secret code that let me into libraries stacked with great literature. I somehow ended up, despite my lack of merit, with a string of New York Times bestsellers and designation as the Patron of Trinity College Philosophical Society, an honor previously held by Jonathan Swift and Oscar Wilde.

However, for years, until the miracle of “spell check,” my editors tore their hair out over my East LA spelling. I suppose you could say that I took the place of a more deserving Phillips Academy Prep School grad — some privileged son of a Bush. I hope I did.

Greg Palast (Rolling Stone, Guardian, BBC) is the author of The New York Times bestsellers, Billionaires & Ballot Bandits and the book and documentary, The Best Democracy Money Can Buy. His latest film is Vigilante: Georgia's Vote Suppression Hitman

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