

## Affirmative action is still needed in our society

As reported in Sunday's Daily News, the Supreme Court is set to consider its first affirmative action case since 2003.

Abigail Fisher, who is white, was denied admission to the University of Texas at Austin in 2008. She contends she would have been admitted had the institution not used a "quota" system that gave preference to applicants from underrepresented groups.

A lot of people are missing the point about affirmative action, which has more to do with socioeconomic status than race or ethnicity. Individuals who have been raised in relatively wealthy families have tremendous advantages over those who were not. This competitive edge manifests itself in a number of tangible ways, including access to higher education.

The link between socioeconomic status and standardized test scores is exceptionally well-documented. Students from more affluent families consistently score higher on the ACT and SAT. And since African-Americans and Hispanics continue to be more heavily represented in the lower socioeconomic classes, their access to higher education is disproportionately affected when these tests become the primary criterion in college admissions decisions.

Standardized test scores, when not considered within the context of factors such as background and family environment, perpetuate institutional racism; i.e., they create an artificial deficiency in the pool of "qualified" African-Americans and Hispanics.

Let me be very clear. It is morally and ethically wrong to deny someone admission to college based on predictors that are inherently biased against less fortunate applicants. ACT and SAT scores are only meaningful if socioeconomic status is also taken into account when they are interpreted.

The bottom line is that racism is alive and well in the United States. As a consequence, we will continue to need affirmative action until everyone is truly judged solely by the content of their character.

Sadly, we are not there yet.

**Aaron W. Hughey**  
Bowling Green