



**Yale Black Law Students Association**  
Yale Law School  
127 Wall Street  
New Haven, CT 06511

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## ***Harvard, Stanford, Yale Black Law Students Write Affirmative Action Brief***

NEW HAVEN, CT (February 14, 2003) -- The Black Law Students Associations of Harvard Law School, Stanford Law School, and Yale Law School are submitting an amicus brief on Tuesday to the United States Supreme Court in support of the University of Michigan Law School's affirmative action program at issue in *Grutter v. Bollinger*.

The BLSAs are chapters of the National Black Law Students Association, a nonprofit student organization with over 200 law school chapters and 6,000 members, dedicated to promoting the professional and academic goals of black law students. Each BLSA chapter aims to advance a heightened understanding of issues -- such as affirmative action -- that are of importance to black law students and the black community at large.

Alumni of the BLSAs are among the most distinguished graduates of their respective institutions, serving as litigators, judges, professors of law, legislative and executive officials, and principals of major public and private enterprises. Notable Harvard, Stanford, and Yale black alumni include Kenneth Chenault, Marian Wright Edelman, Lani Guinier, Hon. A. Leon Higginbotham, Ronald Noble, Hon. Eleanor Holmes Norton, Charles Ogletree, Franklin Raines, and Hon. Anthony Williams.

In their amicus brief, the BLSAs argue that the University of Michigan has a compelling interest in promoting diversity through affirmative action. Affirmative action has played a critical role in helping law schools such as Harvard, Michigan, Stanford, and Yale meet their shared public missions to train and graduate lawyers who are capable of solving the most complex social problems confronted by our multiracial democracy. "These policies help create an environment where racial stereotypes and prejudices are challenged and where students learn to work together, debate one another, and understand each other," explains Harvard Law School student Troy Brown.

The BLSAs' brief also argues that affirmative action is especially important at the top law schools, which serve as a gateway to the most prestigious and powerful positions in the legal and political community. "Our research has shown that these law schools serve an important gateway function," explained Yale Law student Travis LeBlanc. "For example, eight of the nine Supreme Court justices who will decide the Michigan cases attended Harvard, Stanford, or Yale Law School." A dramatic reduction in the number of black and other minority students at these law schools would have far-reaching social and political implications.

Students at all three law schools have been researching and writing the brief since December. "It has been a challenge to balance both studying for exams and writing a Supreme Court brief, but the importance of this case was too great to ignore. We are also grateful for our fellow student and faculty support," said Stanford Law student Alexis Karteron.

The BLSAs are represented by counsel of record Theodore Wells (HLS '76) of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison in New York; and co-counsel United States Representative William J. Jefferson (HLS '72); George W. Jones, Jr. (YLS '80) of Sidley, Austin, Brown & Wood, LLP; and former Clinton Deputy White House Counsel Cheryl Mills (SLS '90).

If you would like more information about the National Black Law Students Association (NBSA), please visit the web site at <http://www.nbsa.org>.

**Contacts:**

**Danielle Gray**  
Harvard Law School  
Tel. 617/547-2393  
[dgray@law.harvard.edu](mailto:dgray@law.harvard.edu)

**Alexis Karteron**  
Stanford Law School  
Tel. 650/497-9525  
[karteron@stanford.edu](mailto:karteron@stanford.edu)

**Travis LeBlanc**  
Yale Law School  
Tel. 203/776-8434  
[travis.leblanc@yale.edu](mailto:travis.leblanc@yale.edu)

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