



## **Harvard's Eurocentric, Fraudulent Diversity Paradigm**

**Ye Zhang Pogue**

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October 14th, 2018 was a sunny but freezing day. I attended the rally to support the plaintiff Students for Fair Admission (SFFA) in the lawsuit against Harvard University's anti-Asian discrimination in the school's undergraduate admission. I arrived about an hour before the rally's scheduled starting time and talked to reporters from several mainstream media platforms. I wanted to explain to them why many people like me who self-identify as a progressive and support the efforts of increasing underrepresented racial minorities through race-conscious admission, condemn Harvard's current diversity paradigm in its admissions process. Diversity is about appreciating the humanity of people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Harvard has failed in its pursuit of diversity when defending an admissions process that systematically and persistently rates Asian Americans lower on their personal scores.

### **Asian Americans' Personality Scores Worse than All Other Groups**

The plaintiff alleged multiple accusations against Harvard, one of which was that Harvard intentionally gave competitive Asian-American applicants lowest personal scores, such as positive personality, likability, courage, kindness and being "widely respected". This finding enraged the Asian-American community across the political spectrum because it is exactly the racist stereotype Asian Americans face in their everyday life. The plaintiff's accusation needs to be carefully examined before reaching any conclusion since, in every lawsuit, the dueling parties have incentives to stretch evidence to their advantage. Therefore, I focus on the defense Harvard University made to refute this accusation of Asian applicants' low personal scores by [stating](#) that while admissions officers may not meet the applicants, they can judge their personal qualities based on factors like personal essays and letters of recommendation. Using the language of statistics, Harvard [claimed](#) that the low personal scores can be explained by observable and "unobservable factors" seen in teacher recommendations, essays, and interviews. In plain English, this means if one reads an Asian applicant's recommendation letters and other written materials, he or she would agree with Harvard's conclusion that Asians indeed have poor personal scores compared with other racial groups.

### **Defending Racism**

This defense itself is insidiously racist in its nature. The Asian race is a sociopolitical construct. According to the U.S. Census, Asians are people with origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent. Similarly, every other racial category is an artificial construct aggregating people with the origins of a certain geographic region. By way of explanation, people falling in each racial category are intrinsically diverse when it comes to the vastness of languages, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, as well as personal characteristics. There is hardly any reason to justify the significant differences in



personal scores among racial groups in Harvard's admissions except mindless racial stereotypes or deliberate racial discrimination. Since 1980, Asian Americans have accused various universities of discrimination, with none of the ensuing investigations resulting in conclusions of systematic discrimination against Asian applicants. Notably, most of these probes concluded that Asian stereotypes played a role in preventing Asians from getting into top schools. Yet, decades later, the stereotype penalty in admissions has never been seriously addressed. If the same stereotype exists widely in college admissions, then another form of systematic discrimination has emerged, which Harvard and other elite universities have neglected.

### **Break One Racial Stereotype and Create More, and Call It Anti-bias Training**

Harvard made another defense by claiming that the university has already taken efforts to train admission officers to avoid anti-Asian biases, by subgrouping Asian Americans by different ancestry of origin. According to a Boston Globe [article](#), Harvard claims that it trains its admissions officers to understand the nuances between various Asian-American communities and to avoid treating them as a bloc. One of the examples the university presented in its filings was that "Harvard's admissions officers highlighted how one student's parents were born in Tibetan refugee camps in India..." The training essentially is flawed because it treats Asians not as one bloc but as multiple blocs based on ethnicity and national origin. The most troubling racial experience Asians face is being considered a faceless member of a group--the group could be the Asian group in general, or sub-groups such as Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese, or groups based on occupations such as engineers, accountants and nail salon workers. The training of "understanding of nuance" is operated on the level of differentiating "communities" instead of differentiating individuals it constitutes racial labeling and stereotyping. Subdividing applicants by these categories does not help the admissions officers to understand or appreciate the very nuanced humanity of each Asian applicant. Instead, it perpetuates the anti-Asian racial stereotypes, breaking one stereotype and creating more.

### **Harvard Sees Students through Eurocentric Eyes**

Harvard's diversity paradigm is operated on Eurocentric racial labeling and classifications. During the age of discovery, the European explorers found new routes to Asia and other continents and started the process of conquest and colonization. On their journey, new species and subspecies in different regions were discovered and classified; local tribes and their nuanced traits were documented and studied in a similar way that scientists study species. Later, these practices were deemed as scientific racism. They are racist not because they include denigrating remarks about people from a certain ethnicity or tribe, but because the methodology itself is racist. Classifying and labeling humans in the way by which we study species is not the right method to understand people with differences. It is a racist paradigm that produces more racist ideas. The Harvard diversity paradigm shares the same mindset with the European explorers. It treats Asian-American applicants and other applicants of non-European descent as members of alien tribes. The training Harvard provides its admission officers to help them understand the humanity of people is at best insulting. It is unclear how the larger Asian-American community feels about this training method due to the newness. But history has been



clear about how the people who were "discovered" felt about the Eurocentric endeavors at the time. From the perspective of many non-Europeans, the Age of Discovery marked the arrival of invaders from previously unknown continents.

### **Reject Harvard's Fraudulent Diversity and Build Something New**

In the liberal media, the Harvard lawsuit is widely perceived as an effort to repeal affirmative action, endanger diversity, or even empower white supremacy. But for people like me, the lawsuit has exposed the fraudulent diversity paradigm Harvard adopted and given people who were classified as a member of alien groups an opportunity to voice their opinions. Liberal colleges are one of the driving forces behind combating racial stereotypes. They are influential in shaping the social narrative on race. Unfortunately, when it comes to fighting anti-Asian stereotypes, these liberal colleagues are relatively silent. In the lawsuit, Harvard even defended these stereotypes. The perpetual Asian stereotypes are damaging to not only the applicants but to every person of Asian descent. The academia must reexamine the definition and practices of diversity, and Asian Americans can contribute to the new diversity paradigm.

*\*Author Ye Zhang Pogue is a doctoral candidate in Social Policy at Brandeis University.*