

EXHIBIT 1

Menu

SEARCH RESULTS

1-25 of 65 News Results

Search Tip: News searches use stemming for search terms.

1 2 3 NEXT > LAST >>

Ginsberg's 'Howl' helped set rhythm for Beat GenerationBy [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
April 14, 2026

April marks National Poetry Month, which provides an opportunity to celebrate a distinguished voice of liberation. American poet and writer...

Author argues feminism, like justice and fairness, is for allBy [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
March 17, 2026

In a recent conversation, a Puerto Rican professor shared her disillusionment with feminism. She grew up on the island, which she regarded ...

Puerto Rican rapper Bad Bunny crosses art with social justiceBy [Ramon Ocasio III](#) and [Beatriz Santiago](#)
March 12, 2026

Bad Bunny, the Puerto Rican-born musician, whose real name is Benito Antonio Martinez Ocasio, headlined the halftime Super Bowl LX show. Co...

Author examines struggles of Black communist Claudia JonesBy [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
February 17, 2026

Although the United States is considered a liberal democracy, it has seen many political trials, such as those of the Haymarket rioters, Eu...

Author envisions path forward to realize MLK's 'Promised Land'By [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
January 13, 2026

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 — considered by many to be one of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s most significant achievements and the cause fo...

Prison writings of Peltier stand as testament to struggles, resilienceBy [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
December 16, 2025

The denigration of indigenous people in America is a grave historical and ongoing injustice that has had profound impact on the social, cul...

Malcolm X inspired generation of political activists in ChicagoBy [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
November 25, 2025

Malcolm X, born Malcolm Little on May 19, 1925, in Omaha, Nebraska, left a lasting impact on the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. As...

Author recounts bleak chapter of lynching in Texas BorderlandsBy [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
November 11, 2025

In his 1951 novel, "Requiem for a Nun," William Faulkner famously wrote, "The past is never dead. It's not even past." This statement sugge...

Fall of Civil Rights Act of 1875 led to rise of white supremacyBy [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
October 14, 2025

The U.S. Supreme Court facilitated the expansion of Jim Crow laws in the South Oct. 15, 1883 by invalidating the Civil Rights Act of 1875, ...

Remembering labor leaders lights path forward, rekindles memoriesBy [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
September 16, 2025

The Sankofa bird symbolizes the concept of retrieval. Its head is turned backward while its feet face forward as it carries a precious egg...

Mendez case rejected the separate but equal doctrine prior to BrownBy [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
August 26, 2025

My nephew Max, also known as Geronimo, turned 7 years old this year. He attends a dual-language Chicago Public School and speaks and reads ...

Mass deportations reminiscent of early 20th Century eventsBy [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
July 29, 2025

An immigrant rights activist told me that the current administration aims to surpass the deportation goals of 1954 — when more than one mil...

High court's racial justice stance continues to gain importanceBy [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
June 24, 2025

Many of you are likely familiar with the poignant and timeless poem "First They Came" written by German Lutheran pastor Martin Niemöller. T...

Author examines race, identity, justice at cultural intersections

By [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
May 27, 2025

In the month of May, we take the time to reflect on and celebrate the role Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (AANHPIs...

McCleskey case broke ground but left unanswered questions

By [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
April 8, 2025

Are racial disparities in our criminal justice system still being overlooked? The anniversary of McCleskey v. Kemp allows us to ruminate on...

Lessons learned from and about Bronx native Justice Sotomayor

By [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
March 11, 2025

On Lincoln's birthday, members of the Illinois Latinx Judges' Association attended elementary classrooms across Chicago to read to kinderga...

Remembering 'Cha Cha' Jiménez, Young Lords founder, activist

By [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
February 11, 2025

American poet and musician Gil Scott-Heron explained the catchphrase "the revolution will not be televised" as a moment of epiphany that wi...

Author sees end of race politics, urges focus on class inequality

By [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
January 14, 2025

"The View" talk show recently interviewed Coleman Hughes, author of the book "The End of Race Politics: Arguments for a Colorblind America" ...

Author tells story of 2 realities through eyes of Native American

By [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
December 11, 2024

I recently had a conversation with my 12-year-old great-nephew, Thelonious (as in Monk). During our chat, "Monk," as he is called, mentione...

1968 East LA student walkouts encapsulated a social justice era

By [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
November 20, 2024

In the spring of 1968, across the city of Los Angeles, 20,000 Mexican American students organized walkouts from their high schools and issu...

Athlete's act of conscience on world stage carries heavy price

By Justice [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
October 9, 2024

Anyone aware of acts of protest, feats of conscience, and other deeds of courage will recall the raising of clenched fists at the 1968 Olym...

Author examines origins of race, prejudice in Kafkaesque story

By Justice [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
September 3, 2024

Pablo Picasso once said, "Bad artists copy. Good artists steal." I was reminded of this axiom as I read Mohsin Hamid's book "The Last White...

Book examines justice, white privilege via telling vignettes

By Justice [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
August 14, 2024

I was recently part of a panel organized by Illinois Supreme Court Justice P. Scott Neville Jr. Also present were Appellate Justices Rena V...

Asian American scholar explores contours of 'anti-Black' nation

By Justice [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
July 17, 2024

While Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month has passed, the book I placed on hold at the Chicago Public Library has just arriv...

Asian American scholar explores contours of 'anti-Black' nation

By Justice [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
July 17, 2024

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EXHIBIT 2

Author sees end of race politics, urges focus on class inequality



Racial Justice

By [Ramon Ocasio III](#)

Justice Ramon Ocasio III has served as a judge for 17 years and now is a justice for the 1st District Appellate Court. He may be reached at rocasio@illinoiscourts.gov.

Posted January 14, 2025 1:43 PM EST

“The View” talk show recently interviewed Coleman Hughes, author of the book “The End of Race Politics: Arguments for a Colorblind America” (Penguin Random House 2024).

There was an exchange between Sunny Hostin and Hughes. I encourage everyone interested in ending racial inequality to listen to this exchange. Parenthetically speaking, some have called Hughes a Black conservative, a label Hughes himself resists.

The question was raised regarding the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. In his “I Have a Dream” speech, MLK famously said he dreamed that his “four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

Whether race reigns supreme or whether class is the prism to see and combat racial disparity and racial inequality — that is the question!

W.E.B. DuBois, a scholar on race, famously stated: “The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line . . .” On the other end of the spectrum, William Julius Wilson, another scholar on race, argues that race is no longer the primary determinant of life chances for Blacks in the way it had been historically.

I have come to respect MLK as a radical Black liberation leader, notably when he, reminiscent of Frederick Douglas’ “power concedes nothing without a demand” statement, said, “Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.” MLK reaffirmed that those in positions of power are not inclined to relinquish their privilege.

I analogize Hughes’ book to an appellant’s brief — a first chance to define the issues and cite support in the record. Unfortunately, the appellee has declined to file a brief. If the interest of justice requires, the reviewing court has the power to scour the record for reasons to either sustain or reverse the judgment.

A pugilist, Hughes comes out swinging. Starting with the introduction, Hughes mocks Ibram X. Kendi’s idea for a constitutional amendment establishing a Department of Anti-Racism (DOA). Tasked with blocking any local, state or federal law from going into effect if it determines that the law has a racist impact. The DOA experts could not be fired even by the president, which would amount to a lifetime appointment. Kendi is the author of “How to Be an Antiracist” and the National Book Award winner “Stamped From the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America.”

Hughes also ridicules Robin DiAngelo, author of “White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism.” According to Hughes, DiAngelo argues that white Americans are all racist simply by living in America.

When asked on “The View” about his arguments for a colorblind America, Hughes responded by saying, “A lot of people equate colorblindness to ‘I don’t see race’ or to pretending not to see race. I think that’s a big mistake. We all see race, right, and we are all capable of being racially biased, so we should all be self-aware to that possibility. My argument is not for that; my argument is that we should try our very best to treat people without regard to race both in our personal lives and in our public policy.”

Who could argue with the essence of the Golden Rule? But how does the Golden Rule translate into public policy? Professor Cornel West famously declared, “Justice is what love looks like in public.” But what is justice and what is it to do justice?

What would MLK do?

In the exchange between Hughes and Hostin on “The View,” each invoked MLK’s book “Why We Can’t Wait.” Hughes argued that class is a better proxy for addressing racial disparities and acknowledged that Blacks are disproportionately impacted and proceeded to assert that MLK’s proposal for a Bill of Rights for the Disadvantaged is the way forward.

Hostin disagreed with Hughes, stating he was wrong in suggesting that race has no place in the conversation regarding racial inequality and rejected the notion that a colorblind analysis was the objective of the civil rights movement.

While Hughes' perspective on class might appeal to left-oriented Social Democrats, his belief that affirmative action lowers standards comfortably aligns him with conservative pundits.

I will wait for the appellee's brief before making any final judgments. I encourage everyone to read Hughes' book. Although unpersuasive on some matters, I suspect common ground is possible.

I also encourage reading MLK's "Why We Can't Wait." It still holds significant relevance today.

General Categories: [Professional Development](#)

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EXHIBIT 3

Centuries of resistance, from Wounded Knee to Red Nation

By [Judge Ramon Ocasio III](#)

Chicago Daily Law Bulletin

Posted December 27, 2023 4:00 PM EST

The 133rd anniversary of the Wounded Knee Massacre, the deadliest mass shooting in American history, falls on Dec. 29.

On the fourth day after Christmas in 1890, U.S. Army troops massacred as many as 300 Lakota men, women and children near Wounded Knee Creek on the Lakota Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

Undoubtedly, the Lakota people's difficulties predated the massacre. By the 1890s, the Lakota nation lived on a reservation segregated from their ancestral lands. The United States government often failed, in violation of treaties, to provide food, escalating the problem of starvation. Even worse, newspaper editorials of that time called for bloodshed.

Parenthetically, in 1889, the Paiute prophet Wovoka was guided by a dream in which he entered heaven, saw his dead relatives and received instructions from God. He believed a new world was coming where no death, sickness or misery would exist.

Loving your neighbor was espoused as part of the teachings. Wovoka's vision also saw a world without white people and their culture. To bring his dream to life, Wovoka taught that Indians had to perform the Ghost Dance. See Rani-Henrik Andersson's book, "The Lakota Ghost Dance of 1890" (University of Nebraska Press 2008).

The Ghost Dance quickly spread east to other tribes, and the phenomenon caught the attention of federal authorities.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs assigned James McLaughlin to accelerate the process of assimilating the Lakota. Banning the Ghost Dance was viewed as a necessary step toward assimilation, a critical action that helped give rise to the Wounded Knee massacre.

Another catalyst for the massacre was the killing of Sitting Bull. Profiled in Dee Brown's book "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West," Sitting Bull's followers had embraced the Ghost Dance so Sitting Bull was targeted for arrest.

On Dec. 15, 1890, 43 reservation police surrounded Sitting Bull's log cabin. Awakened, Sitting Bull asked to put on his clothes and agreed to accompany his jailors. Upon exiting the cabin, Sitting Bull and the police were confronted by a crowd of Ghost Dancers. The Ghost Dancers rejected the arrest of Sitting Bull. What crime had Sitting Bull committed? Inevitably, shots were fired, and Sitting Bull was dead.

Fast forward to Feb. 27, 1973, to the Wounded Knee Occupation, also known as the second battle of Wounded Knee, where about 200 Oglala Lakota and followers of the American Indian Movement occupied the town of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

The occupation lasted for more than two months to protest ongoing mistreatment of Native Americans by the federal government as well as the complicity of tribal leadership. Federal agents surrounded the town. Shots were fired, and two activists were killed. One federal agent was seriously injured. Native American leaders Russell Means and Dennis Banks were arrested. The charges were eventually dropped due to prosecutorial misconduct.

Fast forward to more recent times. Another manifestation of self-determination happened in November 2014 when American Indians organized under the banner of The Red Nation.

According to Nick Estes, co-founder of The Red Nation, the organizing effect was triggered by the murders of indigenous people at the hands of non-native men, sometimes law enforcement. Police killings of Native Americans include Loreal Tsingine, 27, fatally shot by Winslow, Arizona, police; Allen Locke, 30, fatally shot by Rapid City, South Dakota police; Sarah Lee Circle Bear, 24, pregnant and found dead while in police custody in the Brown County Jail in Aberdeen, South Dakota; and Jacqueline Salyers, 32, fatally shot by Tacoma, Washington, police executing an arrest warrant for her boyfriend.

The Red Nation has a 10-point program including demands for freedom, dignity and the return of land.

"Mother Earth belongs to nobody, rather we all belong to her," the group declares. "We must restore correct relations with Mother Earth because land is the basis of our livelihoods. Land must be returned to the original caretakers."

The Red Nation program also calls for the abolition of policing.

"Cops are Indian killers," the program charges. "They are foot soldiers of US occupation, racism, and misogyny. Cops police the poor and protect private property and the rich. Only we can protect ourselves."

Whether rejecting the continued dispossession of indigenous territory or rights or calls to abolish police, two centuries of indigenous resistance continues.

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EXHIBIT 4

Fall of Civil Rights Act of 1875 led to rise of white supremacy



Racial Justice

By [Ramon Ocasio III](#)

Justice Ramon Ocasio III has served as a judge for 17 years and now is a justice for the 1st District Appellate Court. He may be reached at rocasio@illinoiscourts.gov.

Posted October 14, 2025 12:05 PM EDT

The [U.S. Supreme Court](#) facilitated the expansion of Jim Crow laws in the South Oct. 15, 1883 by invalidating the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which prohibited racial discrimination in public places. As a result, discrimination and segregation in public schools and on juries were allowed to continue.

The situation prompted me to reflect on the historical ideological fault line between equal rights and white supremacy.

The story of Free Frank McWorter is remarkable. “New Philadelphia,” written by his descendants Gerald A. McWorter and Kate Williams-McWorter (Path Press 2018), chronicles Free Frank’s achievements.

A former slave, Free Frank had purchased his freedom and eventually that of his family members. He later migrated to New Philadelphia, Illinois, which holds historical significance as the first town founded and platted by a Black man in 1836, established by Free Frank himself.

The perspective of Black scholar and attorney Derrick Bell is revealing. In “Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism” (Basic Books 1992), Bell discusses the idea that liberal democracy and racism in the United States are historically, and perhaps inherently, reinforcing. He argues that American society was built on racial slavery and continues to benefit from racial discrimination. Bell describes this relationship as a symbiosis.

Similarly, Malcolm X, during the final year of his life, began to view capitalism as a fundamental cause of the oppression experienced by Blacks. In a 1964 speech, Malcolm stated, “You can’t have capitalism without racism.”

Another intriguing book is “In the Matter of Color: Race and The American Legal Process: The Colonial Period” (Oxford University Press 1978) by the late A. Leon Higginbotham Jr., who served on the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. This volume is the first in a series that explores the legal foundations of racial injustices in the United States.

Both Bell and Higginbotham address the manifestations of white supremacy. While “New Philadelphia” recounts Free Frank’s heroic journey of agency and self-determination against formidable odds, Bell and Higginbotham examine how legal rituals can render injustice permissible or allow wrongdoers to evade accountability.

Nonetheless, these perspectives are an initial step toward a comprehensive evaluation. In addition, consideration must be given to addressing the tangible effects of institutionalized white privilege, also referred to as white supremacy.

On reflecting on the Civil Rights Act of 1875, I experienced a profound sense of lamentation. At that time, Democrats used delaying tactics to hinder the bill’s passage. This dynamic seems to be repeating itself today. The final version of the act excluded provisions for schools and juries to avoid social equality and prevent Blacks from serving on juries.

Although the Radical Republicans secured a partial victory with the act’s passage, it was short-lived. The U.S. Supreme Court later invalidated the law, ruling that Congress lacked the authority under the 14th Amendment to stop racial discrimination by private individuals and organizations. The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1875 was a pyrrhic victory, and its downfall ensured the continuation of white supremacy.

The collection of essays in “A Field Guide to White Supremacy” (University of California Press, 2021), edited by Kathleen Belew and Ramon A. Gutierrez, examines the historical and contemporary issues relating to social and political practices involving white supremacy and its role in American identity.

The book covers topics such as antisemitism, settler colonialism, white privilege, nativism, mass incarceration and mass deportation. The essays explore how the policies and actions affecting marginalized and oppressed groups have evolved.

The chapters on rape culture, anti-LGBTQ+ violence and violence against Black and brown transgender women demand deep reflection. The multiple essayists assert that white supremacy aims to control and oppress anyone who is not a cisgender heterosexual white male. There is also a section explaining how anti-immigrant rhetoric and policy fuel xenophobia and contribute to right-wing populist movements here and abroad.

As I delved deeper into the “Field Guide,” the pervasive influence of white supremacy became increasingly evident. The legal frameworks, societal norms and economic systems that have developed over centuries continue to perpetuate disparate outcomes and other injustices. However, as activist Mariame Kaba has emphasized, hope is a discipline.

Contemporary movements for racial justice, driven by a new generation of activists, are challenging the status quo and demanding systemic change. The Black Lives Matter movement, for instance, has brought global attention to issues of police brutality, mass incarceration and economic disenfranchisement. These movements build on the legacies of previous struggles, using technology and social media to mobilize and educate.

The journey toward dismantling white supremacy is long and arduous, but it is a journey worth understanding. The stories of resilience, resistance and solidarity within the Black, Puerto Rican, LGBTQ+ and other marginalized and oppressed communities offer hope and inspiration. By learning from the past and striving for a better future, we can work together to create a society that truly embodies the principles of equality and justice for all.

General Categories: [Professional Development](#)

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EXHIBIT 5

Blue pill or red pill? Looking back as we move forward

By Judge [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
Chicago Daily Law Bulletin
Posted April 26, 2023 5:00 PM EDT

There is a scene from the 1999 film “The Matrix” where the protagonist is given a choice. Morpheus (played by Laurence Fishburne) asks Neo (played by Keanu Reeves) if he wants to learn the truth about the Matrix.

Morpheus opens his hands and announces, “If you take the blue pill, the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe what you want to believe, whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes.”

Morpheus pauses and then reveals, “Remember all I am offering is the truth, nothing more.”

A pill of knowledge versus a pill of blissful ignorance. Neo’s choice is one we are confronted with today.

In the age of Trump, there is increasing resistance to discussions about America’s racial history. On April 28, 2021, Idaho became the first state to ban the teaching of critical race theory in public schools. Since then, Republican-controlled state legislatures across the country have passed similar laws including Georgia, Florida and Mississippi.

The fear behind the legislation appears to be the protection of white children from feeling guilty about the crimes of their ancestors. This type of learning has been labeled “critical race theory” by the right, although the theory is simply a way of analyzing American history through the lens of racism. Right wing politicians are now using “woke” as a new “Southern strategy.” Scholars who study critical race theory contend that racism is normalized in American society and in American history. However, their fundamental grievance centers on the slow pace of racial equality and equal justice for all.

Professor Emeritus of Black Studies Abdul Alkalimat at the [University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign](#) posits a solution for addressing these attacks from the right. The secret is in the sankofa bird. In the Twi language of Ghana, the word “sankofa” means to “to retrieve.” The sankofa bird, with its head reaching back to hold its precious egg, reminds us that we look to the past to find what we need for the future.

In his book “The History of Black Studies” (Pluto Press 2021), Alkalimat argues, “[E]very social movement out of the Black community has had an educational component that constitutes a development of Black Studies.” Alkalimat conceives six movements as manifestations of Black studies: Freedom Movement, Black Power Movement, Black Arts Movement, New Communist Movement, Black Women’s Movement and the Black Student Movement.

The origins of Black studies arose from the Black Power Movement and the “trinity of self-respect, self-determination, and self-defense.” This — combined with the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. — brought about a surge in Black student enrollment in higher education.

These Black students were often the first college student in their family to enroll into these historically white institutions. Access to these institutions of higher learning for Black and brown students was limited. Alkalimat reports that, “At the beginning of the 1960s, there were more than two hundred thousand Black students enrolled in higher education; at the end of the 1960s, more than one million.”

“They brought with them a heightened political consciousness that reflected the state of struggle gripping most communities, especially working people,” he writes.

Alkalimat highlights the Project 500 experience at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. By 1967, there were 372 Black students out of 30,400 total students on the UIUC campus. Project 500 resulted in 565 new Black and Latinx students on campus. Alkalimat is unequivocal in stating these types of programs were part of a national response to militant students demanding an increase in Black and Latinx student enrollment and not the result of enlightened leadership on the part of the university administrators.

Alkalimat does a masterly job of telling the stories of Black and brown students’ struggles to bring Black studies to college campuses across the country. Of course, he comments on the 1968 San Francisco State College student strike. Lasting 133 days, it was the longest such strike in the history of higher education. One of the students’ successful demands was the establishment of the nation’s first Black Studies Department. Another was that Black scholar Nathan Hare, formerly at [Howard University](#), be hired as acting chair of Black studies.

Alkalimat chronicles what he calls the boldest form of social disruption, the seizure and takeover of a campus building. Colleges and universities across the country were impacted, including Howard University, March 19, 1968; [Northwestern University](#), May 3, 1968; [Duke University](#), February 13, 1969; and [Cornell University](#), April 18, 1969.

The demands were consistent: the recruitment and retention of Black and brown students, the hiring of Black and brown administrators and scholars, and the establishment of Black studies departments and curriculums and cultural centers.

Anna Pauline “Pauli” Murray was at [Brandeis University](#) in the winter of 1969 when Black students seized control of Ford Hall, where her office was situated. In January 1969, Black students from San Francisco State College had been touring the country to garner support for their strike. While at Brandeis, they challenged the Black students to commit to Black studies and the question of “manhood” was raised.

EXHIBIT 6

Affirmative action – diversifying the courts one justice at a time

By Judge [Ramon Ocasio III](#)
Chicago Daily Law Bulletin
Posted October 18, 2023 5:00 PM EDT

As I raised my right hand to take the oath of office as an Illinois Appellate Court justice, I was overwhelmed by the burst of exuberance of family and friends and humbled by the well wishes of attorneys and judicial colleagues prior to my formal ascension.

As a student of history, I understood the significance of the moment. Once there was one Latinx justice on the Appellate Court and now there are three.

Supreme Court Justice [P. Scott Neville Jr.](#) must have experienced a similar déjà vu. When Neville ascended to the state Supreme Court, he was the sole Black on the court. The addition of Justice [Lisa Holder White](#) and Justice [Joy V. Cunningham](#) has raised the specter of equity.

What will be the narrative for future generations? The Illinois Latinx Judges' Association has long held that diversity on the bench is essential to justice, a self-evident truth. Right?

We know that juries deliver better results when they are composed of different types of people. In addition, there is research that demonstrates the more diverse the judiciary in our criminal courts, the less punitive the sentences. Right?

The [U.S. Supreme Court](#) has recently eroded the ability of institutions of higher learning to be race conscious in their admissions policies. Ironically enough, ignoring the category of legacy admissions and insofar as white privilege is implicated, the principle of nondiscrimination may or may not resurface in later litigation and future Supreme Court rulings.

As I contemplated my new role, I was reminded of Randall Kennedy's book "For Discrimination: Race, Affirmative Action, and the Law" (Pantheon Books 2013). It is a thorough and thoughtful analysis of affirmative action written before the conservative shift of the U.S. Supreme Court in recent years.

Nonetheless, it is worth reading since it voices arguments for reparatory justice and affirms that one remedy for compensating for past (or present) discrimination is some form of remedial affirmative action. Simply stated, affirmative action programs assist those hurt by past racial exclusion or maltreatment. Unavoidably problematic, perhaps, but a measure on behalf of marginalized communities is always understandable.

Randall also posits that discrimination that functions as a mechanism to increase diversity is different (and morally defensible) from a mechanism that promotes the reverse. Is he right?

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, at the end of the *Grutter v. Bollinger* 539 U.S. 306 (2003), opinion, stated, "We expect that 25 years from now, the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary to further the interest approved today." Parenthetically, O'Connor voted in *Grutter* to allow latitude concerning race-based admissions programs.

Today, the U.S. Supreme Court has rejected the promising intervention of affirmative action programs, elevating the principle of nondiscrimination as sacrosanct. Kennedy argues that the principle of nondiscrimination is solely a tool and asserts what is sacred is social justice, equality of outcome.

According to Kennedy, the U.S. Supreme Court has wrongly rejected the rectification of societal discrimination as a basis for racial affirmative action. Is he right?

The American creed has held out the egalitarian idea that if you work hard and play by the rules, success is inevitable. However, according to the [American Bar Association](#), although Latinos make up 18% of the U.S. population, we only comprise 5% of U.S. attorneys. This deficiency in the pipeline will only worsen in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's gutting of affirmative action.

Justice must satisfy the appearance of justice. How many Latinx Appellate Court Justices should we have? Answer ... three and counting.

General Categories: [Courts and Judges](#), [Professional Development](#)

This provocation manifested itself into a spontaneous uprising and the takeover of Ford Hall. Parenthetically, Pauli Murray was the first Black woman to get a doctorate from [Yale Law School](#). More than 50 years later, Black Brandeis students and alumni are raising funds for the first endowed faculty position in the African and African-American Studies Department at Brandeis.

According to Alkalimat, Black studies has always been anchored in the battle of ideas against racism.

The question persists, should the judiciary take the blue pill or the red pill?

The choice is yours.

General Categories: [Professional Development](#)

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