

No. 11-

IN THE
Supreme Court of the United States

ABIGAIL NOEL FISHER,
Petitioner,

v.

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN et al.,
Respondents.

ON PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO THE
UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FIFTH CIRCUIT

PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI

BERT W. REIN
Counsel of Record
WILLIAM S. CONSOVOY
THOMAS R. MCCARTHY
CLAIRE J. EVANS
WILEY REIN LLP
1776 K Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 719-7000
brein@wileyrein.com

Attorneys for Petitioner

BACKGROUND IMAGE: TREY GONZALES, COURTESY.

SIDES CHOSEN, LINES DRAWN UT Austin on the ‘hook’

Charles Landriault
The Signal

The United States Supreme Court heard oral arguments Oct. 10 in *Abigail Noel Fisher vs. University of Texas at Austin*, a case based on affirmative action that could change the way colleges admit students going forward.

Abigail Fisher, a white student from Sugar Land, Texas, sued the University of Texas at Austin after she was denied admission in 2008 citing but for the color of skin, she would have been admitted.

“There were people in my class with lower grades who weren’t in all the activities I was in who were being accepted into UT,” Fisher said while being videotaped answering questions for the Project on Fair Representation’s website. “The only other difference between us was the color of our skin.”

Graduating with a 3.59 GPA, Fisher was in the top 12 percent of her high school class, just 2 percent shy of the state’s Top 10 Percent Law, a law enacted in 1997 that guarantees admission to students graduating in the top 10 percent of their high school class.

“I took a ton of AP classes, studied hard and

did my homework and made the honor roll,” Fisher said.

UT filed its brief as respondent in the matter Aug. 6 citing that, “UT has learned through experience that diversity has invaluable educational benefits,” and “better prepares students to become the next generation of leaders in an increasingly diverse work force and society.”

UT’s admissions policy closely follows the *Grutter v. Bollinger* decision, decided in 2003, which prohibits racial quotas, yet acknowledges the importance of diversity and allows universities to consider race, as well as other factors, while admitting students.

“UT’s brief focuses on the fact that we are closely following the *Grutter* decision, the previous Supreme Court decision,” said UT President William Powers.

In its brief, university representatives stated that the Top 10 Percent Law decides admissions on one single criterion but does not provide enough basis to create a diverse student body; the holistic review process, which rates applicants on test scores, essays, activities, socioeconomic sta-

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Marriage equality issue divided along party lines

Gary Cecil III
The Signal

For the first time in history, a sitting U.S. president openly supports same-sex marriage. Marriage equality is one of the “hot button” campaign issues being debated this election.

While the Republican Party continues to oppose expanding the definition of marriage beyond one man and one woman, the Democratic Party, led by President Obama, supports same-sex marriage as part of its party platform.

“We support marriage equality and support the movement to secure equal treatment under law for same-sex couples. We also support the freedom of churches and religious entities to decide how to administer marriage as a religious sacrament without government interference,” states the Democratic Party’s platform.

The Republican Party platform reaffirms its support for a Constitutional amendment defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

“That is why Congressional Republicans took the lead in enacting the Defense of Marriage

Act, affirming the right of states and the federal government not to recognize same-sex relationships licensed in other jurisdictions. The current Administration’s open defiance of this constitutional principle—in its handling of immigration cases, in federal personnel benefits, in allowing a same-sex marriage at a military base, and in refusing to defend DOMA in the courts makes a mockery of the President’s inaugural oath,” states the Republican platform.

The Pew Research Center, a public opinion polling center that does not take positions on issues, published an article Two-Thirds of Democrats Now Support Gay Marriage reporting that “in the past four years, overall support for marriage equality has risen to a slight majority, even though President Obama’s recent announcement of his support for same-sex marriage had little influence on public opinion.” One reason for this increase is that the younger generation is generally more accepting of homosexuality and that generation is now becoming voting age.

“If marriage equality is

SEE MARRIAGE, PAGE 6

Students on the rebound

Timothy Lapointe
The Signal

In the past, it was expected for students to leave their parents’ home straight out of high school or college, never to return. Today, more than one-third of adults residing the U.S., aged 18 to 34, live in multi-generational households.

This generation has been named ‘The Boomerang Generation,’ referencing the fact that many will leave their parents’ home only to return, sometimes and again.

The Pew Research Center, a nonpartisan fact tank, analyzing data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau found that 39 percent of all adults aged 18-34 either live or recently moved in with their parents. Of these statistics, 53 percent are 18-24, 41 percent are 25-29 and 17 percent are 30-34.

One-in-ten adults between the

ages of 18 and 34 blame the poor economy for returning home to their parents. Specific contributing factors for this boomerang effect include the need to repay student loans, failure to find jobs, working jobs with salaries that do not cover living expenses, saving to purchase homes or automobiles, or returning to college to pursue a master’s degree or Ph.D.

“I’m really scared about getting out of college,” said Desiree Allen, computer science major. “Even though I know I’m going into an allegedly lucrative field, all I hear is horror stories about people not being able to actually find jobs anywhere.”

The Pew Research Center reports young adults living with their parents remain upbeat about their living conditions because this phenomenon has become so widespread.

SEE BOOMERANG, PAGE 6

ONLINE in this issue

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President Obama is NOT a Battle Rapper

In the culture of hip-hop, “battle rapping” is the ability to spar verbally with your opponent. Battle rapping is a fierce competition of two rappers free styling (many times with prewritten raps about their opponent) exchanging verbal rhetoric to win over the crowd for personal prestige and supremacy. President Obama is not a battle rapper. Yes, he can rap, but improvised rapping is not his strong suit.

In a freestyle battle, each rapper’s goal is to “diss” their opponent such as address why the opponent threw 47% of the population under the bus, address the other’s assertions that Obama’s plan to cut \$716 billion from Medicare will have a devastating impact on Medicare recipients, Bain Capital, or the opponent’s “carried-interest” tax loophole. Obama allowed his opponent to “diss” him freely with no verbal retort. He wasn’t sharp, witty, passionate, nor did he gain the respect of the crowd, something a true “battle rapper” would have done. Obama failed to make his case and call his opponent out, therefore losing the battle.

LETTERS

President Obama is a “studio rapper”. He needs to go into the recording booth (i.e., in front of a pro-Democratic audience), read his raps off of a piece of paper (i.e., teleprompter), have the engineer give him his cue (i.e., have the audience applaud his every word), and then forcefully delivery his rap (i.e., energize the crowd by conveying a message that caters to the audience).

The problem with studio rappers is that they make songs that mainly play on the radio that dominates the airwaves. The more you hear the song, the longer the tune stays in your head. The lyrics of “hope” and “change” have been stuck in the American peoples minds for almost four years now. Maybe he needs to write a new song that includes the lyrics of “jobs” and “more jobs.” Many rappers base their lyrics on current situations, so a studio record about “jobs” would be cool.

With the presidential election in a few weeks, President Obama

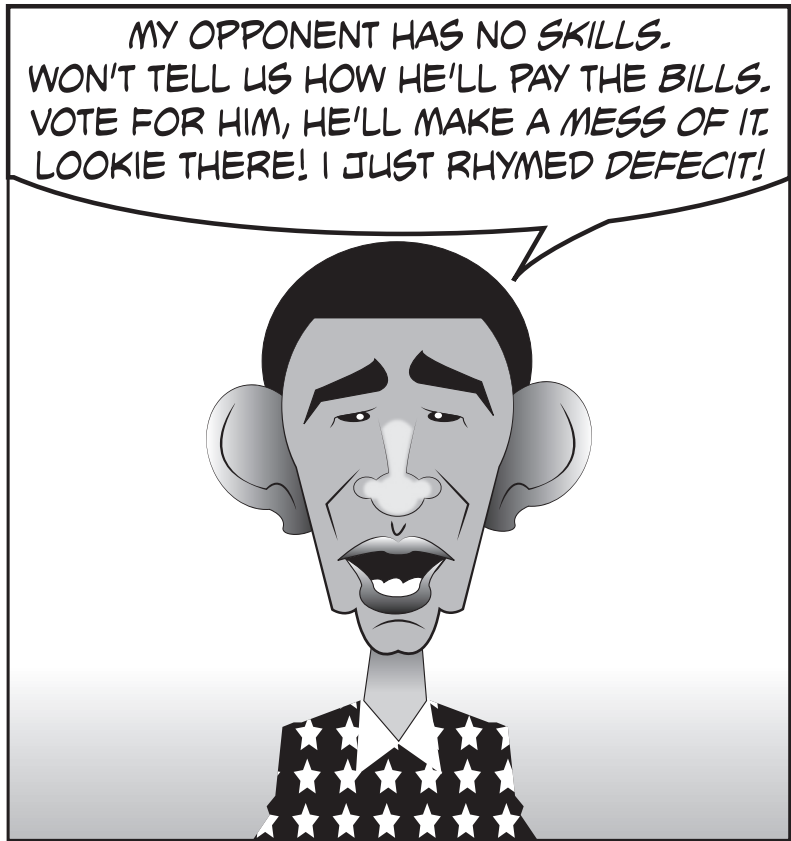
doesn’t have the luxury of going into the studio and recording an “inspirational” rap song that will be played in heavy rotation by liberal media outlets. He needs to get in battle mode, stand toe-to-toe with his opponent, have the best delivery, disseminate accurate facts, and hope to win over the majority of the crowd (i.e., the American people).

Can President Obama do better in the next two rap battles (i.e., debates on October 16 and 22)? The only way would be to attack the lies and inaccuracies of his opponent. But, does Obama think his opponent will not have an effective response? I bet his opponent will be ready to “diss” him again.

Obama didn’t lose the first rap battle because he performed badly. He lost because his opponent performed better than him. The quest to become president by days end on November 6 will be a battle. A battle won by whichever rapper can rock the crowd.

William T. Hoston
UHCL Assistant Professor of Political Science

WANTNEEDO BY: KALAN LYRA



REAL TALK WITH DA PREZ.

Democracy: one person one vote

I seek change. I seek a great change in this great republic. In fact, what I look to do is put an end to the republic.

That is probably the most inappropriate and unpatriotic statement ever made, but it is time. It is time to become something we have claimed to be for years. It is time to turn this country into a democracy.

At this juncture in our nation’s life, we are still using the same archaic system for electing presidents that we have used for centuries. Citizens vote locally for a candidate of their choice, and after their votes are tallied, a select group of individuals tally a vote in the Electoral College that decides who the next president will be.

It made sense back in the late 1700’s, but then again, so did counting an entire ethnic population as only 3/5 a person.

The problem back then was communication. Getting word from the original 13 states to the capital took quite a lot of time. Google Maps states that it would take 77 hours to bike from Atlanta to Philadelphia. Biking was used as a close approximation of horseback, the way to travel back then.

Therefore, it would take over three days just to get a letter, package, or election results to the original capitol. This scenario also requires swapping of horses and riders to make sure the package

LETTERS

reaches its destination without delay.

That is no longer the case, by any means.

A package sitting in the back of a car can make it to Washington D.C. in less than 11 hours; a letter on a plane will be there in just over an hour. Electronically, that same letter will be there in the time it takes the pilot or driver to buckle their seat belt.

News networks run election results as soon as they are reported, seems safe to say the government could do the same, especially with electronic voting machines becoming the norm at most voting stations.

But what does this have to do with the death of the Republic? Simple. It allows for the removal of the middle man. On November 6th, when you submit your vote why not make sure it counts. One vote equals one vote and the candidate with the most votes win.

Brilliant idea, isn’t it? Tear down the map of red states and blue states. Sadly, the maps dividing the states into the two categories are hindrances to getting people do their “civil duty.”

Look at Texas on any map of the electoral vote, it is deep red. The Texan electoral delegates

knew what party they were voting for before knowing they were being selected as delegates.

Votes for Obama in the state of Texas are pebbles being throwing against the side of a three ton elephant. In 2008, over 3.5 million Texan voters picked Obama. That’s 3.5 million silenced voices. 3.5 million people who spent their morning picking the man they wanted, only to be a statistic that night.

Pull the Electoral College and open up the vote to pure populous and change the face of the nation. Force a candidate to reach out to all Americans, and watch them spin through every city. Candidates will be forced to give so many speeches, shake so many hands, kiss so many babies that they would come out battle tested and ready.

No more money dedicated solely to advertising in “swing states” either. John Smith of Cleveland, OH is now as equally important to both parties as his cousin James Smith of Cleveland, TX.

One person, one voice, one vote, one step towards democracy. It is a radical concept to be sure, but the founding fathers would have thought the same of flying machines and boxes full of moving pictures.

William Humbird
UHCL Communication Major

THE SIGNAL

CO-EDITORS
Cameron Palmer
Stephen Schumacher

DESIGNERS
Stephanie Brown
Cameron Palmer

STAFF
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Stephanie Brown
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PUBLICATION SPECIALIST
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Taleen Washington

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Address letters to:
The Signal
Student Publications Office
UH-Clear Lake
2700 Bay Area Blvd.,
Box 456
Houston, TX 77058

Reach the staff:
Phone: 281-283-2570
Fax: 281-283-2569
Email: thesignal@uhcl.edu

Visit the website:
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They’re back...it won’t be an empty nest for long

Vonda Atchley
The Signal

There is an amazing feeling of pride a mother feels as her daughter strides across the stage to receive both her high school diploma and associate’s degree simultaneously.

This feeling is intensified when she receives her bachelor’s degree just two short years later.

While the joy of those astonishing moments never leave your heart, there are times you do wish your daughter would eventually get a job and leave your home.

“It’s a girl,” the doctor shouted throughout the delivery room 23 years ago as my husband and I cried over the birth of our daughter. At that point, it was truly the most miraculous time in my entire life. My first child had been born, healthy and beautiful. She would grow up to be something wonderful. I just knew it.

Each generation is given a label. Everyone is familiar with the baby boomers and generation X. This generation is becoming known as the boomerang generation. This group of adults in their mid-20s to mid-30s is known to leave home and come back again



STAFF COLUMN

on a regular basis. The reason for their “boomerang” behavior can be directly contributed to the economy of our nation.

My daughter’s boomerang effect began in college. After completing her associate’s degree while still in high school, she began attending the University of Houston. Immediately, she became involved with an excellent sorority and wanted to live on campus.

The economy was on the downhill and she couldn’t find a job that would pay enough to afford housing and work with her

school schedule. So, she took out student loans. She began playing the boomerang game right then.

She lived with roommates on and off, trying to pay for her portion of the bills, as much as she could. Then, when the money ran out, she was back at home. She would also come home when she ran out of food or gas money.

This coming and going would constantly put pressure on the family finances. I had to always make sure I had the money to give to her when she needed something. On top of that, she also started falling deeper and deeper in debt with student loans.

A very efficient two years later, my daughter earned her bachelor’s degree. I was so very thankful that she was out of school. She could get a job, start her adult life and no longer depend so much on me...or so I thought.

One way I tried to help get my daughter out the door was to put her on a job search plan. Each week she was to apply for at least three jobs. Her first week she did great; she applied for three jobs and had three interviews. I was incredibly proud and impressed

but a little suspicious, too. I have been in the job market before and never had those kinds of results. I suggested we research the companies offering interviews.

Company one researched on Yahoo. Search result: “company is a scam, several lawsuits have been filed.” Well, that was a bust.

Company two researched on Yahoo. Search result: “blogs from several previous employees stating misleading positions, bad working conditions and extremely low pay.” Yea, I don’t think so.

Company three researched on Yahoo. Search result: “not your typical company – most applicants must pay to work at this company.” Pay to work at your job? No.

My daughter was back at square one. Boomerang effect strikes again.

Finally, after six months, my daughter had an interview at a real company, paying real money in her discipline for a real chance to begin her career. We are both hopeful about this position. The money is decent, but even at decent, it will not be adequate enough to allow her to move out and begin life on her own right

away. She will still be stuck at home paying off student loans for a little while longer.

Unfortunately, once my daughter is on her own, the chances of her staying that way are very slim. The financial stress of qualifying to own a home or buy a new car has become more strenuous than previous generations. Logically, to save money for her dreams, she will need return home to save money toward these types of adulthood rights of passage.

As proud as I am of my daughter, I am amazed how her and my other children still control the future for my husband and me. The economy’s effect of the boomerang generation affects the parents as much, if not more so, as the children. We are learning to live with the ricocheting in our children’s life.

We will not have our home in the country anytime soon. We cannot even consider retiring when we are 65. Couple vacations are not even a thought and downsizing our house won’t be an option for a very long time.



There is more election-related content online at **www.uhclthesignal.com**, including survey results of a mock presidential election conducted by political science majors Meggan Brown, Kristyn Weaver, Elizabeth Solis and Jonathan Edjeren.

The Signal wants to hear from you!

The Office of Student Publications is conducting a brief survey on readership to determine the most effective ways to reach the UHCL community. We would be very appreciative if you would, please, take two to three minutes to complete the survey.

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Thank you!





ABORTION:

Pro-Choice: Supports policies, initiatives, and programs that help prevent unintended pregnancies, pregnant women and mothers, encourage healthy relationships, and promote adoption. Supports Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court decision that protects women's health and reproductive freedom, and affirms a fundamental principle: that government should not intrude on private family matters.

ECONOMY:

Obama has pledged to reform the tax code so that it is "simple, fair." He endorses a middle class tax cut that will provide \$1000 dollars of relief and eliminate income taxes for any retiree making less than \$50,000 per year. He is against privatizing Social Security and raising the retirement age.

EDUCATION:

Obama believes education is important and plans to prepare 100,000 new teachers in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math because the quality of U.S. math and science education lags behind many other nations. America has fallen to 9th in the proportion of young people with a college degree; a quarter of American students are not finishing high school.

HEALTH CARE:

Health care was one of the centerpieces of President Obama's 2008 campaign, and with the backing of a Democrat-dominated Congress, his Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 was signed into law after a hard-fought battle with Republican legislators. The Act introduced comprehensive reforms on national health care legislations to expand coverage to 32 million uninsured Americans.

MARRIAGE QUALITY:

Obama is the first sitting U.S. president to publicly support same-sex marriage. He is fundamentally supportive toward the LGBT community.

ABORTION:

Pro-Life: Previously supported abortion, but now he opposes abortion unless the cases involve rape, incest or if the mother's life is in mortal danger. Mitt Romney supports the Pence amendment that is aimed at eliminating all Title X grants for Planned Parenthood.

ECONOMY:

Romney has pledged to initiate 10 major actions on his first day of presidency in order to boost the nations economy including: reducing the corporate income tax rate to 25 percent; eliminating Obama-era regulations and executive orders involving job creation and organized labor.

EDUCATION:

Romney believes education is important and plans to advocate wide-ranging reforms so that education would run at the state level and not the federal. Supports No Child Left Behind and advocates tying teachers' compensations to their results instead of tenure

HEALTH CARE:

Romney believes free enterprise is the way America works and we need to apply that to health care. He is a supporter of the universal healthcare, but implemented at the state level, not the federal level. Obama's healthcare plan is implemented at the federal level; if elected, Romney plans to dismantle Obama healthcare.

MARRIAGE EQUALITY:

Romney is against same sex marriage. He believes basic civil rights and certain appropriate benefits should be available to people in non-traditional relationships. He supports marriage as an institution between a man and a woman and believes our constitution and laws should reflect that.

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That's What He Said 2012 Presidential Edition

How well do you know your candidates? Match the quotes to the faces and find out.
Faces may match up to more than one quote.

1. "For too long in this society, we have celebrated unrestrained individualism over common community."

2. "I had a two hour and fifty-something. I hurt a disc in my back, so I don't run marathons anymore."

3. "I stand ready to lead us down a different path, where we are lifted up by our desire to succeed, not dragged down by a resentment of success."

4. "I believe in an America where millions of Americans believe in an America that's the America millions of Americans believe in. That's the America I love."

5. "If the people cannot trust their government to do the job for which it exists – to protect them and to promote their common welfare – all else is lost."

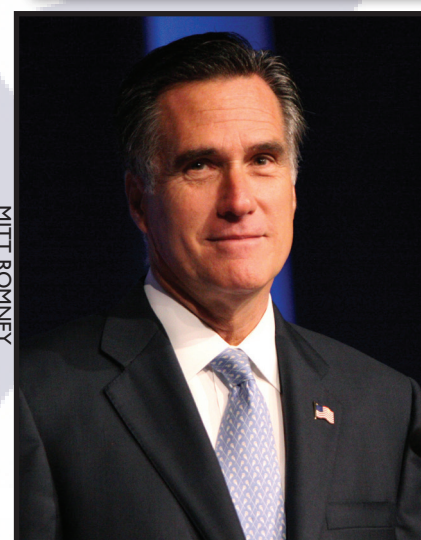
6. "My mother believed and my father believed that if I wanted to be president of the United States, I could be; I could be Vice President!"

7. "I've now been in 57 states – I think one left to go."

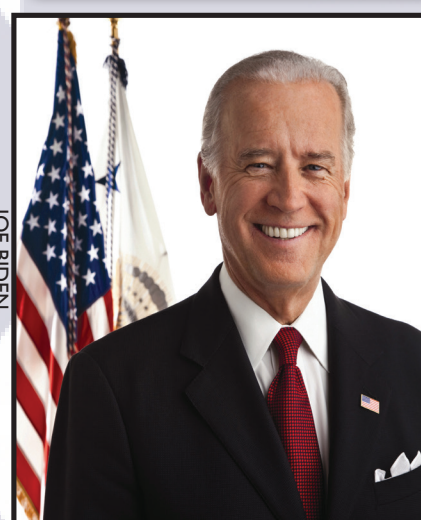
8. "If we don't make tough decisions today our children are going to have to make much, much tougher decisions tomorrow."



BARACK OBAMA



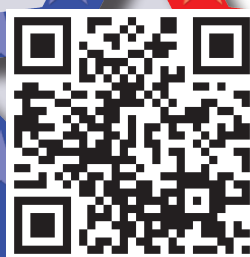
MITT ROMNEY



JOE BIDEN



PAUL RYAN



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Use your smartphone to scan the QR code above to further test your skills when it comes to the things politicians say.

Answers: 1 & 6 - Biden, 2 & 8 - Ryan, 5 & 7 - Obama, 3 & 4 - Romney

PHOTOS COURTESY OF PETE SOUZA AND GAGE SKIDMORE

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: continued from page 1

tus, cultural background, as well as race and ethnicity, gives the university an edge to create the diversity it needs on campus.

“Holistic review allows for the consideration of a broad array of factors and thus fosters a broad diversity, including diversity *within* different racial groups,” UT’s University Media Relations stated in an Aug. 6 press release.

Filling 75 percent of its in-state admissions under the Top 10 Percent Law, UT accepts the remaining quarter of applicants through the process of holistic review.

Powers believes that UT’s admission policy is a crucial part in making better leaders for the future.

“We have a narrowly tailored admissions approach that makes modest use of ethnicity in a holistic review that looks at a lot of characteristics that make for good students and good leaders for the future,” Powers said.

Affirmative action has been a contentious issue throughout history since its inception during the presidency of President John F. Kennedy.

Executive Order 10925, which established Equal Employment Opportunity to eliminate racial discrimination, provided that contractors doing business with the government “will take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and employees are treated during their employment, without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin,” and was solidified by the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

“Affirmative action was not an important step in job and education equality; it was a necessary step,” said Steve Johnson, assistant treasurer with the NAACP San Antonio branch. “Because without it, affirmative action was not being accomplished.”

Central to Fisher’s case is whether or not UT should have reintroduced racial and ethnic preferences after the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Grutter*.

Fisher’s counsel, provided by the Project on Fair Representation, argued that in 2003 (prior to the *Grutter* ruling), UT had a

race-neutral policy in place that was extremely effective in achieving diversity, so the reintroduction of racial preferences was unnecessary, thus unconstitutional.

Edward Blum, director of the Project on Fair Representation, a legal defense fund that supports litigation that challenges racial and ethnic classifications and preferences, spoke out about the case in a press release dated Feb. 21.

“It is deeply troubling that UT has justified its racial-preference policies based upon the lack of undergraduate ‘classroom diversity,’” Blum said. “If allowed to remain a goal, UT and hundreds of other schools will be permitted to racially gerrymander every classroom in order to achieve proportional racial balance. This is gravely wrong.”

Fisher’s counsel argued that the effectiveness of the Top 10 Percent Law created a significantly more diverse class because statistics showed that 21.4 percent of the freshmen entering UT were African American and Hispanic, a rise from 15.3 percent in 1997.

“The Supreme Court may use this case to dismantle affirmative action in higher education,” said Ashley Packard, professor of Communication and Digital Media Studies.

William Hoston, assistant professor of Political Science and program convener, is concerned about the effects Fisher’s case could have on students’ futures beyond the university.

“Diversity on college campuses is very important,” Hoston said. “Any profession you enter will have individuals from diverse groups, and, when exposed in college, this allows students to enter the workforce with an understanding of how to interact with co-workers.”

UHCL’s current admissions policies do not factor race and ethnicity as bases for acceptance. Yvette Bendeck, associate vice president of enrollment management, attributes the location and Houston’s diversity as major deciding factors that provide the “changing profile” of UHCL.

“Over the past decade, UHCL

has been able to achieve a more diverse student population,” Bendeck said. “UHCL has been classified by the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities as a Hispanic Serving Institution since 2010.”

Even with the minority numbers at UHCL on the rise, Linda Bullock, assistant dean of student diversity, points out that UHCL continues to strive to achieve an even more diverse faculty.

“I think UHCL is very diverse,” Bullock said. “There are some individuals on campus that have pushed really hard to help make this campus more diverse, but we still have some areas to work on. Where I believe we do have under-represented diversity is in the faculty. I believe the highest under-represented minority within our faculty is Hispanics.”

While Bullock contends that diversity at UHCL is on the right track, she is still a proponent for affirmative action.

“I know we need it in universities and colleges,” Bullock said. “If people are continually fighting to stop it simply because they are not accepted into an institution of their choice, why would we not need it? Education should be available to everyone regardless of race, ethnicity, culture or class. Why are so many lawsuits being filed? It is simply an entitlement issue.”

Though not speaking to the media about her case, Fisher did speak out in a press release dated Feb. 21.

“A good start to stopping discrimination would be getting rid of the boxes on applications, male, female, race, whatever,” Fisher said. “Those don’t tell the admissions people what type of student you are or how involved you are, all they do is put you into a box; get rid of the box... I hope the Court will decide that all future UT applicants will be allowed to compete for admission without their race or ethnicity being a factor.”

A final decision from the Supreme Court has not yet been disseminated.

“Anything that ends with the word engineering. Finance. Accounting. Economics. Computer Science. Physics. Math itself (obviously), of course, money isn’t the important thing. You want to do something you love. After all, the amount of money you earn has to compensate you for how much you dislike your job, and there is just a point at which no reasonable amount of money will make up for having to suffer through something you hate day after day.”

Cotten encourages students not to give up on their pursuit of a college degree and simply to work with the fear of student loans or the like.

“College is almost always a smart investment,” Cotten said. “Regardless of whether you pay up front or borrow for it. Study after study shows that the increase in average lifetime earnings from getting a bachelor’s degree far outstrips the cost of the degree.”

MARRIAGE: continued from page 1

actualized, it will do nothing more than come closer to realizing the truth that yes, ‘all men are created equal,’” said Alan Mansfield, Unity Club president. “The only negative affect the opposing side will feel from reaching marriage equality is that they’ll have lost their battle of bigotry. Who anyone marries is not a concern of anyone else except for the people invited to the ceremony. Say gay couple ‘A’ gets legally and federally married. They’ve lived across the street from conservative couple ‘B’ for 20 years. Nothing has changed except for a document that couple ‘B’ is never going to see.”

The Pew research shows that acceptance of homosexuality in general has also been on the rise. However, many people who support homosexuality still do not support same-sex marriage.

Though the Pew research shows the number of Republicans who support marriage equality is growing, Republicans, in general, still oppose it. Republican Presidential Candidate Mitt Romney signed the National Organization for Marriage’s (NOM) pledge to support the Defense of Marriage Act that defines marriage as a legal union between one man and one woman.

“Thirty-two states when given the chance have voted to protect marriage,” said Thomas Peters, cultural director of NOM. “Gay marriage has primarily been pushed with this claim that it is ‘inevitable,’ even though it goes down in defeat time and time again.”

NOM’s pledge also supports appointing federal judges who do not support same-sex marriage and putting the decision to repeal gay marriage in states that have permitted it to a popular vote.

“It’s important to prevent gay marriage because gay unions are not marriages,” Peters said. “The public purpose of marriage is and has always been to unite men and women together, and to unite them to whatever children they may have . . . any child introduced into a same-sex unit is deprived of either his or her mother or father.”

“The word ‘marriage’ has meaning in our society,” said Robin Maril, legislative counsel for the Administrative Advocacy for the Human Rights Campaign. “It communicates a lifelong commitment between two people based on respect and love. ‘Civil unions’ do not carry that weight and create a completely second-class version of relationship recognition for same-sex couples. The commitment that same-sex couples make to each other is no different from the commitment that different sex couples make, and the way the government views this commitment shouldn’t be different either.”

“It’s not about preventing anything,” said Alliance Defending Freedom Senior Counsel Austin Nimocks. “Marriage is between one man and one woman. That’s what’s

“THE WORD ‘MARRIAGE’ HAS MEANING IN OUR SOCIETY. IT COMMUNICATES A LIFELONG COMMITMENT BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE BASED ON RESPECT AND LOVE.”

- Robin Maril
Administrative
Advocacy for the
Human Rights Campaign

important. A mother and father are indispensable.”

Mansfield and KHMIX – MIX 96.5 Radio DJ Blake Hayes both compare the current state of marriage equality to the “separate but equal” inequities that the Civil Rights Movement fought against.

“Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act in ‘96, to appease the majority by not having to recognize civil unions federally,” Mansfield said. “Civil unions for gays are simply another form of ‘separate but equal,’ which was deemed unconstitutional over 50 years ago.”

Hayes, a recent guest speaker at UHCL for National Coming Out Day, said “the issue is really quite simple.”

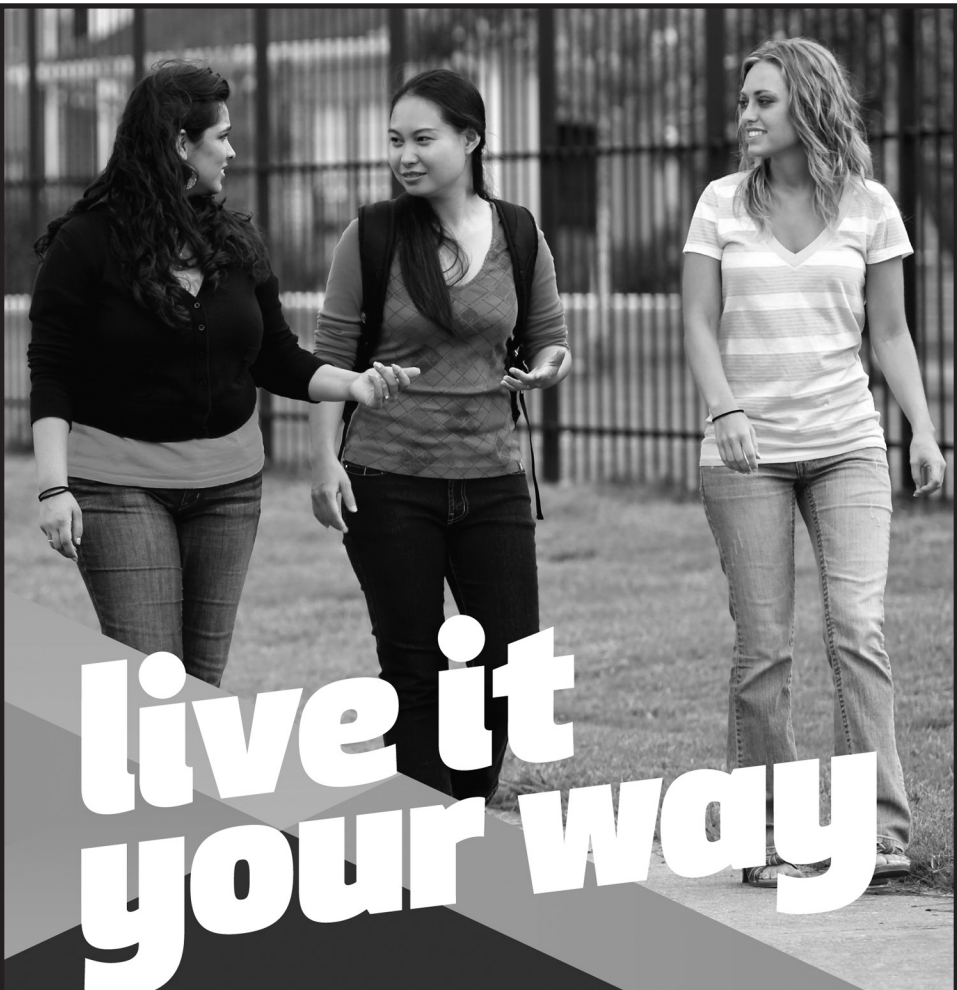
“If you’re gay, you’re treated as a second-class citizen under the law,” Hayes said. “Laws banning marriage equality, or supporting other anti-gay discrimination, are the Jim Crow laws of our time. Civil unions are great, but they’re not enough. They’re not marriage. We tried that on the path to racial equality, creating separate water fountains or bus seats. Separate but equal doesn’t work, and that’s not according to me, that’s from the Supreme Court. Separate but equal is never equal.”

Peters argues gay marriage is really not about benefits anymore and points out even in states that have granted same-sex couples all the legal rights of marriage through civil unions, activists are still attempting to redefine marriage.

“Gay unions are not marriages and however long this fiction may be perpetuated in law, the more harm to society and the next generation will result,” Peters said. “If we erase the idea and if the law treats the idea as akin to bigotry that moms and dads each matter and each contribute something unique to the wellbeing of children, we have lost a core human truth and society and culture will suffer as a result. Gay people have the right to live as they choose, but they do not have the right to redefine marriage for the rest of us.”


Hayes said the opposition to marriage equality confuses him.

“How does banning me from marrying someone improve your marriage?” Hayes asked. “Doesn’t it go against the American ideals of pursuing liberty and happiness? ...Equality has always made America stronger, not weaker.”




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Film & Speaker

S E R I E S

THE WHISTLEBLOWER

Monday, Nov. 5
7 p.m., Bayou Theater

Distinguished Speaker: Katheryn Bolkovac

This ripped-from-the-headlines thriller is inspired by actual events. Kathy Bolkovac (Rachel Weisz) is a Nebraskan police officer who takes a job working as a peacekeeper in post-war Bosnia. Her expectations of helping to rebuild a devastated country are dashed when she uncovers a dangerous reality of corruption, cover-up and intrigue amid a world of private contractors and multinational diplomatic doubletalk. Rate R.

Admission is FREE. Reception and book signing will follow screening. This event is part of the American Whistleblower Tour sponsored by the Government Accountability Project.

Any person requiring an accommodation to participate in an event should contact the Student Life Office at 281-283-2560, at least two weeks before the event

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MIKE MCMULLEN: COURTESY

The Egypt in Transition group in front of the Dashour Pyramid south of Cairo.



MIKE MCMULLEN: COURTESY

Hasan Awad gives a lecture about Islam in a mosque in Cairo.

A TRIP ABROAD BRINGS CHANGE TO LIGHT

Stephen Schumacher

The Signal

In 2011 the world watched as Egypt transitioned from an oppression-filled region to one of a free and equal representation of its people.

A revolution started by few and spread by millions; brought together for a single goal – one often overlooked and taken for granted by the Western world – democracy.

When the dust settled, more than 800 lives would be lost, thousands would be injured, and one president would resign.

The resignation of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak resulted in Egypt's first free and open election. Everett Penn, associate professor of criminology, and Mike McMullen, associate professor of sociology and cross-cultural studies, witnessed firsthand Egypt's first steps toward democracy during their annual study abroad program, Egypt in Transition.

Their stories paint a vivid picture of a time of triumph and great change.

"We were there between the initial election in May when there were 13 candidates, and then we left on the day the runoff elections started happening for the two candidates, the two top vote getters," McMullen said.

The runoff election McMullen refers to was between Ahmed Shafik, the last Prime Minister under Hosni Mubarak, and Muslim Brotherhood candidate Mohamed Morsi.

Penn and McMullen were quick to point out that although the Egyptian people had much to celebrate, things were still far from perfect.

"During our study abroad trips we get the opportunity to talk to many Egyptians," Penn said. "We have the opportunity to talk to people who are very into the mainstream, who are shop owners, tourists, academics. We would ask these questions of them and we would get just about every spectrum of answer you could think of."

McMullen remembered the

lingering tension people felt about the choices they were given for the presidency.

"What I noticed when I talked to people was their frustration that they went through all this revolution and it came down to the old regime candidate that many did not want," McMullen recalled. "Then others were afraid of the Muslim brotherhood candidate. I think there was a mixture of hope and frustration. All this blood sweat and tears, and this is what they got. So there was frustration, but still excitement, because for the first time since the day of the pharaohs they were going to elect their own leader."

"I think what we saw was an excitement in the idea of voting but not necessarily an excitement that great change would occur," Penn added.

Despite the Egyptian peoples' victory in overthrowing an oppressive regime, the election was shrouded by uncertainty. Feelings from years of oppression do not simply fade overnight.

"I think all of us assume the election here for the U.S. president is going to happen," McMullen said. "It wouldn't even enter my mind, 'would the military stage a coup to prevent it?' That was a real concern there. Even up until the day we flew out when the runoff election happened, there were still people wondering, 'is the military going to allow this to happen?'"

The fear and confusion of wondering if the people would have a chance to vote, knowing that at any moment the military could step in and bring the entire process to a halt, the freedom to choose, without a fear for our safety or well-being, is something Americans don't have to face today.

On the last day of their trip, Penn and McMullen walked the streets as the runoff elections took place. Penn recalls it as a powerful and emotional day.

"For me, the pinnacle moment of the trip was the Saturday before we left," Penn said. "Dr. McMullen, a student, our guide

and myself, we walked the neighborhood as the elections were taking place. And we walked by a polling station that had news reporters, people lined up, even a truck for water, and it truly brought a tear to my eye, because I paralleled the 1960s and the 1950s of African Americans here in the South and the work that had to be done, and the lives lost to get to that moment with the joy of seeing another group of people have the honor and the right to vote."

As McMullen and Penn took in the sights and sounds of the historic runoff election, their own tour guide was pulled aside and interviewed by a reporter. McMullen was struck by the fact that a regular Egyptian citizen's opinion was valued and sought after; he saw it as evidence of the significant change in Egypt's transition toward democracy.

"It made me appreciate what we have here," McMullen said. "I'm not worried about a coup. Romney may win, Obama may get re-elected, but there is not going to be a revolution. There will be a peaceful transition of power."

"Isn't that something – that on that day in January every four years, that it is a shaking of hands and an understanding that you now have power? That is remarkable," Penn mused. "With the many countries I have traveled around the world, it is always great to come back to America and think, 'that's the way we do business.'"

Penn and McMullen both stressed the importance of focusing on the similarities instead of the differences that can separate cultures.

"People are the same no matter where they come from around the world," Penn said. "People want the best for themselves, for their family, the respect from others, to be able to follow their own religion. You find out the more you travel, the more people are similar. We are more the same than we are different."