

Affirmative Action and the US Supreme Court

Lee Bollinger
President, Columbia University

March 14, 2003
2:00 pm -3:30 pm

[To view the video of the event, click on the Columbia News Video Forum.](#)

For photos of the event, [click here](#).

Alumni Auditorium
College of Physicians and Surgeons
Columbia University
630 W. 168th St.
New York, NY 10032

President Bollinger addressed an audience of over eight hundred on Friday, March 14 in the Alumni Auditorium of the College of Physicians and Surgeons. The event was sponsored by the Center for Bioethics. President Bollinger traced the history and discussed the issues involved in the two crucial Supreme Court cases: Gratz v. Bollinger, involving admissions to the University of Michigan's undergraduate College of Literature, Science, and the Arts; and Grutter v. Bollinger, involving Michigan's Law School. He called these two cases the "most important civil rights court cases (in 25 years) since Brown vs. Board of Education," and stated that these cases represent not just a legal matter, but also a legislative and social policy matter. He explained how the Bakke case, decided by Justice Powell in 1978, laid the groundwork for considering race and ethnicity as factors in admissions, provided it is done for educational reasons. President Bollinger and many others consider diversity essential in educating individuals for a well-functioning democratic society.

In her introduction, Dr. Ruth Fischbach stated "these cases are not just about race-conscious admissions policies, but are about justice, about a right and moral public policy for a moral and just society." Dr. Fischbach believes that having an educated and diverse work force is in our best interests; it is for the good of society. Since education is a gateway to better employment, it improves the socioeconomic status of individuals, which improves their health.

The cases will be argued April 1, 2003 and the decisions will be announced in June.

President Lee Bollinger is the nineteenth President of Columbia University, and a member of the faculty at the Law School. He is a graduate of the University of Oregon and Columbia Law School. While at Columbia he was an Articles Editor of the Law Review. He served as law clerk for Judge Wilfred Feinberg on the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit and Chief Justice Warren Burger on the United States Supreme Court. He joined the faculty of the University of Michigan Law School in 1973; he was named the Dean of the Michigan Law School in 1987. He became Provost of Dartmouth College and Professor of Government in July 1994, and was named the twelfth President of the University of Michigan in November 1996. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a member of the boards of the Gerald R. Ford Foundation and the Royal Shakespeare Company.