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IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES

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BILL SCHUETTE, ATTORNEY :  
GENERAL OF MICHIGAN, :  
Petitioner : No. 12-682

v. :

COALITION TO DEFEND AFFIRMATIVE :  
ACTION, INTEGRATION AND IMMIGRANT :  
RIGHTS AND FIGHT FOR EQUALITY BY :  
ANY MEANS NECESSARY (BAMN, ET AL.):

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Washington, D.C.

Tuesday, October 15, 2013

The above-entitled matter came on for oral  
argument before the Supreme Court of the United States  
at 1:00 p.m.

APPEARANCES:

JOHN J. BURSCH, ESQ., Solicitor General, Lansing,  
Michigan; on behalf of Petitioner.

MARK D. ROSENBAUM, ESQ., Los Angeles, California; on  
behalf of Cantrell Respondents.

SHANTA DRIVER, ESQ., Detroit, Michigan; for Coalition to  
Defend Affirmative Action Respondents.

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(1:00 p.m.)

CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: We will hear argument next today in Case 12-682, Schuette v. The Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action.

Mr. Bursch.

ORAL ARGUMENT OF JOHN J. BURSCH

ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER

MR. BURSCH: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice, and may it please the Court:

The issue in this case is whether a Michigan constitutional provision requiring equal treatment violates equal protection. And for two reasons, the answer is no.

First, unlike the laws at issue in Hunter and Seattle, Section 26 does not repeal an antidiscrimination law. Instead, it repeals preferences and thus, it's an impediment to preferential treatment, not equal treatment.

JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Holt had nothing to do with an antidiscrimination law. It had to do with a remedy, defective segregation. Why isn't this identical to Seattle?

MR. BURSCH: Justice Sotomayor, it's not identical because of the remedy issue. In Seattle, they

1 were trying to create, in the court's words, equal  
2 educational opportunity by imposing a remedy that would  
3 result in equality in the schools.

4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: You don't think that the  
5 proponents of affirmative action are attempting to do  
6 the same thing? One of the bill sponsors here said that  
7 this constitutional amendment will bring back  
8 desegregation in Michigan, and it appears to have done  
9 just that.

10 MR. BURSCH: Well, there's two points to  
11 that question and I'll address them both. First on the  
12 merits, under Grutter, the point of preferences in  
13 university admissions cannot be solely the benefit of  
14 the minority, because under Grutter, it's supposed to  
15 benefit the campus as a whole through diversity, and  
16 which we think is a laudable goal.

17 It's a forward-looking action, not a  
18 backward-looking action, to remedy past discrimination.  
19 And we know that because under Grutter, you can use  
20 preferences whether or not there's de facto or de jure  
21 segregation, simply to get the benefit.

22 But with respect to your -- your point about  
23 the University of Michigan and what has or has not  
24 happened here, two thoughts on that. First, we have the  
25 statistics that we discuss in our reply brief where it's

1 not clear that -- that the diversity on Michigan's  
2 campus has gone down. But our main point on that is --  
3 is not those numbers, but the fact that there are other  
4 things that the University of Michigan could be doing to  
5 achieve diversity in race-neutral ways.

6 For example, we know that --

7 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I thought that in  
8 Grutter, all of the social scientists had pointed out to  
9 the fact that all of those efforts had failed. That's  
10 one of the reasons why the -- I think it was a law  
11 school claim in Michigan was upheld.

12 MR. BURSCH: Well, there's social science  
13 evidence that goes both ways. But I want to focus on  
14 the University of Michigan because there's two things  
15 that they could be doing right now that would get them  
16 closer to the race-neutral goal.

17 The first thing is that they could eliminate  
18 alumnae preferences. Other schools have done that.  
19 They have not. That's certainly one way that tilts the  
20 playing field away from underrepresented minorities.

21 The other one, and this is really important,  
22 is the focus on socioeconomic --

23 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: It's always wonderful  
24 for minorities that they finally get in, they finally  
25 have children and now you're going to do away for that

1 preference for them. It seems that the game posts keeps  
2 changing every few years for minorities.

3 MR. BURSCH: Given the makeup of Michigan's  
4 alumnae right now, certainly that playing field would be  
5 tilted the other way.

6 The other thing that we practice is  
7 socioeconomic diversity. And at the University of  
8 Michigan, there was a stat in "The Wall Street Journal"  
9 just two days ago that if you measure that by Pell  
10 grants, the number of students who are eligible for  
11 those, at the University, the number of students who  
12 have Pell grants is half what it is at more progressive  
13 institutions like Berkeley and the University of Texas  
14 at Austin.

15 So the University of Michigan could be  
16 trying harder. But our point isn't to get into a debate  
17 about whether preferences are a good or bad thing,  
18 because that's not what this case is about. The  
19 question is whether the people of Michigan have the  
20 choice through the democratic process to accept this  
21 Court's invitation in Grutter to try race-neutral means.

22 JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Bursch, could you go  
23 back --

24 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, while you're on  
25 Seattle, can you -- I have difficulty distinguishing

1 Seattle. One factual difference is that there was a  
2 school board there, a directly-elected school board  
3 elected for a short term of years. Here there's a board  
4 of trustees.

5 Is that -- is that the distinguish -- a  
6 distinguishing factor in the case in which a principal  
7 distinction could be made?

8 MR. BURSCH: I think it's a distinguishing  
9 factor. You know, kind of sticking with how hard is it  
10 under the new political process. And I think the chart  
11 that we have on page 17 of our reply brief explains that  
12 it's really easier to change race-based admissions  
13 policies now than it was before Section 26. And that's  
14 one basis.

15 But I think the more fundamental basis is to  
16 say, you know, what Seattle is about. And -- and if you  
17 indulge me, I'm going to suggest that Seattle could mean  
18 one of three things. One of those I think you should  
19 clearly reject, and then the other two I think are --  
20 are possible interpretations that you could adopt.

21 When Seattle talks about racial  
22 classifications, it focuses on laws that have a racial  
23 focus. Now, right out of the box, equal protection is  
24 about people, not about laws, but even more  
25 fundamentally, that cannot be the right test. At a

1 minimum, that part of Seattle has to go because if you  
2 had a race-neutral law, like Michigan's Equal Protection  
3 Clause, which forbids discrimination on the basis of  
4 race or sex -- you know, it mirrors the concept of the  
5 Federal clause -- that itself would be subject to strict  
6 scrutiny because it has a racial focus. So we know that  
7 can't be right and that's Respondent's position.

8           So that leaves you two other choices. And  
9 one would be an incremental change to this political  
10 restructuring doctrine; the other would be a more  
11 aggressive change. The incremental change would be to  
12 interpret racial classification in Seattle as meaning a  
13 law that, one, repeals an antidiscrimination provision,  
14 as it did in Hunter and Seattle; and two, removes that  
15 issue to a higher level of the decision-making process.  
16 And because Michigan's law requires equal treatment, it  
17 eliminates preferences, not an antidiscrimination law.  
18 That would be a way that you could keep Seattle and  
19 Hunter as a viable doctrine, and still rule in our favor  
20 on this case.

21           JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: I don't see the  
22 distinction. Bussing could be viewed, and was viewed,  
23 to benefit only one group. It was a preference for  
24 blacks to get into better schools. That's the way the  
25 case was pitched, that was its justification, and to

1 integrate the society. Affirmative action has the same  
2 gain. We've said that in Fisher; it should be to  
3 diversify the population, so it favors diversity as  
4 opposed to desegregation.

5 MR. BURSCH: Right. But there's a  
6 difference between favoring diversity as an abstract  
7 concept on campus, which Grutter clearly allows, and  
8 remedying past discrimination, which was the point of  
9 the bussing in Seattle. And that's why we're really in  
10 a post-Seattle world now, because under --

11 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But there -- there was no  
12 proof that there was any de jure segregation in Seattle.

13 MR. BURSCH: That's correct because, at the  
14 time of Seattle's decision, we didn't yet have parents  
15 involved, and so there wasn't a strict scrutiny test  
16 that was being applied to that bussing program. And so  
17 you didn't have to go as far as you would today if you  
18 wanted to uphold that same bussing program.

19 But what really -- what ties this case up --

20 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But you're saying there --  
21 there are three things. One, the first you reject.

22 MR. BURSCH: Yes.

23 JUSTICE KENNEDY: The law was a racial  
24 focus.

25 MR. BURSCH: It can't be because of racial

1 focus.

2 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Okay. And the second was  
3 an incremental improvement in the -- in the democratic  
4 process -- or democratic responsibility?

5 MR. BURSCH: That, plus --

6 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Responsiveness, I guess.

7 MR. BURSCH: Right. That, plus repealing an  
8 antidiscrimination law. I think that's a narrow way --

9 JUSTICE KENNEDY: And was there a third, did  
10 you say?

11 MR. BURSCH: Well, the third way is really  
12 to -- to look at racial focus and say that's wrong, and  
13 maybe this whole doctrine needs to be reexamined. And  
14 the way that you could do that is to look at what  
15 Seattle and Hunter are really doing, which is falling  
16 right into the Washington v. Davis line of cases.

17 Both of those cases could have been resolved  
18 by saying, one, there's a disparate impact; and two,  
19 given the facts and circumstances in 1969, Akron, Ohio  
20 and 1982, Seattle, Washington, that there was  
21 discriminatory animus based on race. And if you did  
22 that, you could reconcile those cases with  
23 Washington v. Davis and the entire line of equal  
24 protection jurisprudence this Court has used since that  
25 time.

1 JUSTICE GINSBURG: But there is such a claim  
2 in this case, it just wasn't decided -- wasn't there a  
3 racial animus, that the reason for Proposition 2 was to  
4 reduce the minority population? The court of appeals  
5 didn't get to that, but there was such a claim.

6 MR. BURSCH: There was a claim, but, Your  
7 Honor, there was also a decision. And the district  
8 court was really clear on this. Keep in mind that this  
9 was a summary judgment posture, and the district court  
10 concluded properly that there wasn't even a question of  
11 material disputed fact with respect to intent. This is  
12 at pages 317 to 319 of the supplemental appendix  
13 petition.

14 And that's because the primary motivation  
15 for Section 26 included so many nondiscriminatory  
16 reasons, including the belief of some in Michigan that  
17 preferences are themselves race discrimination. Others  
18 that -- race-neutral alternatives is actually a better  
19 way to achieve campus diversity that results in better  
20 outcomes for underrepresented minority students. Some  
21 could believe that the preferences result in mismatch,  
22 as Justice Thomas is --

23 JUSTICE KENNEDY: That, it seemed to me a  
24 good distinction for Hunter and Mulkey v. Reitman, which  
25 the briefs don't talk much about.

1 MR. BURSCH: Yes.

2 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But not necessarily a  
3 distinction in Seattle because Seattle you could argue,  
4 well, there are other methods that are less racially  
5 divisive.

6 MR. BURSCH: And I think -- and I would like  
7 to come back to Reitman because that fits into this  
8 framework, too.

9 But I think if you have any question about  
10 what Seattle really meant, the place to look is the  
11 later decision in Cuyahoga Falls, because in Cuyahoga  
12 the Court specifically mentions, quote, "the evil of  
13 discriminatory intent present in Seattle." That's at  
14 pages 196 to '97 of the opinion. And it also talks  
15 about the decisionmakers' statements as evidence of  
16 discriminatory intent in the Hunter case, at page 195.  
17 And so I think if you look at Cuyahoga Falls, it has  
18 already done some of the work for you if you are going  
19 to take the more conservative route and say there's  
20 intent.

21 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: But I don't see how the  
22 argument would be any different here. One of the main  
23 sponsors of this bill said it was intended to segregate  
24 again. The voters in Seattle were not all filled with  
25 animus; some of them just cared about their children not

1 leaving -- not having outsiders come in. I mean,  
2 there's always voters who have good intent.

3 MR. BURSCH: That's true and there is always  
4 some bad apples, too. We don't dispute that point. But  
5 -- but here you have a district court holding that there  
6 is not even a material question of fact with respect to  
7 animus, because there are so many reasons that could be  
8 advanced, legitimate reasons again, about mismatch and  
9 about the benefits of racial --

10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: In Seattle as well. So  
11 it wasn't the issue of animus that drove Seattle.

12 MR. BURSCH: I think it's much harder in  
13 Seattle, Your Honor. But to fit Reitman into this  
14 discussion and what I would consider the more  
15 conservative way to deal with Seattle and Hunter, one  
16 that would preserve those as a doctrine, is to think  
17 about how Reitman would come out under that test. In  
18 Reitman, of course, you had antidiscrimination laws just  
19 like in Hunter at the local level, which were then  
20 repealed by a State constitutional amendment.

21 And the political restructuring doctrine had  
22 not yet been invented yet, and so what the Court did is  
23 it relied on the California Supreme Court's finding that  
24 there was discriminatory animus in striking down those  
25 antidiscrimination laws.

1           I think that if you view Hunter and Seattle  
2 similarly as cases where if you repeal an  
3 antidiscrimination law, as opposed to one that requires  
4 equal treatment, that's the narrow way to cabin those  
5 cases and ones that -- a way that would allow those  
6 cases to survive, yet to distinguish Section 26.

7           One point that we haven't discussed much is  
8 the democratic process, and it's important that I  
9 emphasize that, obviously, the use of race-based and  
10 sex-based preferences in college education is certainly  
11 one of the most hotly contested issues of our time. And  
12 some believe that those preferences are necessary for  
13 campus diversity. Others think that they are not  
14 necessary, and in fact that we would have a much better  
15 world if we moved past the discussion about race and  
16 instead based it on race-neutral criteria.

17           JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Bursch, can I ask you  
18 to go back to the very first thing you said, because I  
19 didn't get your -- your point. The question: What  
20 impact has the termination of affirmative action had on  
21 Michigan, on the enrollment of minorities in the  
22 University of Michigan? Do we have any clear picture of  
23 that, what effect the repeal of affirmative action has  
24 had?

25           MR. BURSCH: Yes, Justice Ginsburg, we have

1 a muddy picture. As we explain in our reply brief, the  
2 first thing that we have is the actual statistics for  
3 the first full year after Section 26 went into effect.  
4 This is 2008. And what we find is that the number of  
5 underrepresented minorities as part of the entering  
6 freshman class at Michigan as a percentage changed very  
7 little. It went from about 10-3/4 percent to about  
8 10-1/4 percent.

9           Then it gets very difficult to track,  
10 because, following the U.S. Census's lead, in 2010 the  
11 University of Michigan stopped requiring students to  
12 check only a single box to demonstrate what their race  
13 or ethnicity was and moved to a multiple checkbox  
14 system.

15           And Justice Sotomayor, when you see in the  
16 amici briefs that there has been a dramatic drop, for  
17 example, in African American students on campus at the  
18 University of Michigan, those numbers don't take into  
19 account that people who before were forced to check a  
20 single box now could be checking multiple boxes. And if  
21 you fold in the multiple checkbox students, the number  
22 of underrepresented minorities on campus actually comes  
23 out higher. Now, we don't know what those numbers are,  
24 because you could have a student who might be white and  
25 Asian and they would not be considered an

1 underrepresented minority, and they could be in there;  
2 but we know that the numbers are a lot closer than when  
3 you just look at single checkbox students in isolation.

4 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So what do we do with  
5 the statistics from California? An amici from  
6 California, their attorney general, has shown, another  
7 State with a similar proposition, has shown the dramatic  
8 drop.

9 MR. BURSCH: Well, the statistics in  
10 California across the 17 campuses in the University of  
11 California system show that today the underrepresented  
12 minority percentage is better on 16 out of those 17  
13 campuses. It's not at Berkeley; they haven't gotten  
14 there yet; but it's better on the rest.

15 And by going to race-neutral criteria, what  
16 they discovered was that underrepresented minority  
17 students have higher GPAs, that they take more  
18 technology, engineering and math classes, and they have  
19 a graduation rate that is 20 to 25 percent higher than  
20 it was before California's Proposition 209.

21 You can see similar effects in Texas in  
22 their top 10 percent program before it was modified.  
23 And not only did it have those positive impacts, but it  
24 actually increased minority performance at  
25 social-economically disadvantaged high schools, where

1 the students said: Hey, if I can only get into the top  
2 10 percent of my class, I can be in the University of  
3 Texas at Austin.

4 And again, we can all agree that diversity  
5 on campus is a goal that should be pursued. What the  
6 California and Texas experiences have demonstrated is  
7 that there are good, positive reasons why the voters  
8 might want to try a race-neutral alternative.

9 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: So why is it okay to  
10 have taken away -- not okay to have taken away the  
11 decision to have bussing from the local school boards,  
12 the people on the ground, but it's okay to take that  
13 power away from the people on the ground here, the board  
14 of regents, who are also elected like the school board  
15 was in Seattle?

16 MR. BURSCH: Because as --

17 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: The general population  
18 has feelings about many things, but the only decision  
19 that they're -- educational decision that they are  
20 taking away from the board of regents is this one:  
21 affirmative action. Everything else they leave within  
22 the elected board of regents.

23 MR. BURSCH: You've put your finger on the  
24 fulcrum of Respondents' best argument, that only race as  
25 a factor alone has been removed. And there their

1 argument is exactly backwards, because it's not Michigan  
2 or Section 26 that single out race. It's the Equal  
3 Protection Clause itself, because, Justice Sotomayor, if  
4 a student wants to lobby for an alumni preference or  
5 a cello preference and put it in the State constitution,  
6 strict scrutiny is never applied to that effort. But  
7 when you try to get a preference based on race or not  
8 based on race in the Federal -- or the State  
9 constitution, strict scrutiny is always applied.

10 And so it's the Equal Protection Clause  
11 which is making a differentiation between race and  
12 everything else. And that's why this Court in Crawford,  
13 again decided the same day as Seattle, at page 538,  
14 recognized, quote, "a distinction between State action  
15 that discriminates on the basis of race and State action  
16 that addresses in neutral fashion race-related matters."  
17 And Section 26 falls into that latter category.

18 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: You have been asked  
19 several questions that refer to the ending or  
20 termination of affirmative action. That's not what is  
21 at issue here, is it?

22 MR. BURSCH: No, and I'm glad that you  
23 brought that up, Chief Justice Roberts, because  
24 affirmative action means a lot more than simply the use  
25 of race or sex-based preferences in university

1 admissions.

2           The -- Article I, Section 26, only focuses  
3 on this one aspect of university admissions. Now,  
4 another important point to understand is that Section 26  
5 is not all about university admissions. This is  
6 actually a much broader law that applies not just to  
7 race and ethnicity, but also to sex and other factors,  
8 and that affects not just universities but also public  
9 contracting and public employment.

10           This was a broad-based law that was  
11 primarily motivated by the people of Michigan's decision  
12 to move past the day when we are always focused on race,  
13 exactly as Grutter invited the States to do. And you  
14 can -- you can see how that discussion gets mired when  
15 you look at some of these statistics that we have been  
16 talking about. Is someone who has multiple racial boxes  
17 checked more or less diverse than someone who only has  
18 one box checked? Is someone who comes from outside the  
19 country -- say from Mexico --

20           JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: You've done something  
21 much more. You are basically saying, because Fisher and  
22 Grutter -- we've always applied strict scrutiny --

23           MR. BURSCH: Correct.

24           JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: -- all right. So it's  
25 essentially a last resort, within some reason. But what

1 you are saying, if all those other measures fail, you're  
2 by Constitution saying you can't go to the remedy that  
3 might work.

4 MR. BURSCH: No, that's not what we are  
5 saying.

6 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Well, but you're -- but  
7 this amendment is stopping the political process. It's  
8 saying the board of regents can do everything else in  
9 the field of education except this one.

10 MR. BURSCH: Well, again, it actually runs  
11 the other way, because equal protection is what singles  
12 out race-focused measures for strict scrutiny. But what  
13 we're saying is under Grutter, race preferences are  
14 barely permissible. It cannot be unconstitutional for  
15 the people to choose not to use them anymore, to accept  
16 this Court's invitation in Grutter, to move past the  
17 discussion about race and into a race-neutral future.

18 JUSTICE KENNEDY: What would you do with a  
19 constitutional amendment that said pro-affirmative  
20 action laws, and only those, require a three-quarters  
21 vote of the State legislature?

22 MR. BURSCH: Well, under what we're going to  
23 call the narrow "Save Hunter and Seattle," something  
24 like that would be unconstitutional because it removes  
25 an antidiscrimination provision and moves it to a higher

1 level of government.

2 Now, one of the problems with keeping that  
3 doctrine is it could also work the opposite way. You  
4 know, pretend that the political climate in Michigan was  
5 turned on its head and that universities had agreed that  
6 they were no longer going to use race or sex in  
7 admissions and that it was the State electorate, either  
8 in the legislature or in the constitution, which imposed  
9 a Grutter plan on everyone.

10 Well, under Hunter and Seattle, that would  
11 have to go because that law removes an  
12 antidiscrimination provision and moves it to the higher  
13 level. And so that would be one reason why you might  
14 want to take the Washington v. Davis approach and  
15 consider whether there's discriminatory animus based on  
16 race.

17 But, you know, in either of those cases, I  
18 think you can either, you know, pare down the doctrine  
19 or get rid of it entirely and distinguish our case from  
20 it. But the one point that I want to leave you with  
21 today is that the -- the core of Respondent's arguments  
22 that somehow a racial classification can be any law that  
23 has a racial focus, cannot be the right test. No matter  
24 what, that portion of Seattle and Hunter has to go,  
25 because equal protection is about protecting

1 individuals, not about protecting laws; and even  
2 nondiscriminatory race-neutral laws that have a racial  
3 focus would fall under their racial focus test.

4           You know, the hypothetical we give in our  
5 briefs on that, besides a State Equal Protection Clause,  
6 would be the Federal Fair Housing Act because it  
7 references race, it has a racial focus, in the words of  
8 Seattle and Hunter, and it has the ability of preventing  
9 anyone from lobbying for preferences based on their race  
10 or sex at lower levels of the government, either State  
11 or local.

12           So under their theory, the Federal Fair  
13 Housing Act would have to be applied under strict  
14 scrutiny. And their only response to that in the brief  
15 is that: Well, the Supremacy Clause takes care of that  
16 problem. And we all know supremacy doesn't kick in  
17 until you first determine that the Federal law itself is  
18 constitutional, and it wouldn't be under their theory.

19           So -- so what we're asking you to do is  
20 eliminate that portion of Hunter and Seattle that  
21 suggests that a law's racial focus is the sine qua non  
22 of a political restructuring doctrine test and to  
23 either --

24           JUSTICE GINSBURG: Mr. Bursch, isn't --

25           MR. BURSCH: Yes.

1 JUSTICE GINSBURG: -- isn't the position  
2 that was taken in Seattle derived from a different view  
3 of the Equal Protection Clause? I mean, strict scrutiny  
4 was originally put forward as a protection for  
5 minorities -- a protection for minorities against  
6 hostile disadvantageous legislation. And so the view  
7 then was we use strict scrutiny when the majority is  
8 disadvantaging the minority. So you do, under the  
9 Carolene Products view, you do focus on race and you  
10 ask, is the minority being disadvantaged?

11 If that were the view, then I suppose we  
12 would not be looking at this, well, the criterion is  
13 race and wherever the disadvantage falls, whether a  
14 majority or minority, it's just the same. That wasn't  
15 the original idea of when strict scrutiny is  
16 appropriate. So if we were faithful to that notion,  
17 that it is -- measures a disadvantage the -- the  
18 minority that get strict scrutiny.

19 MR. BURSCH: Well, two thoughts on that,  
20 Justice Ginsburg. First, under Grutter, this Court made  
21 crystal clear that a Grutter plan is not about which  
22 minority group is being advantaged or disadvantaged.  
23 It's supposed to benefit the campus as a whole. And to  
24 the extent the claim is that preferences benefit certain  
25 classes of minorities and not others, you know, for

1 example, it benefits African Americans and Latinos, but  
2 not Asians, even though they're both discrete and  
3 insular underrepresented groups, that -- then it fails  
4 under Grutter. It can only be something that benefits  
5 everybody.

6 But more fundamentally, going back to your  
7 question about the origin of the doctrine, I think it's  
8 really important to understand why we have Hunter,  
9 because Hunter, remember, was decided before  
10 Washington v. Davis. And when you look at the face of  
11 the law in Akron, Ohio in Hunter, there's nothing in  
12 there that would trigger strict scrutiny. And so this  
13 Court was searching for another way to -- to strike down  
14 a law that removed an antidiscrimination provision and  
15 made it more difficult to reenact at the higher level of  
16 the political process. It needed something to fix that.

17 And our point is you can either construe it  
18 to do exactly that, that only antidiscrimination laws  
19 being struck down and moved to a higher level can  
20 satisfy a political restructuring doctrine, or you can  
21 look at it differently. You can say: Now that we've  
22 got Washington v. Davis and we all know what the intent  
23 was in Akron, that that is a simpler way to address  
24 this -- this problem and we really don't need the  
25 political restructuring doctrine at all anymore.

1           But the reason why we had the doctrine in  
2 Hunter is because strict scrutiny did not apply.

3           JUSTICE GINSBURG: You said that the  
4 district court found it was clear that there was no --  
5 there was no discriminatory intent, but that wasn't  
6 reviewed on appeal.

7           MR. BURSCH: No, it was not. But it wasn't  
8 a finding. It was actually more than that. It was at  
9 the summary judgment stage. The district court  
10 correctly concluded there wasn't even a question of  
11 disputed material fact as to whether intent was the  
12 primary motivation of the electorate.

13           Unless there are any further questions, I  
14 will reserve the balance of my time.

15           CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.  
16 Mr. Rosenbaum.

17           ORAL ARGUMENT OF MARK D. ROSENBAUM  
18 ON BEHALF OF THE CANTRELL RESPONDENTS

19           MR. ROSENBAUM: Mr. Chief Justice, and may  
20 it please the Court:

21           Let me begin, Justice Kennedy, with the  
22 questions you raise and then come to the question that  
23 Chief Justice Roberts raised.

24           To begin, Justice Kennedy, there's no way to  
25 distinguish the Seattle case from this case nor the

1 Hunter case. Both those cases have to be overruled.  
2 Here is why the Seattle case is -- is identical to this  
3 case. Both issues -- both cases involve  
4 constitutionally permissible plans which had as their  
5 objective obtaining diversity on campuses. Seattle was  
6 a K through 12 case. This case is a higher education  
7 case. But in both instances, the objective was to  
8 obtain diversity. No constitutional mandate to relieve  
9 past discrimination.

10 Rather, in fact, as the Court said, Seattle,  
11 Tacoma, and WASCO were attempting to deal with de facto  
12 segregation.

13 JUSTICE ALITO: Is that an accurate  
14 description of Seattle? I thought that in Seattle,  
15 before the school board adopted the bussing plan, the  
16 city was threatened with lawsuits by the Department of  
17 Justice, by the Federal government, and by private  
18 plaintiffs, claiming that the -- the previous pupil  
19 assignment plan was -- involved de jure segregation.  
20 Isn't that -- isn't that correct?

21 MR. ROSENBAUM: That's correct with respect  
22 to at least one of the districts, Justice Alito. But in  
23 terms of the program itself, there's no dispute that it  
24 was done pursuant to a plan for de facto segregation.  
25 Moreover, the question you asked, Justice Kennedy --

1 JUSTICE ALITO: I don't understand the  
2 answer to that question. As to Seattle itself, is it  
3 not the case that they were threatened with litigation?

4 MR. ROSENBAUM: Yes, but there'd been no  
5 finding, Justice Alito, of de jure segregation.

6 JUSTICE ALITO: And isn't it correct that  
7 the district court found that there was de jure  
8 segregation?

9 MR. ROSENBAUM: That is not correct.

10 JUSTICE ALITO: It didn't?

11 MR. ROSENBAUM: There was -- there was no  
12 finding whatsoever that there had been de jure  
13 segregation and that there was a constitutional  
14 imperative to correct that desegregation. It was an  
15 absolutely identical situation.

16 And regarding the accountability, Your Honor  
17 is correct that in Seattle what we were dealing with was  
18 an elected school board and here, as the Michigan brief  
19 says, as the Wayne State brief says, as the court  
20 specifically found at pages 326A and 327A of the record,  
21 this is a political process in which the regents were  
22 elected, have at all times maintained plenary authority  
23 over the admissions process itself, and that --

24 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, there are two  
25 things. Number one is it delegated to the faculty. And

1 number two, they're election -- they're elected only  
2 rarely and in staggered terms.

3 MR. ROSENBAUM: That -- that -- that is no  
4 question that that's correct, Your Honor. But the --  
5 the ordinary process itself is a politically accountable  
6 process. That's what the district court found when it  
7 looked at how the system worked. And in fact --

8 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: What if the -- what  
9 if the -- the board delegated to the various  
10 universities the authority to develop their own  
11 admissions programs?

12 MR. ROSENBAUM: It couldn't alter -- I'm  
13 sorry, Chief Roberts.

14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: And they did, and  
15 then after several years they decided, you know, we  
16 don't like the way it's working; they're adopting too  
17 many racial preference programs; we're going to revoke  
18 the delegation.

19 MR. ROSENBAUM: Absolutely fine.

20 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Why is that any --  
21 any different?

22 MR. ROSENBAUM: Because the difference is  
23 that in the Seattle case, in this case, and in the  
24 Hunter case, what's going on is a change from the  
25 ordinary political process, which Your Honor perfectly

1 described. They can change it today. They can go to  
2 a -- an affirmative action plan today, repeal it  
3 tomorrow, come back.

4 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So if there were a  
5 provision in the Michigan Constitution that says the  
6 board of regents is authorized to enact these programs,  
7 in other words delegated from the people in the  
8 Constitution to the board, and then the people change  
9 the delegation by saying, no, it's no longer -- we're no  
10 longer going to leave that up to the board, we're going  
11 to make the decision ourselves in the Constitution, how  
12 is that any different?

13 MR. ROSENBAUM: It is different, Your Honor,  
14 because of the racial nature of the decision. Under  
15 their theory, under their theory, the people of the  
16 State -- of a State could amend their constitution, put  
17 in the legislature two rooms, one for racial matters,  
18 one for all other sorts of matters, and say to any  
19 entrant who wants to enter that first room: You may do  
20 so, but first you have to pay an exorbitant cover charge  
21 and then you have to mount multiple stairs, flights of  
22 stairs, just to begin the process of enacting  
23 constitutionally permissible legislation.

24 Or think about it in a desegregation case.  
25 A student comes in -- two students come into the

1 admissions committee. One says -- and the admissions  
2 committee says: We have one question for you, one  
3 question for you since you're here to talk about a  
4 legitimate -- a legitimate factor in pursuit of  
5 diversity. Here's the question: Do you want to talk  
6 about your race, your race in the context of other  
7 factors? And if the answer is yes, that student is  
8 shown the door, told go raise between 5 and \$15 million,  
9 repeal Prop 2 and then you can come back to make -- make  
10 the case.

11           Whereas the student who says, no, I've just  
12 got another legitimate factor, maybe geography. Maybe  
13 alumni confections -- connections, whatever that is,  
14 that person is permitted to make the case. It is a  
15 racial distinction.

16           Now, Chief Justice Roberts, you're certainly  
17 onto something in terms of are there race-neutral  
18 methods to get this done? Of course there are. The  
19 State constitution itself could be altered so that a  
20 different committee or a different set of individuals  
21 could -- could make the decision that they don't like  
22 the way the regents are doing it. Or they could do it  
23 the old-fashioned way, the way that the politically  
24 accountable system works, which is to say, we are going  
25 to work at these universities, that's how affirmative

1 action involving race happened in the first place.  
2 That's at pages 270 to 271A and 282A to 293A. They  
3 worked for years to make that happen.

4 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, I thought the whole  
5 purpose of strict scrutiny was to say that if you want  
6 to talk about race, you have a much higher hurdle to  
7 climb than if you want to talk about something else.  
8 Now, you can argue that strict scrutiny should only  
9 apply to minorities and not to students who are not  
10 minorities, but I thought the Court decided that a long  
11 time ago.

12 MR. ROSENBAUM: Exactly.

13 JUSTICE ALITO: So I don't know why that's a  
14 hard question that you asked about the student who says,  
15 I want to talk about race. What if it's a white student  
16 who comes in and says: I want to talk about race; I'm  
17 white and therefore you should admit me, you should give  
18 me preference. The State can't say, no, we don't want  
19 to hear that?

20 MR. ROSENBAUM: The State can say, we don't  
21 want to hear that whether it comes from a white person  
22 or a black person or whomever, if in fact, they are not  
23 doing it on a race-specific basis. You're exactly  
24 right, of course, about strict scrutiny. And the  
25 programs in this case, indeed, the only programs in this

1 case that are effective, are those that have passed  
2 strict scrutiny --

3 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, I don't understand  
4 your answer then. If the student -- one student comes  
5 in and says I want to talk about how well I play the  
6 cello, all right, we'll listen to that. I want to come  
7 in and talk about why I as a white person should get a  
8 preference; you have to listen to that because you're  
9 listening to the -- to the talk about the cello, too?

10 MR. ROSENBAUM: You do, Your Honor, when the  
11 program has passed the strict scrutiny test that we're  
12 talking about. And that's the only sort of program that  
13 is at issue in this case. Of course you're correct. If  
14 it is a Gratz type program, if it's unconstitutional, if  
15 it's a quota system, you don't have to listen to anybody  
16 talk about race. But we are only dealing with  
17 constitutionally permissible programs. Why it is  
18 impossible, impossible to distinguish Seattle?

19 And this argument about Hunter, page -- page  
20 389 of the Hunter decision is the reason Hunter was  
21 decided. It's not a Washington v. Davis case.

22 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Well, I'm not sure I  
23 understood the answer you gave to the Chief Justice's  
24 hypothetical. Maybe I misunderstood the hypothetical.

25 Suppose the board of regents have a rule,

1 it's written, it's a rule, that the faculty makes a  
2 determination on whether there should be affirmative  
3 action.

4 MR. ROSENBAUM: Yes.

5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Five -- and the faculty  
6 votes for affirmative action. Three years later, the  
7 board of trustees said we're abolishing the rule; we're  
8 doing that ourselves. Violation?

9 MR. ROSENBAUM: Assuming that the regents  
10 say that's fine, no problem whatsoever, no problem  
11 whatsoever. That's the ordinary political process.

12 JUSTICE KENNEDY: So the -- so the regents  
13 can take it away from the faculty?

14 MR. ROSENBAUM: The regents have plenary --

15 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But can the legislature  
16 take it away from the regents?

17 MR. ROSENBAUM: Not under the Michigan  
18 Constitution, because the Michigan Constitution --

19 JUSTICE KENNEDY: No, no. Hypothetical  
20 case.

21 MR. ROSENBAUM: Okay. Under -- who's got  
22 the authority here? The -- the legislature can take it  
23 away. That's not a problem in a -- in a situation where  
24 that's part of the ordinary process.

25 JUSTICE KENNEDY: But then the voters can't

1 take it away. At what point is it that your objection  
2 takes force? I just don't understand -- I just don't  
3 understand --

4 MR. ROSENBAUM: Where there is --

5 JUSTICE KENNEDY: -- the declension here --

6 MR. ROSENBAUM: My apologies, Your Honor.

7 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Or the crescendo, whatever  
8 you call it.

9 (Laughter.)

10 MR. ROSENBAUM: Both are music to my ears.

11 The point, Justice Kennedy, is that the --  
12 the people of the State have multiple options available  
13 to them if they don't like the way the universities are  
14 operating. But the one option they don't have is to  
15 treat racial matters different from all other matters.

16 The example that you gave --

17 JUSTICE KENNEDY: That applies in the Chief  
18 Justice's hypothetical or my revision of it as between  
19 the board of regents and the faculty or between the  
20 faculty and the legislature.

21 MR. ROSENBAUM: Exactly. And the problem --  
22 the problem that the restructuring process gets at,  
23 because of the particular concern that this Court has  
24 shown with respect to the political process, that the  
25 political process itself not become outcome

1 determinative; that the political process itself be a  
2 place where we can air these discussions, but not create  
3 it in a separate and unequal way to make the -- to  
4 actually make the decision itself through the process.  
5 So --

6 JUSTICE KENNEDY: Why is -- why is the  
7 faculty administration, a faculty decision, any less  
8 outcome determinative than what the voters would say?  
9 I -- I think there would be people that might disagree  
10 with your empirical assumption.

11 MR. ROSENBAUM: Then I'm not explaining it  
12 clearly. The first -- the -- when the faculty makes the  
13 decision, Justice Kennedy, that's part of the ordinary  
14 political process. Nobody's allowed to win all the  
15 time. No one has to win all the time. No one has to  
16 win all the time. Whatever it is, it is. That's the  
17 ordinary political process. That's how we use the  
18 political process.

19 The problem with -- with mounting a racial  
20 classification within the Constitution itself is that  
21 then -- that takes the ordinary political process to the  
22 extraordinary political process. That's --

23 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: So I mean, you could  
24 say that the whole point of something like the Equal  
25 Protection Clause is to take race off the table. Is it

1 unreasonable for the State to say, look, race is a  
2 lightning rod. We've been told we can have affirmative  
3 action programs that do not take race into account.  
4 Socioeconomic diversity, elimination of alumnae  
5 preferences, all of these things. It is very expensive.  
6 Whenever we have a racial classification, we're  
7 immediately sued. So why don't we say we want you to do  
8 everything you can without having racial preferences.

9           Now, if the litigation determines that we're  
10 required to have racial preferences, this statute has an  
11 exception and -- and allows that. But starting out, we  
12 want to take race off the table and try to achieve  
13 diversity without racial preferences.

14           MR. ROSENBAUM: The problem, Your Honor, as  
15 this Court stated as recently as last term in the Fisher  
16 case, is that under the Equal Protection Clause race is  
17 not all the way off the table. And the problem with  
18 Proposal 2 is that the substance and the message that it  
19 communicates is that because of the separate and unequal  
20 political track that is created with respect to the  
21 extraordinary steps that have to be taken, the message  
22 is that, even where race is being utilized as one of  
23 many factors in a constitutionally permissible way, the  
24 message that is being communicated is that all uses of  
25 race are illegitimate, all uses of race are -- are off

1 the table, that "race" itself is a dirty word.

2 JUSTICE SCALIA: Why -- why doesn't the  
3 Fourth Amendment violate the rule you're saying -- or  
4 the 14th Amendment violate the rule that you're  
5 proposing? I mean, I'm a minority and I want laws that  
6 favor my minority. Not just in university; everywhere.  
7 My goodness, I can't have that through the normal  
8 legislative process. I have to get a constitutional  
9 amendment to do it, right?

10 MR. ROSENBAUM: That is correct, Your Honor.

11 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, so I guess -- I guess  
12 that on this subject of equal treatment of the races, we  
13 can eliminate racism just at the -- at the legislative  
14 level, can't we?

15 MR. ROSENBAUM: Your Honor, the underlying  
16 basis of the entire strict scrutiny doctrine in the 14th  
17 Amendment is to preclude the government, preclude the  
18 Legislative and Executive Branch, from making those  
19 determinations as absolute determinations.

20 The 14th Amendment sets the standards and  
21 the criteria by which we measure that. Of course you're  
22 correct. That's what the 14th Amendment does. It sets  
23 what the rules are in terms of how race is utilized.  
24 But what the Grutter case said --

25 JUSTICE SCALIA: And you can't change those

1 rules by normal legislation, correct?

2 MR. ROSENBAUM: That is correct.

3 JUSTICE SCALIA: So if you're a minority  
4 that wants favored treatment, you're just out of luck.

5 MR. ROSENBAUM: You have to use the ordinary  
6 political process. And that's all we're saying.

7 JUSTICE SCALIA: No, but the constitutional  
8 amendment is not the ordinary political process.

9 MR. ROSENBAUM: But the -- but the fact that  
10 it's a State constitutional amendment underscores my  
11 argument, which is that -- that in order for the -- for  
12 a -- the minority or any individual, and white,  
13 minority, whatever -- whatever the individual is, to say  
14 I want the same rule book, I want the same playing  
15 field, the problem with Proposal 2 is that it creates  
16 two playing fields.

17 JUSTICE ALITO: If Proposal 2 had been in  
18 the Michigan Constitution before any affirmative action  
19 program was adopted, would the result be the same?

20 MR. ROSENBAUM: It would, Your Honor,  
21 because -- because it would be building in this  
22 explicitly facial racial classification into the State  
23 Constitution. The problem are the separate and unequal  
24 systems that are being used to deal with race. And  
25 separate and unequal, under the 14th Amendment,

1 shouldn't come within ten feet of race.

2 JUSTICE SCALIA: It's not a racial  
3 classification. You should not refer to it that way.

4 MR. ROSENBAUM: It is a racial --

5 JUSTICE SCALIA: It's the prohibition of  
6 racial classifications.

7 MR. ROSENBAUM: No, Your Honor.

8 JUSTICE SCALIA: Every prohibition of racial  
9 classification is itself a racial classification?

10 MR. ROSENBAUM: No, Your Honor. The problem  
11 with Proposal 2 is that it is -- just as in Hunter, just  
12 as in Hunter -- it is an explicitly facial racial  
13 classification. It singles out race for different  
14 treatment.

15 My goodness, this was borne -- this campaign  
16 started three days after Grutter itself. The author  
17 said the purpose of it was to get rid of racial  
18 preferences.

19 JUSTICE SCALIA: Well, if that's how you're  
20 using racial classification, I thought it meant, you  
21 know, it's directed at blacks or Asians --

22 MR. ROSENBAUM: No.

23 JUSTICE SCALIA: -- or -- no. In that  
24 sense, the 14th Amendment itself is a racial  
25 classification, right?

1 MR. ROSENBAUM: Well, it sets the  
2 standard --

3 JUSTICE SCALIA: In that sense, the 14th  
4 Amendment itself is a racial classification. No?

5 MR. ROSENBAUM: I don't agree with that,  
6 Your Honor, because I'm measuring it as a racial  
7 classification by the 14th Amendment. And that comes  
8 back to Justice Ginsburg's argument.

9 His argument, his revisionist history of  
10 Hunter, his -- was -- was about motive. But, Your  
11 Honor, that had nothing to do with the problem in this  
12 case. When the Court looked -- when the district court  
13 looked -- may I finish my answer, Chief Justice Roberts?

14 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Yes.

15 MR. ROSENBAUM: When the court looked at  
16 this particular issue, the concern was the way that it  
17 racially divided the political process itself. What he  
18 is saying is that, well, there may be all sorts of  
19 motives. That's a rational basis test, and that has  
20 nothing to do with the racial classification.

21 The definition I'm using, Justice Scalia, is  
22 this Court's definition of a racial classification, for  
23 which all sorts trigger strict scrutiny. Thank you very  
24 much.

25 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.

1 Ms. Driver?

2 ORAL ARGUMENT OF SHANTA DRIVER

3 ON BEHALF OF THE COALITION TO DEFEND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

4 RESPONDENTS

5 MS. DRIVER: Mr. Chief Justice, and may it  
6 please the Court:

7 We ask this Court to uphold the Sixth  
8 Circuit decision to reaffirm the doctrine that's  
9 expressed in Hunter-Seattle, and to bring the 14th  
10 Amendment back to its original purpose and meaning,  
11 which is to protect minority rights against a white  
12 majority, which did not occur in this case.

13 JUSTICE SCALIA: My goodness, I thought  
14 we've -- we've held that the 14th Amendment protects all  
15 races. I mean, that was the argument in the early  
16 years, that it protected only -- only the blacks. But I  
17 thought we rejected that. You -- you say now that we  
18 have to proceed as though its purpose is not to protect  
19 whites, only to protect minorities?

20 MS. DRIVER: I think it is -- it's a measure  
21 that's an antidiscrimination measure.

22 JUSTICE SCALIA: Right.

23 MS. DRIVER: And it's a measure in which the  
24 question of discrimination is determined not just by --  
25 by power, by who has privilege in this society, and

1 those minorities that are oppressed, be they religious  
2 or racial, need protection from a more privileged  
3 majority.

4 JUSTICE SCALIA: And unless that exists, the  
5 14th Amendment is not violated; is that right? So if  
6 you have a banding together of various minority groups  
7 who discriminate against -- against whites, that's okay?

8 MS. DRIVER: I think that --

9 JUSTICE SCALIA: Do you have any case of  
10 ours that propounds that view of the 14th Amendment,  
11 that it protects only minorities? Any case?

12 MS. DRIVER: No case of yours.

13 JUSTICE BREYER: Some people think that  
14 there is a difference between the plus and the minus.  
15 Some judges differ on that point. Some agree sort of  
16 with you, and some agree sort of not. All right? Let's  
17 think of those who agree sort of, and then I have a  
18 question. And you know this area better than I.

19 So think of Grutter. Grutter permits  
20 affirmative action. Think of the earlier cases. They  
21 permitted affirmative action where it was overcome, the  
22 effects of past discrimination, but probably not  
23 otherwise.

24 Now, that's what I want to know. Are there  
25 areas other than education where affirmative action

1 would not be forbidden to achieve a goal other than  
2 overcoming the effects? Have you got the question? And  
3 does an answer come to mind?

4 MS. DRIVER: I think that affirmative action  
5 programs could -- could be permissible under employment.  
6 For instance --

7 JUSTICE BREYER: Okay. So there are a set.

8 MS. DRIVER: That's right.

9 JUSTICE BREYER: Fine. If there are a set,  
10 what I -- what I'd like you to explain, if -- if you can  
11 take a minute, is think of how a city is set up. There  
12 are a vast number of administrators. There are a vast  
13 number of programs. It could be an administrator  
14 somewhere says he'd like to give a preference, maybe for  
15 good reason. But then the city council votes no,  
16 because there are other ways of doing it, by, you know,  
17 first come, first served or some other criteria that  
18 doesn't use race.

19 Are all of those unlawful? Every one? Do  
20 you have to leave it up to the -- no matter what the  
21 subject, no matter what the -- or are you going to draw  
22 a line somewhere? Is there a line that you could draw  
23 that would take your case on the right side from your  
24 point of view, but would say we're not giving power to  
25 every administrator in the city to decide on his own

1 whether to use racial preferences without a possibility  
2 of a higher-up veto --

3 MS. DRIVER: I think --

4 JUSTICE BREYER: -- which I don't think you  
5 want to say, but maybe you do.

6 MS. DRIVER: No. I think these are very  
7 fact-based determinations. And so, somebody could make  
8 a decision that they wanted to use what you're calling  
9 racial preferences. And that could mean a range of  
10 things, and that could be subject to a veto higher up.  
11 Yeah, I agree with you.

12 JUSTICE BREYER: So what's the line? Is  
13 there any line that you can say, look here. We were  
14 trying to be very helpful, and all of a sudden they put  
15 this thing on the ballot, you can't even get it through.  
16 Okay? That's your basic point.

17 But -- but if you think of -- you have to  
18 write something, and that something has tremendous  
19 effect all over the place. So what kind of line is  
20 there, in your opinion?

21 MS. DRIVER: I think Hunter-Seattle provides  
22 the line. I think it says that if you have a law that  
23 has a racial focus, and that law, part of proving that  
24 it has a racial focus, is that it takes a benefit that  
25 inures to minorities and it removes that benefit and it

1 restructures the political process and places a special  
2 burden on minorities to re-ascertain that right, yeah, I  
3 think that's a proper rule. Because it's -- it's --

4 JUSTICE ALITO: Can I -- can I come back to  
5 the question that the Chief Justice and Justice Kennedy  
6 were asking before? Essentially, it's their question.  
7 Let's say that the -- the decision about admissions  
8 criteria across the board is basically delegated to the  
9 faculty. All right? And the faculty adopts some sort  
10 of affirmative action plan. And now that is overruled  
11 in favor of a colorblind approach at various levels  
12 going up the ladder.

13 So maybe it's overruled by the -- the dean  
14 of -- by a dean, or maybe it's overruled by the  
15 president of the university. Maybe it's overruled by  
16 the regents. Maybe, if State laws allowed, it's -- it's  
17 overruled by an executive department of the State.  
18 Maybe it's overruled by the legislature through ordinary  
19 legislation. Maybe it's overruled through a  
20 constitutional amendment.

21 At what point does the political  
22 restructuring doctrine kick in?

23 MS. DRIVER: I think in this case, the  
24 difference between what other groups can do in order to  
25 get preferential treatment for their sons and daughters

1 and what racial minorities are subject to, the level of  
2 distinction places such a high burden on minorities.

3 JUSTICE ALITO: Well, that really -- that  
4 really isn't responsive to my question. Let's say  
5 exactly what was done here is done at all of these  
6 levels. At what point does the doctrine kick in? When  
7 it goes from the faculty to the dean? From the dean to  
8 the president, et cetera, et cetera? Where does this  
9 apply?

10 MS. DRIVER: I think it depends on where it  
11 is that minorities face a heavier and special burden.

12 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: It can't be that,  
13 because the normal political process imposes burdens on  
14 different groups. I thought the line was a very simple  
15 one, which is if the normal academic decision-making is  
16 in the dean, the faculty, at whatever level, as long as  
17 the normal right to control is being exercised, then  
18 that person could change the decision.

19 So if they delegate most admissions  
20 decisions, as I understand from the record, to the  
21 faculty, but they still regularly, besides race, veto  
22 some of those decisions, and race is now one of them,  
23 then the Board of Regents can do that normally. So  
24 could the president, if that's the way it's normally  
25 done.

1                   It's when the process is -- political  
2 process has changed specifically and only for race, as a  
3 constitutional amendment here was intended to do, that  
4 the political doctrine is violated. Have I restated?

5                   MS. DRIVER: You have, you restated it very  
6 well, and I agree with you in principle.

7                   JUSTICE KENNEDY: But I still don't  
8 understand your answer to Justice Alito's question.  
9 Suppose the dean has authority in the bylaws of the  
10 university to reverse what the faculty does, but you  
11 have a dean who just does not like affirmative action.  
12 He is dead against it. And he makes the decision to  
13 reverse the faculty. Do you have a remedy?

14                   MS. DRIVER: I don't think it -- I don't  
15 think Hunter-Seattle applies.

16                   JUSTICE KENNEDY: All right. Then you have  
17 Justice Alito's question. Then it's the president of  
18 the university, and then it's the legislature.

19                   MS. DRIVER: I think you need two things: I  
20 think you need the decisionmaking -- the decisionmaking  
21 body. If the University of Michigan regents decided  
22 tomorrow to eliminate affirmative action programs and  
23 there was no Prop 2, they have the legal right to do  
24 that. They are the decision-making body.

25                   And minorities still could go and lobby the

1 regents, still could go and talk about the questions of  
2 racial equality difference --

3 JUSTICE ALITO: But would that be true --  
4 I'm sorry. Would that be true if they had never gotten  
5 involved in admissions criteria before? They have the  
6 authority, but they left that to the university  
7 officials.

8 MS. DRIVER: I think if they have the  
9 plenary authority to do that, yeah, I think that, again,  
10 if they wanted to eliminate affirmative action programs  
11 and they had that plenary authority and it was  
12 guaranteed by the Michigan State Constitution and it had  
13 existed for 150 years, and they chose to enter this  
14 area, I think --

15 JUSTICE ALITO: I don't see how that is  
16 consistent with Justice Sotomayor's answer to my  
17 question. Don't the people of Michigan have -- don't  
18 the people of Michigan have plenary authority?

19 MS. DRIVER: In this case, the particular --  
20 it's -- they are applying that plenary authority in --  
21 or in a way that is racially focused, and creates a  
22 political process that is disadvantageous to minorities.

23 JUSTICE BREYER: I'm not saying instead of  
24 political process. Don't let me put words in your  
25 mouth. Think what you think here.

1           You say where the authority is divided in a  
2 certain way, and that is true under the constitution of  
3 the State. So the State government lacks the power.  
4 And then you have to take the power from the people and  
5 change the constitution, and when you do that in respect  
6 to a benefit, then, in respect to benefits,  
7 Washington -- you know, Seattle and Hunter kick in.  
8 See, where are not dealing with past discrimination.

9           MS. DRIVER: This -- what we're talking  
10 about in terms of affirmative action are  
11 constitutionally permissible programs that were shown to  
12 this Court to be the only way to achieve racial  
13 diversity and integration at the University of Michigan.  
14 And whether you -- whether you explain that by looking  
15 at the reality of the inequality in education for black  
16 and white Michigan or whatever it is that you come up  
17 with that requires that, the university has shown that  
18 this is the only way to achieve diversity in which  
19 racial diversity is a part of the -- is a part of the  
20 quotient.

21           And so to take away that right from the  
22 university and from the regents -- and I just want to go  
23 back to one of the questions that was answered. If you  
24 look at the law schools, the medical schools, the  
25 professional schools now in the State of Michigan,

1 there's been a precipitous drop in underrepresented  
2 minority enrollment in those schools. We are going back  
3 to the resegregation of those schools because of the  
4 elimination of affirmative action.

5 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: To what extent -- to  
6 what extent does your argument depend -- I thought both  
7 Hunter and Seattle speak in these terms -- that the  
8 policies that are more difficult to enact are beneficial  
9 for the minority group.

10 MS. DRIVER: The -- -- say that -- I'm  
11 sorry. Can you repeat --

12 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: To what extent does  
13 your argument depend upon the assumption that the  
14 programs that you say are now more difficult to enact  
15 are beneficial to the minority group?

16 MS. DRIVER: I think it's an important  
17 component part, because I think it's in the benefit to  
18 the minority group that it's especially important --

19 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Well, why do you --

20 MS. DRIVER: -- that the political process  
21 be on a level field.

22 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Right. What if the  
23 question of whether it's a benefit to the minority group  
24 is more open to debate, whether it's through the  
25 mismatch theory that Taylor and Sander I guess have

1 adopted, or other theories? Do we have to assume in  
2 your favor that these definitely are beneficial to  
3 particular minority groups?

4 MS. DRIVER: Certainly the minority voters  
5 of Michigan believe them to be, because 90 percent of  
6 black voters in Michigan voted against Prop 2. And I  
7 think that that's a clear indication of the popularity  
8 of these programs and the perceived benefit of these  
9 programs.

10 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: There may be a  
11 difference between popularity and benefit. In other  
12 words, you want us to assume that the programs are  
13 beneficial to a minority group?

14 MS. DRIVER: Yes. And they are beneficial  
15 to minority groups. They may -- they may serve to  
16 provide benefits for the population beyond minority  
17 groups, but they are a benefit if they --

18 JUSTICE SCALIA: Your opponent says  
19 otherwise. He says that minority students have taken  
20 tougher courses, they have been better qualified to be  
21 admitted, and all sorts of other benefits. So it's  
22 certainly a debatable question.

23 MS. DRIVER: It's a debatable question in  
24 another forum in a different case, and in fact I think  
25 that case was the Grutter case.

1           This case isn't about -- isn't just about  
2 whether or not affirmative action benefits minorities.  
3 It's also the restructuring of the political process and  
4 the special burden that's placed on minorities. It's  
5 not -- if you want to go back to debating the -- whether  
6 affirmative action --

7           JUSTICE SCALIA: You're changing your  
8 answer, then. Your answer to the Chief was it does  
9 depend and now you are saying it doesn't depend on  
10 whether it benefits minorities at all; it's just whether  
11 it places a -- a greater burden on minorities to change  
12 it. Which is it?

13           MS. DRIVER: No, I --

14           JUSTICE SCALIA: One or the other?

15           MS. DRIVER: I think it's a two-part test.  
16 I think the first, the first thing that you look at is,  
17 is there a racial focus to the law, and is the benefit  
18 that's been taken away something that inures to  
19 minorities. And I think the second part of the test,  
20 and that's why I think Seattle/Hunter is such a narrow  
21 doctrine, is whether there also has been a restructuring  
22 of the political process and a special burden placed on  
23 minorities. It requires both.

24           CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel.

25           Mr. Bursch, you have 4 minutes remaining.

1 REBUTTAL ARGUMENT OF JOHN J. BURSCH

2 ON BEHALF OF THE PETITIONER

3 MR. BURSCH: Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice.

4 I'm going to start with a sentence from  
5 Crawford, decided the same day as Seattle, where this  
6 Court defined what a racial classification is: A racial  
7 classification either says or implies that persons are  
8 to be treated differently on account of race." It  
9 doesn't say anything about laws with or without a racial  
10 focus. And we think that is the test that ultimately  
11 should come out of the decision in this case.

12 Now, my friends on the other side disagree  
13 with that, because if that's the test Section 26 is  
14 constitutional. And so they draw this false dichotomy  
15 between laws that involve race and laws that don't  
16 involve race; we will put them in two separate chambers  
17 of the legislature and charge a fee if you want to talk  
18 about -- about race.

19 And we know that can't be right, because of,  
20 Chief Justice Roberts, your observation that the whole  
21 point of equal protection is to take race off the table  
22 when everyone is being treated the same. That's why  
23 they can't --

24 JUSTICE GINSBURG: You quoted -- you quoted  
25 from Crawford.

1 MR. BURSCH: Yes.

2 JUSTICE GINSBURG: And there is an opposing  
3 quote in Seattle itself on page, what is it, 486?

4 MR. BURSCH: Yes.

5 JUSTICE GINSBURG: "When the State's  
6 allocation of power places unusual burdens on the  
7 ability of racial groups to enact legislation designed  
8 to overcome the special condition of prejudice, the  
9 governmental action seriously curtails the operation of  
10 those political processes ordinarily to be relied on to  
11 protect minorities."

12 And it quotes Carolene Products. So -- and  
13 then the following sentence is: "In the most direct  
14 sense, this implicates the judiciary's special role, not  
15 of treating the individuals as individuals, but the  
16 judiciary's special role in safeguarding the interests  
17 of those groups that are relegated to a position of  
18 political powerlessness."

19 So the rationale of Seattle is that notion  
20 that we can't put hurdles in the way of a disadvantaged  
21 minority.

22 MR. BURSCH: Justice Ginsburg, there is two  
23 problems with that. First that's where the Respondent's  
24 theory most closely knocks up against Grutter, because  
25 you are right: under Seattle and Hunter you've got to

1 have a policy designed for the purpose of primarily  
2 benefitting the minority. But if that's the policy, it  
3 violates Grutter, which is supposed to benefit everyone.

4 But the bigger problem is if you treat a --

5 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: Diversity does, but when  
6 you take away a tool for diversity that's what Seattle  
7 is saying is wrong.

8 MR. BURSCH: Right, but the bigger  
9 problem --

10 JUSTICE SOTOMAYOR: You can't take the tool  
11 away simply because it may include race as a factor,  
12 simply because you are changing the playing field.

13 MR. BURSCH: But Justice Sotomayor, the  
14 biggest problem with Respondents' test, with applying  
15 the literal language of Seattle, is that as I said, the  
16 Federal Fair Housing Act, the Equal Credit Act, a State  
17 equal protection law that mentions -- all of these  
18 things fall in the category of laws dealing with race.  
19 Some are discriminatory.

20 JUSTICE ALITO: Seattle and this case both  
21 involve constitutional -- Seattle and this case both  
22 involve constitutional amendments. So why can't the  
23 law -- the law be drawn -- the line be drawn there? If  
24 you change the allocation of power in one of these less  
25 substantial ways, that's one thing; but when you require

1 a constitutional amendment that's really a big deal.

2 MR. BURSCH: Because that would still  
3 invalidate the Michigan Equal Protection Clause which  
4 has a racial focus that says you cannot discriminate  
5 based on race or sex, and yet no one would argue it  
6 should be subject to strict scrutiny.

7 JUSTICE BREYER: That's the benefit to a  
8 minority group. But what I'm thinking is go read the  
9 cases. You yourself seem to say these cases seem to  
10 apply alike to the benefits or to the discrimination  
11 against it. I mean, there is lots of language in  
12 Seattle.

13 MR. BURSCH: Right.

14 JUSTICE BREYER: You come -- now, suppose  
15 you take that and say, all right, it was meant in  
16 context; but the context includes constitutional  
17 amendments because with the constitutional amendment you  
18 are restructuring. Now you would lose on that theory;  
19 but there would be a limitation on the extent to which  
20 the people have the right to move powers around.

21 MR. BURSCH: Justice Breyer, the limitation  
22 has to be not only that, but also that you are repealing  
23 an antidiscrimination law, not an equal treatment law.  
24 Or again, otherwise the State equal protection clause  
25 has to fall. So to the extent that I am right, that is

1 a way that you can narrow Hunter and Seattle, and  
2 section 26 has to survive. If I am wrong about that,  
3 then respectfully Seattle and Hunter should be  
4 overruled. Either way, it does not violate equal  
5 protection to require equal treatment. Thank you.

6 CHIEF JUSTICE ROBERTS: Thank you, counsel,  
7 counsel. The case is submitted.

8 (Whereupon at 2:00 p.m., the case in the  
9 above-entitled matter was submitted.)

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