

# The Supreme Court's Latest Whitelash is a Disaster for Us All

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## NEWS

The Babcock Foundation is alarmed by the Supreme Court's decision to strike down affirmative action. As Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson wrote in her dissent, "The only way out of this morass—for all of us—is to stare at racial disparity unblinkingly, and then do what evidence and experts tell us is required to level the playing field and march forward together, collectively striving to achieve true equality for all Americans."

To be certain, America became a superpower by exploiting the free labor of Black people on land stolen from Indigenous people. Wealthy white property-owning men created the laws, regulations, customs and structures that delivered benefits to them at the expense of everyone else. It worked then and it continues to work now. As the saying goes, "Every system is perfectly designed to produce the results it is producing."

Affirmative action was an attempt at a course correction, a proven model to disrupt those systems. It enabled this country to build a pipeline of diverse talent, to facilitate not only education for students who'd experienced systemic racism, but also connections to networks that provide gateways to opportunity. Nowhere are these relationships more critical to progress than in the South. This ruling will trigger a backward lurch to an odious era when higher education, and the opportunities it affords, were reserved for a privileged class. It will spark countless lawsuits intended to erode racial equity in all aspects of American life.

As an organization working in the South, we see first-hand how white supremacy continually reinvents itself to maintain the status quo. And this latest example of "whitelash" against racial progress is deeply personal for me, a Black son of the Deep South admitted to the University of New Orleans with a full scholarship. My undergraduate degree enabled admission to

Tulane University, where I earned an MBA. These were opportunities not only to attain mastery in my study area, but also to foster relationships that opened doors – first to the world of research, then a role in the mayor’s office, a career at Tulane and now, philanthropy. For me, affirmative action was a catalyst – just as it has been for countless students of color - providing an opportunity to build a career, take care of my family, participate in civil society and contribute to the well-being of my community.

While angered and dismayed by this decision, the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation remains steadfast in our pursuit of true racial equity and the fullest expression of democracy possible. Our grantee and philanthropic partners across 11 Southern states are working to build the kind of power that can forestall this tide of regressive manifestations of a white supremacist patriarchy. These are the people who carry forward the civil rights struggle of our elders, and they are providers of hope and light in an especially dark chapter of our history. We will continue the fight.

## Places

Alabama, Appalachia, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee

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