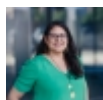


The Supreme Court Got It Wrong: Who We Are Does Matter ^[1]

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Fellows from the Yale Ciencia Academy, a program that promotes diversity in science.

Yesterday's Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) ruling on race-conscious admissions [3] did not come as a surprise. But it still hurt.

Last week, I welcomed 30 talented students from across the U.S. and from diverse identities and life experiences to Yale. They came for a few days of community-building, leadership development, and career planning as part of the Yale Ciencia Academy [4]—a program I founded and lead. The joy of celebrating their successes and contributions in science soon turned to frustration, sadness, and anger when I heard that SCOTUS had struck down affirmative action with a 6-3 vote.

The Supreme Court got it wrong. Their decision ignores an extensive body of studies [5] demonstrating racial inequity in education, health, and wealth. For 60 years, affirmative action was an effective tool for leveling the playing field and enriching the diversity of college graduates and the social mobility of individuals. Its reversal sends several toxic messages. Among them, that our cultural identities and lived experiences are not an important facet of who we are as learners and scholars; that student body diversity is not an aspect that institutions should value when establishing their learning environments.

As the leader of Ciencia Puerto Rico, I know for a fact that these messages are not true. **Ciencia Puerto Rico is based on a central tenet that our cultural heritage and social identity are important assets that enrich science and that should be celebrated and valued.** For many of the inspiring scientists and innovators in our community, a lack of financial resources or the constant interruptions of electrical outages and school closures did not hold back their education and training. Instead, through affirmative action, universities were able to value their experiences and what they brought to the table, in addition to their scientific skills.

Further, as a leader in educational administration at Yale, one of the most prestigious universities in the U.S., I have seen first-hand how everyone **benefits when there is diversity among students and faculty members.**

Although I am sad, angry, and afraid of what the Supreme Court's decision might mean for future generations of students and Puerto Rican scientists, I know that this is not the first or only affront we will face as a community. In moments like this, I am reminded and inspired by Silvio Rodríguez's Días y Flores [6], where he sings about how rage towards injustice, malice, and pettiness is his most precious gift. The anger and injustice I feel at this moment fuels me to continue working for what's right. Rather than despairing, the Supreme Court's decision has made things more clear. We need CienciaPR and the people within it more than ever.

I urge the members of our community, and especially the thousands of faculty and administrative leaders, to be vocal about the critical importance of diversity in STEM, to continue supporting efforts to diversify academia, and to push back against institutions' impulses to curtail diversity efforts for fear of lawsuits and judicial retaliation.

The Supreme Court's decision does not limit our ability to mentor students through institutional programs or nonprofits like [Científico Latino](#) [7] or [NRMN](#) [8]. It does not prevent universities from visiting Minority Serving Institutions like the ones in Puerto Rico or from seeking to establish lasting and sustainable relationships with them. It does not talk about preventing professional development, fellowships, summer, or postbac programs (at Yale I lead [PATHS](#) [9], [Yale Ciencia Academy](#) [4], and the [Intersections Science Fellows Symposium](#) [10], among others). It does not limit an institution's ability to celebrate the lived experiences and diverse identities of faculty and students and to show how much they value and appreciate their presence (see my colleague Mónica Feliú-Mójer's [Background to Breakthrough series](#) [11] for a good example on how to do this well). The SCOTUS decision does not prevent programs from advertising opportunities among networks like CienciaPR, [SACNAS](#) [12], [ABRCMS](#) [13], [SHPE](#) [14], and the many [BlackInX](#) [15] groups. Finally, please remind your peers in admissions that institutions are still able to ask students to talk about the value and benefits of their lived experiences in personal essays. For more information and ideas, check out this [comprehensive guidance on how to advance equity](#) [16] within the parameters of the current law, from the Othering and Belonging Institute.

Finally, to the students across the U.S. and Puerto Rico who are part of CienciaPR, if you, like me, have been feeling affected by the Supreme Court's decision, please remember: **where you come from will always be an important part of who you are as a scholar, a researcher, a scientist**. Reach out to a trusted mentor for guidance and support, and if you don't have one, use the CienciaPR community to find one.

Thank you to the CienciaPR community. Your presence, your voice, your connections and example are what we need to move us towards a more equitable tomorrow.

Giovanna

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