



For Immediate Release
Thu. Apr 01, 2010

[Print, Bookmark or Share](#)
[Return to News Home](#)

Civil Rights Attorney to Discuss Controversial Affirmative Action Case

John Payton, Director-Counsel and President of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, has been the lead counsel in some of the most significant civil rights cases in recent times. The list includes the affirmative action cases Gratz v. Bollinger and Grutter v. Bollinger.

Next Tuesday, April 6, he will visit The City College of New York (CCNY) to lead a panel discussion on the Grutter case, which resulted in a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision on law school admissions, and deliver The Skadden, Arps Lecture in Legal Studies. His lecture topic will be "Democracy & Diversity."

Both events are in The Great Hall of Shepard Hall and are free and open to the public. The panel discussion begins at 4 p.m., followed by the lecture at 6 p.m.

Mr. Payton's co-panelists on the Grutter v. Bollinger discussion will include: Dennis J. Shields, CCNY Acting Vice President, Student Affairs and Dr. Lynda G. Dodd, Joseph H. Flom Professor of Legal Studies and Political Science in The Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom Honors Program at CCNY.

Mr. Shields, then the assistant dean for admissions at the University of Michigan Law School, was a named defendant in Grutter v. Bollinger, in which the Supreme Court upheld the institution's affirmative action admissions policy.

Grutter v. Bollinger and its companion case, Gratz v. Bollinger, both filed in 1997, challenged the affirmative action admissions practices of the University of Michigan's law school and undergraduate programs, respectively. Mr. Payton represented Mr. Shields in Grutter v. Bollinger.

"(Payton) has been one of the most significant lawyers in terms of litigating important education civil rights issues in the last quarter century," Vice President Shields said. "We are privileged to welcome him to The City College because the student population we serve is directly impacted every day by the issues that he's been advocating for."

Educated at Pomona College and Harvard Law School, Mr. Payton clerked for The Hon. Cecil F. Poole, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California. He later became a partner in WilmerHale LLC's Litigation/Controversy Department and a member of its Government and Regulatory Litigation Practice Group. While there, Mr. Payton represented the American Legacy Foundation, a nonprofit that fights tobacco use, in its suit against a large tobacco company. He left the Washington law firm in 2008, when he was asked to be the next Director-Counsel and President of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund.



John Payton

Mr. Payton has also served as co-chair of the Lawyers Committee on Civil Rights and as president of the District of Columbia Bar.

Mr. Payton was selected by peers for inclusion in the 2005, 2006 and 2008 editions of "Best Lawyers in America" and was chosen by "Washingtonian" magazine as one of the "Top Lawyers" in Washington, DC in 2004. Last month, he was included on the National Law Journal's list of the past decade's 40 most influential attorneys in the United States -- one of only four chosen in the civil rights field.

Mr. Payton's discussion and lecture are co-sponsored by the CCNY Office of Student Affairs and The Skadden, Arps Honors Program.

About the Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom Honors Program

The Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom Honors Program was established at CCNY to increase diversity in law schools and the legal profession by providing talented students from diverse backgrounds with the education, groundwork and experience necessary to gain admission to, and succeed in, competitive law schools. It is supported by a commitment of \$9.6 million over 10 years from the eponymous New York-based global law firm. For more information on the program visit:

www.ccnycunyu.edu/skadden

Media Contact

Jay Mwamba P | 212-650-7580 E | jmwamba@ccny.cuny.edu

The City College of New York

160 Convent Avenue
New York, NY 10031
(212) 650 7000

:: Closings and Emergencies
:: Website Privacy Policy
:: Make This Website Talk
:: Text Only Version of Website

Find us on:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Youtube
- Flickr

Search with Google

:: [Contact the College](#) | [Telephone Directory](#) | [Donate to CCNY](#)
:: [Email Page to a Friend](#)

© Copyright, The City College of The City University of New York. All rights reserved.
Website Powered by: [CommonSpot](#)

