A Disturbing Trend in Law School Diversity

A collaboration between the Society of American Law Teachers (SALT) and the Lawyering in the Digital Age Clinic at the Columbia University School of Law.

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Rising Capacity: During the same 15-year period, the size of law school classes and the total number of law schools have increased, resulting in nearly 3,000 more first-year matriculants. There were 176 ABA-accredited law schools in 1992. As of 2008, that number has increased to 200 schools.
And yet...Declining Enrollment: The percentage representation of both groups has actually trended downward since 1993. These groups account for a significantly smaller percentage of the 2008 entering class than the 1993 entering class. Indeed, there was a 7.5% decrease in the proportion of African Americans in the 2008 class as compared with the 1993 class. There was a 11.7% decrease in the proportion of Mexican Americans in the 2008 class as compared with the proportion entering law school 15 years ago.
Therefore, over the past 15 years, African American and Mexican American representation in law school has decreased. African Americans and Mexican Americans have captured none of the nearly 3,000 additional seats that became available. Even in real numbers, there are fewer African-American and Mexican-American matriculants in the 2008 class (4,060 combined) than existed in the Fall 1993 class (4,142 combined).
Higher Shut Out Rate & Lost Opportunity Costs: African American and Mexican American applicants have higher shut out rates than Caucasian applicants, which means a higher percentage of applicants in those groups are denied acceptance by all the schools to which they apply.

Shut Out Rates From 2003 to 2008

Af-Am & Mex-Am are Shut out of Law School at Higher Rates

- Caucasian: 34% Shut Out Rate
- Mex-Am: 46% Shut Out Rate
- Af-Am: 61% Shut Out Rate

Admittance Rate

Roll over bars for exact values.
As they are shut out of the legal profession, African Americans and Mexican Americans must turn to other careers. As a result, they may face lost opportunity costs in the form of lower mean incomes. The net result is that for African Americans and Mexican Americans, law schools are not progressing towards more inclusive admissions. This affects everyone who is concerned about better education and a more representative