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Prop. 209 Stymies Outreach Event

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For Immediate Release
Thursday, November 21, 1996

Prop. 209 Stymies Outreach Event

SAN FRANCISCO - Over the past eight years, the Northern California ABA Approved Law Schools have jointly sponsored an annual *Law School Admission Fair for Students of Color*. The purpose of the program was to foster greater interest in law school in students of color and provide an opportunity for all potential law students to meet with the admissions representatives from the participating schools. Perhaps more importantly, the program was designed to present different perspectives on legal education and the law school admissions process as they pertain to students of color. This year's program was scheduled to be conducted at the University of California, Berkeley campus at Boalt Hall School of Law on Sunday, November 24, 1996.

However, on November 14, Boalt Hall officials notified the participating law schools that the program could not be conducted in its original form. They stated that passage of Prop. 209 (the so-called California Civil Rights Initiative) now prohibits the UC system from engaging in any outreach activities that target students on the basis of race, ethnicity or gender. After a day of consultation with various UC faculty, deans, administrators, and legal counsel at both the campus and system-wide level, it was concluded that the program on the 24th could be in violation of Prop. 209. Furthermore they concluded that "even if it is not in violation, it had the potential to be a flash-point for unwanted media attention."

As a result of this action, the name of the event was changed from "Law School Admission Fair for Students of Color" to simply "Law School Admission Fair" and certain adjustments to the agenda were made. Ostensibly, the goal was to allow the event to be held at Boalt Hall as planned, but with the least disruptive consequences, and to not place the School and campus in an untenable position vis-a-vis Prop. 209.

Officials at Golden Gate University School of Law are deeply distressed by this turn of events. With the passage of Prop. 209, the Law School looked forward to this year's *Law School Admissions Fair for Students of Color* as an excellent opportunity to advertise and reaffirm the law schools' collective commitment to affirmative action in legal education. Through their overly broad reading of Prop. 209, Boalt Hall has adversely affected this opportunity and placed the participating private law schools, whose admissions and recruiting practices remain unchanged by Prop. 209, in the unfortunate situation of appearing to condone this interpretation.

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