

# Affirmative action: reverse discrimination

[Sociology](#), [Social Issues](#)



Baker 1 Jennifer Baker ReverseDiscriminationEven though slavery has not been a part of America for over a century now, racial discrimination still exists in various parts of our culture. A controversial policy known as affirmative action was introduced in the 1960's to try and promote racial equality in society. Affirmative action is supposed to give minorities an equal chance in life by requiring minority employment, promotions, college acceptance, etc. At first this sounds like a perfect solution to racial discrimination, but in reality it is discrimination in reverse.

The term " affirmative action" was first used back in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy in an executive order designed to encourage racially mixed work forces. He stated that contractors should " take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed without regard to race, creed, color, or national origin. " (Affirmative Action) Then in 1964 the Civil Rights Act was passed which prohibited employment discrimination based on race or sex. The Civil Rights activists continued to argue that minorities weren't going to be able to compete with the more qualified applicants after having suffered discrimination for so long.

So in 1969 President Nixon made it a federal policy that a certain percentage of minorities must be hired in the workplace. Quickly affirmative Baker 2 action changed from being a policy that ensured equal opportunity to being one that gave unfair advantages to minorities. Affirmative action has remained controversial throughout the years, finding itself in and out of the courts. One of the most famous cases was Fullilove vs. Klutznick, which took place in 1980. The ruling stated that setting aside 10 percent of the hiring for minorities was constitutional.

Fortunately in 1996 proposition 209 was passed in California which ended affirmative action throughout the state. This was definitely a breakthrough, but the effects of affirmative action still linger. Many businesses and corporations still give preference to minorities even if they are less qualified. Employers fear that lawsuits will be filed stating that applicants were turned down because of their race. Renowned author and political activist Nathan Glazer, has been against affirmative action since its beginning. Glazer believes that the policy became controversial when it went beyond the ideas of the Civil Rights Act and started requiring employers to hire or promote a certain number of minority applicants or employees. In order to make sure that affirmative action was taking place, federal courts started enforcing “quotas” or “goals” for specific numbers of minority hiring. If these were met, lawsuits based on racial discrimination would be less valid. Says Glazer, “Affirmative action has become a matter of setting statistical goals or quotas by race for employment... the expectations of color blindness that was

Baker 3 paramount in the 1960's has been replaced by a rigid frame of numerical requirements.”(Glazer, 6) Those who oppose quotas and goals are said to be opposers of the Civil Rights Act, even though the affirmative action of today is not what the Civil Rights Act embodied. Glazer compares the misinterpretation of the Civil Rights Act to the desegregation of schools. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that segregated schools were unconstitutional. The idea of racially integrated schools, like racially integrated workplaces, is an excellent one.

However, the desegregation of schools has made busing a necessity. Busing, although not in use today, is when students are transferred to another school

for purposes of racial integration. It is costly to run all the buses and the commuting is hard on the students. Those opposing busing are said to agree with the segregation of schools. (Glazer, 10) The desegregation of schools was also mentioned in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Initially this seemed a fair proposal, but just as affirmative action became detrimental in the workplaces, integrating minorities in schools turned into numerical requirements.

Can you imagine busing programs being used across the United States today? The scary truth is that once one of these ideas is adopted in one city, any other city can then follow suit. For example, if Santa Cruz County were granted the right to require a 15 percent Hispanic student enrollment in all high schools within the county lines, any other city could also put this idea into practice based on precedent. The assignment of students Baker 4 based on race would cause an endless stream of angry parents. Fortunately busing is in the past, but affirmative action still has its claws in the school system.

A few weeks ago I was watching a 60 Minutes segment about a white girl who had filed a lawsuit against the University of Michigan claiming that they did not accept her because of her race. She had graduated from high school with a high GPA and had done everything in her power to become qualified for acceptance, yet she was denied admission. Further research showed that the University of Michigan does in fact admit students based on race. When reading applications, they award points according to criteria. For example, if one writes a good essay he is awarded 1 point and if he is a minority he is awarded 20 points.

Something is askew. Is being a minority 20 times more important than one's scholarly achievements? The University's argument is that students learn better in a racially diverse environment. UC Davis is another example. In 1988 only 40 percent of Davis' freshman class had been accepted solely on the basis of merit. While whites or Asian-Americans needed at least a 3.7 GPA in high school to be accepted, most minority applicants were accepted even though they met much lower standards. Sixty-six percent of the whites graduated while only twenty-seven percent of blacks did.

Even as recently as 1997 one was more likely to get accepted into UCLA if he were black or Hispanic than if he were white. The minority students had both lower GPAs and test scores. There were 5000 applicants for 200 seats which meant that some qualified students were rejected to make way for less qualified minorities. (Chances of Admission) This does not sound like an equal society. In 1995 the University of California system voted to end all affirmative action in admissions. When the changes took effect in 1998, minority enrollment went down drastically.

This seems prejudicial, but in reality it is fair and allows competition between the best, regardless of race. Everyone has an equal opportunity to receive an education. Public schools are free and it is mandatory that children attend them. Any student can take full advantage of their first 12 years of education and earn the GPA that will gain them admission into a college. If a student is born into a poor family there are scholarships and student loans available. Malcolm X is a perfect example of someone choosing to rise up and get an education.

Early in his life he made very unwise choices and ended up a pimp. When he was caught and thrown in jail he decided to begin educating himself. All he had was a dictionary but he used that dictionary and copied down every page. He went from being an illiterate street pimp to a very influential political leader. Affirmative action wasn't around in Malcom's time, but today everybody knows about it or has at least heard the term used. The first time I heard about affirmative action was when my brother first started working at Ralph's supermarket.

There was a black woman working there who was very slow and unproductive. One day my brother asked a fellow employee why the lady didn't lose her job and he said, " She's here for affirmative action reasons. " It turned out that whenever the lady was scheduled for a shift, another Baker 6 worker was also scheduled just to make up for the inefficiency of the black lady. My brother's boss feared a lawsuit if he fired her. This is ridiculous! It is a costly arrangement and unfair to the lady hired just to take up slack for someone else's laziness.

The policy of affirmative action basically states that in order to have an integrated society with equal opportunities for all races, minorities must be given an advantage to make up for their disadvantages. This means that less qualified applicants are getting hired and that students who do not meet the requirements for college admission are being accepted while qualified students are being turned away, all based on race. The Constitution bans the exclusion of minorities from anything based on color, therefore it is unconstitutional to exclude whites based on the same principles. The lesson of great decisions of the Supreme Court and the lesson of contemporary

history have been the same for at least a generation: discrimination on the basis of race is illegal, immoral, unconstitutional, inherently wrong, and destructive of democratic society. "(Gross, 1) Affirmative action is asking us to overlook all that we've learned and even fought for. Since affirmative action is such a hot topic and it affects our country as a whole, it's important to know how the presidential candidates view this subject. Vice President Al Gore tends to favor the policy while Governor George Bush disagrees with it.

Gore's idea is "mend it, don't end it." (Al Gore) He says that affirmative action has done a lot for women and minorities over the years and that to get rid of it would be a waste. He has yet Baker 7 to provide a way to fix it. Bush argues against quotas and goals and proposes an alternative to this policy, one he has used in Texas. He terms his system of ideas and policies "affirmative access". (George Bush) His idea leans more towards the original thinking of the Civil Rights Act and promoting equal opportunity. An example is that the top 10 percent of each high school's graduates be automatically accepted into the college of their choice.

Supposedly the idea has been effective over the past couple of years in Texas. Both candidates have good points. Affirmative action has helped reduce minorities' and women's suffering prejudices in the workplace and in school, but on the other hand it has been taken to the extreme and the prejudices have been turned around. We need to get back to the heart of what the original affirmative action intended. Racial prejudices need to be eliminated completely. We are all the same on the inside. There is no reason to consider outward appearances.

Employers and colleges only need to look at the applicants' qualifications when determining who will be hired or accepted. Affirmative action could also use a face-lift, like the name change Bush suggested. When the term "affirmative action" is used, it is looked upon negatively and is associated with discrimination. A law that requires the acceptance of the most qualified would allow competition of the best and eliminate the issues of minority prejudices. If no regard is given to race, as Kennedy intended, then only the most qualified applicant will be accepted. This is fair. Baker 8

Affirmative action has, in a way, become unfair to minorities. What is going to make them strive to be the best by working hard to get that promotion or studying hard to get those grades if they know they have an easy in? It has become an insult to minorities. Affirmative action is basically saying that they are not as smart or as qualified to be in good schools or in good jobs. It is saying that they need special help to get jobs and into colleges. It is a mockery. I know so many smart minority people who will transfer into better colleges than I and I'm as white as they come!

I sat next to a girl this semester who was so intelligent and had the most amazing style of writing. She was a mix of Indian and black. We must not insult these people by suggesting that we must compensate for their "inferiority" to make everyone equal in the eyes of the law. We were all created equal, and anyone, black, white, or any other race, can choose to set higher goals and achieve them just as Malcom X did. The old affirmative action is outdated. The premise that minorities should be given an advantage to make up for their disadvantages is ridiculous and irrelevant.



Most of the minorities coming into the work force were born after the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964 and therefore have not suffered disadvantages in school or the workplace. If anything, they have reaped the benefits of affirmative action. California and Texas, as well as a few other states, have begun to take major steps in eliminating affirmative action. It is a start but it needs to spread. We are all equal and absolutely no regard should be given to Baker 9 race in education or employment. It is time to end the old affirmative action. We need a policy that eliminates the issue of race completely.