

# Affirmative action topics



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### **Affirmative Action Sample 1**

Should a man be hired for his skills or for the color of his skin? Is racial diversity in the business world more important than the most qualified workers? Affirmative action has become an important topic in today's society to better diversify the different races in America. Affirmative action is a set of public policies that were designed for the elimination of discrimination toward race, color, sex, etc. These policies are under attack today because of the unfairness toward the more qualified people. Increasing opportunities for a minority that has suffered past discrimination is the cause for affirmative action, and for the reverse discrimination toward the majority. Many people view discrimination toward one race today to compensate for the discrimination of another race in the past as unfair. This reverse discrimination is unfair treatment toward the majority. Affirmative actions

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are policies created to give preferential treatment to the discriminated, but also discriminate as well.

Affirmative action was first referenced to in 1961 with the signing of Executive order 10925 (Brunner). With this the Committee on Equal Opportunity was created, and was mandated that projects financed with federal funds take affirmative action to ensure that hiring and employment practices are free of racial bias (Brunner). Three years later, in 1964 President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights act that prohibits any form of discrimination (Brunner). On June 4, 1965, President Johnson defined the concept of affirmative action saying, that civil rights laws alone are not enough to remedy discrimination (Brunner). Supporters of affirmative action say that the government must make up for the past by aiding groups that have been discriminated against. They argue that goals for hiring are necessary to integrate fields traditionally closed and minorities because of discrimination. Does achieving these goals help the American population?

College admissions are a great example of affirmative action. Colleges across the country must admit a certain number of minorities every year into their college. To admit minorities though comes at a cost to the majority. Colleges can only admit a certain number of people in every year as well as certain number of minorities. To do so they must turn down applicants from entering their school that may be more qualified or better fit for the education. Even medical schools are forced to follow the rules set to help minorities. Until recently, medical schools used a numeric point system to rank candidates in the admission process (Croasdale). However, the government ruled this form of admission process unconstitutional forcing

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schools to rethink their admission process (Croasdale). Some people view the racial preference in college admissions as a positive thing, saying that diversity is a benefit for all students (Bowen). While others view this as a discredited achievement toward the minorities as well as discrimination toward other races.

Some people find affirmative action as a good thing in today's society.

Arguments that are for affirmative action include social good: compensatory justice; and the ideal of equality (McElroy). Affirmative action drives a wedge between individual worth and economic success (McElroy). It is affirmative action that gives minorities the rights to many parts of life they did not have before. They are able to get jobs and get into colleges that they thought were impossible. Minorities as doctors are good because minority physicians are more likely to practice in medically underserved areas, improving access to care for these generally poor, minority communities (Croasdale).

Affirmative action in today's society has gotten out of hand. Minorities are receiving benefits that discriminate the majority in America. To repay a minority because of previous discriminations toward them is unfair punishment to the people that it affects today. Reverse discrimination should not be allowed to help diversify America in today's world. Affirmative action are policies set up to help the discriminated, however they discriminate toward the majority at the same time.

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## **Affirmative Action psychology Essay Sample 2**

Affirmative action and other race-conscious remedies were created to erase the differences in rights and opportunities defined by that color line. National anxiety about affirmative action has never been higher. That is saying a lot, considering how controversial affirmative action has been since it was introduced twenty-five years ago. The controversy starts with the identification of affirmative action with jobs, prime but elusive possessions in our market economy. Whether it raises hopes or anxiety, to the average American of every background, affirmative action means jobs. Employment, more than other areas, has given definition to affirmative action. The term was first applied to employment and for years applied only to job

discrimination. Although variations are used in education, government contracting, and voting rights, affirmative action and jobs go together in the public mind. Because there have never been enough jobs to go around, affirmative action has had a precarious existence, even as it became increasingly widespread. Although strong national leadership and crafty legal action may well save it, affirmative action will always have to watch its proverbial back." The aim of affirmative action is to remove these unwarranted self-imposed limitations on career aspirations: to expand people's sense of what is possible for them, so that they can subject the full range of options to the kind of individualized scrutiny that is appropriate to career decisions and goals" (Stroud 385). Affirmative action is without a doubt necessary. Such actions are important to reduce the act of discrimination that is prevalent in our society today. " Employment discrimination experts agree that antidiscrimination laws such as the Civil Rights Act encourage, and in many instances require, affirmative action" (Forman 746). Affirmative action is necessary and people from the minorities should be brought up to higher ranks and highly paid jobs rather than left concentrated at lower paid jobs. Opportunity should be given to them so that they can excel and make their living standards better. Equal opportunity should be present for all the races in the United States. Moreover, gender discrimination should also be subtracted and men and women should have equal job opportunities. Affirmative action is being taken by many nations of the world because they realize its importance. " India, for example, has undertaken affirmative action initiatives in regard to disfavored castes that are both older and more extensive than any program ventured in the United States" (Ginsburg 2). Its 1950 constitution boldly affirms affirmative action

because it realizes that equal opportunity should be presented to all the castes and races in India. There is opposition towards affirmative action and they suggest that it is pointless and useless. However, they fail to realize that “ affirmative action works rather well, at least in the context of employment” (Buford Jr., 1998). The courts themselves favor affirmative action and such is seen by a ruling by a federal district court in San Francisco which brought great changes and for the first time in the history of the fire department’s history, women were admitted as firefighters.” A federal district court review of the San Francisco Fire Department in 1987 led to a consent decree that increased the number of African Americans in officer positions from 7 to 31; Hispanic officers increased from 12 to 55 and Asians from 0 to 10” (Shelton, 1998). In view of such positive decisions by the court it is most likely that the Law Enforcement Association would find no support from the courts of law. If black males and women were helped by affirmative action, white males, often having superior qualifications, were directly harmed by it. Paradoxically, many black people, too, suffered harms as many white people began to automatically assume that any black person in a position of prestige had not earned his or her position, but had merely been awarded it in an affirmative action program. Affirmative action programs also come with the cost of seeming to force us to violate our deeply held ideals in order to satisfy those same ideals. Affirmative action programs seek to create a society in which people were not barred from opportunities because of their color or gender. To do this, however, many programs were put in place in which people with superior qualifications were disqualified from certain positions because of their color or gender. Such dissonance has been too much for many people to live comfortably with. If we really want to help

black people, a large percentage of whom are poor, the most effective way to do so is with a race-neutral affirmative action. Vigorous affirmative action could be pursued here to make sure blacks were able to have equal access to quality education and training. There are a number of costs and benefits to affirmative action, or for any other way of aiding the downtrodden in our society. Blacks have been wronged and severely harmed by whites.

Therefore white society should compensate blacks for the injury caused them. Reverse discrimination in terms of preferential hiring, contracts, and scholarships is a fitting way to compensate for the past wrongs. White males as innocent beneficiaries of unjust discrimination of blacks and women have no grounds for complaint when society seeks to rectify the tilted field. White males may be innocent of oppressing blacks and minorities (and women), but they have unjustly benefited from that oppression or discrimination. So it is perfectly proper that less qualified women and blacks be hired before them. The operative principle is: He who knowingly and willingly benefits from a wrong must help pay for the wrong. It is important that we learn to live in a pluralistic world, learning to get along with those of other races and cultures, so we should have fully integrated schools and employment situations. Diversity is an important symbol and educative device. U. S. society is rapidly becoming multicultural, and, therefore, its citizens and future leaders must be prepared to understand and appreciate the contributions and values of different ethnic groups. The census data on the racial composition of the population indicate that if the present trend of growth continues, whites who composed 73.6 percent of the population in 1995 will constitute only 52.5 percent of the population by the year 2050. It is entirely appropriate that universities welcome qualified students of all



racism and ethnicities to prepare them for productive roles in our highly dynamic and competitive society. Given the population changes in this country, and the globalization of commerce and technology, it is imperative that students as well as educators and policymakers pay greater attention to the histories, institutions, belief systems, values, and norms of different cultures. This is particularly so in the case of those cultures that have hitherto received inadequate attention and recognition. The roles and contributions of women in various disciplines and their endeavors at family, community, national, and international levels must also be acknowledged and included in academic curricula and must be subjects of scientific inquiries. The inclusion of these subjects or topics in college curricula and academic life, however, should not mean the suspension of critical objective judgment about the qualities and values of an ethnic community, a culture, or a society.

However, understanding a culture does not, and should not, mean its uncritical glorification. Thus preferential treatment is warranted to perform this role in society. After agonizing for a few months on what position to take on affirmative action preferences, President Clinton, in a speech on July 19, 1995, at the National Archives, strongly supported the continuous use of affirmative action by declaring, "We should have a simple slogan: 'Mend it, but don't end it'" (Freedberg A1). Leaders of minority groups, such as the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights and the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials, applauded the President's commitment to affirmative action. While strongly supporting affirmative action in general, the President ordered a review to abolish or revise those programs that are abused or poorly administered. Affirmative action is for the betterment of the society in today's world. The Black population did suffer a lot in the past and

they should be compensated for today. The institution should have diversity within them. Many a times even the courts have spoken in support of affirmative action which only makes the advocates of affirmative action in a comparatively stronger position. There is no doubt that opting for affirmative action would improve the society in general and prove to be beneficial.

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### **Affirmative Action Sample 3**

Affirmative action, as supposedly an answer to racial inequality, is a term first introduced by President John Kennedy which refers to redressing the social discrimination. President Johnson developed it and first enforced. "This is the next and more profound stage of the battle for civil rights," Johnson said. "We seek... not just equality as a right and a theory, but equality as a fact and as a result (Brunner Affirmative Action History)." This is a response to the article of James McPherson entitled *Deconstructing Affirmative Action* which was published in the online journal of the American Historical Association, *Perspectives*, on April 2003. James McPherson said that if one looks at a longer perspective of time as historians do, there is more than one side of this affirmative action puzzle. Which, I definitely agree. The purpose of this essay is to help us see the argument that we

should look at both sides which the affirmative action should also be covering.

In the end, I would like us to realize that affirmative action must really ensure that blacks and other minorities will experience equal opportunities in jobs and education as what the white men experience - not one edging the other in opportunities or the other benefited more. The old form of affirmative action favors more of the whites - whites being accepted to jobs without experiencing the hardships of applications, being promoted and dominating the top positions, being prioritize in student admissions and the likes. One of the evidences of these is James McPherson's situation he offered himself as a case study. He was born into a middle class family and his parents send all their children into college. During that time, female were encouraged to take school teaching, marriage or nursing as their career. On the other hand, male were encourage to dwell on professional jobs such as business, lawyers or doctors. But these are for white men only. Minorities and women are discouraged and prohibited to do the same.

Given this situation of the older form of affirmative action, McPherson benefited a lot from getting the proper education, up to graduating and getting the job. Now, it has turned into the other way around - blacks, Native Americans, and Latino/Latina receiving bonus points in the admission in University of Michigan as stated in McPherson's article. McPherson said they have supported the efforts for they want to broaden and diversity the racial, gender and ethnic composition of their classes and even their faculty.

But then there were whites who believed that they were not admitted in the law school or even undergraduate because less qualified minority applicants were accommodated. “ The consequences of the older kind of affirmative action have not yet been neutralized by the newer version,” McPherson said. He further said that the old form’s injustices were greater than those of the new, much worse as it seems (McPherson Deconstructing Affirmative Action). The evidences presented explain what I have said at the first part of this article — that affirmative action is supposedly an answer to racial inequality. But what is happening is that it is just getting worse, bringing more injustices and inequality among the whites and plaintiffs, as McPherson refers to them. In believing so, affirmative action should not be playing at giving extra or special attention to minorities, blacks, and natives who were treated “ unfairly” in the past. But they should be balancing the treatment between whites and these unprivileged people. This is through giving and providing equal opportunities, equal chances, and unbiased judgment especially in education and jobs — neutralizing the old form.

The older form of affirmative has cause injustices. The new form is approaching the same way. That these black and minorities will finally found their way into “ ruling” over the whites. But these should not happen. And these will not happen if affirmative action will be on the right path of its goal to remedy the social inequality and discrimination. I hope that by now we realize that affirmative action must really ensure that blacks and other minorities will experience equal opportunities in jobs and education as what the white men experience.

It should not favor one more than the other in the two separated groups.

Now we know the arguments of the two sides of affirmative action - the old and new. And I hope we realized also that it should be neutral and equal. We are all humans. We are all citizens of this same country. We are all under the same government. Furthermore, we must experience equal opportunities, equal chances. These sides are contradicting each other. Affirmative action has good principle, but should not have bittersweet practiced.

### **Affirmative Action Short Essay Sample 4**

Affirmative action is necessary when a qualified student loses their deserved place at a university because they are black. When a woman more qualified than a man is denied a job because of her gender, affirmative action is necessary. Affirmative action is necessary to run a stable society. Affirmative action is defined in the dictionary as a policy or program for correcting the effects of discrimination in the employment or education of members of certain groups such as women and blacks. Affirmative action is an effort to develop a systematic way of opening doors of education, employment and business opportunities to qualified individuals. Programs about reaching out to affirmative action are built on the American dream that there is enough education, employment and respect for everyone in this country. The programs are not about reverse discrimination or hiring unqualified applicants (Colonnese 197).

Our entire history can be seen as trying to preserve the conviction made in the Declaration of Independence, which was established in 1776. The Declaration of Independence states, We hold these truths self-evident that all men are created equal: that they are endowed by their Creator with

certain inalienable rights: that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The past reveals a distinct gap between what is stated by this American document and the reality of daily life. When this creed was created, only white men could vote and black slaves were not even counted as whole people. Action needed to be taken in order to make the idea that all men are equal a reality.

It was not until 1954 when the Brown vs. the Board of Education decision was made, that the legal impediments, which prohibited blacks from entering the arena of competition, were removed (Lewis 1). In 1961, President John F. Kennedy issued Executive Order 10925, which required federal contractors to take affirmative action to desegregate the work force, but nothing changed overnight (Dovidio 60). Adults remember water fountains being labeled white and colored, they never sat next to members of another race in a movie theater or a restaurant. Even after the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 was passed, during the climax of the civil rights movement, most blacks were still confined to servile and undesirable jobs. They worked as unskilled laborers and most black women worked as low-level service maids. The continuous series of presidential orders, policies, and court decisions were not enough to give blacks a fair start after years of enslavement (Steinburg 17).

During a ceremony at Howard University in June 1965, President Lyndon Johnson stressed that freedom is not enough by explaining, You cannot take a person who for years has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him to the starting line and say You are free to compete with the others and still justly believe that you have been completely fair (Steinburg 18). It is

society's duty to reconstruct the situation so that fairness will prevail; this can be done through affirmative action.

There are concerns in all ethnic categories about the times when affirmative action doesn't work. There are times when employers treat a flexible goal as a quota, but affirmative action does not include quotas. Quotas, in reference to affirmative action, would be setting a certain number of each ethnic or gender category that is to receive a job or college admission. The US Supreme Court outlawed setting fixed quotas for hiring and school enrollment during the Bakke decision in 1978 (Affirmative Action 1). Some employers may give opportunities to people who are unqualified instead of to those who deserve it, but affirmative action does not select or reject employees without regard to merit (Samuelson 53). These concerns are real, but not legal and not part of affirmative action. When the administration finds these kinds of illegal cases, they will enforce the law to reprimand such behavior. The unqualified recipient of an employment opportunity will have their conveyance revoked. The law requires fairness for all people and should be demanded to be enforced. Affirmative action has already been beneficial for America. Women are now playing a major role in business and politics and also attending all-male schools. Minorities are attending once all-white schools and emerging into America's work force. The never-ending search for equal opportunity is on the correct path with affirmative action.

Some people say that affirmative action is no longer necessary because racism and sexism have been banished from our nation (Graves 9). This is far from the truth. The unemployment rate for African Americans is still twice that of whites (Dovidio 60). Blacks are not the only people being

discriminated against. Women still only make 72% as much as men do at comparable jobs. The average income for a Hispanic woman with a college degree is still less than the average income of a white man with a high school diploma (Clinton 5). The end of discrimination in this country is far from near. There are social problems in the United States, which are similar to all other countries. Our progress is being made to bring our nation together as one. With so much work left to do we shouldn't end affirmative action.

There are differing opinions that are continuing to hinder affirmative action. Some people may say that employers are give opportunities to people who are unqualified instead of those who deserve it, but affirmative action does not select or reject employees without regard to merit (Samuelson 53). Affirmative action did not bring about racial tension that was not already existent. Affirmative action gives minorities the chance to defy the stereotypes given to them by other people. Not using affirmative action will only continue to exclude blacks from participating with the American society. America is labeled as the land of the free; however, many people are still charged for the color of their skin.

If affirmative action is used properly it can help society come together and keep progressing forward. Most citizens share a dream of a better nation, one that allows equal opportunity without discrimination. In order to achieve this dream we must be involved and committed to keeping affirmative action alive until discrimination no longer exists in the work force or schools. In support of creating equal opportunities, Americans should choose to continue rather than bring an end to affirmative action.



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## **Affirmative Action Short Essay Sample 5**

Affirmative action works. There are thousands of examples of situations where people of color, white women, and working class women and men of all races who were previously excluded from jobs or educational opportunities, or were denied opportunities once admitted, have gained access through affirmative action. When these policies received executive branch and judicial support, vast numbers of people of color, white women  
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and men have gained access they would not otherwise have had. These gains have led to very real changes.

Affirmative action programs have not eliminated racism, nor have they always been implemented without problems. However, there would be no struggle to roll back the gains achieved if affirmative action policies were ineffective. The implementation of affirmative action was America's first honest attempt at solving a problem, it had previously chosen to ignore. In a variety of areas, from the quality of health care to the rate of employment, blacks still remain far behind whites. Their representation in the more prestigious professions is still almost insignificant. Comparable imbalances exist for other racial and ethnic minorities as well as for women. Yet, to truly understand the importance of affirmative action, one must look at America's past discrimination to see why, at this point in history, we must become more "color conscious".

History Of Discrimination In America: Events Leading To Affirmative Action. The Declaration of Independence asserts that "all men are created equal." Yet America is scarred by a long history of legally imposed inequality. Snatched from their native land, transported thousands of miles-in a nightmare of disease and death-and sold into slavery, blacks in America were reduced to the legal status of farm animals. A Supreme Court opinion, *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857), made this official by classifying slaves as a species of "private property." Even after slavery was abolished by the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865, American blacks, other minorities, and women continued to be deprived of some of the most elementary right of citizenship. During the Reconstruction, after the end of the Civil War, the

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Fourteenth Amendment was passed in 1868, making blacks citizens and promised them the “ equal protection of the laws.” In 1870 the Fifteenth Amendment was passed, which gave blacks the right to vote.

Congress also passed a number of civil rights laws barring discrimination against blacks in hotels, theaters, and other places. However, the South reacted by passing the “ Black Codes, ” which severely limited the rights of the newly freed slaves, preventing them in most states from testifying in courts against whites, limiting their opportunities to find work, and generally assigning them to the status of second or third class citizen. White vigilante groups like the Klu Klux Klan began to appear, by murdering and terrorizing blacks who tried to exercise their new rights. “ Legal” ways were also found for circumventing the new laws; these included “ grandfather clauses”, poll taxes, white only primary elections, and constant social discrimination against and intimidation of blacks, who were excluded from education and from any job except the most menial.

In 1883, the Supreme Court declared a key civil rights statute, one that prohibits discrimination in public accommodations, unconstitutional. And in 1896, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (163 U. S. 537 [1896]), the Court declared that the state of Louisiana had the right to segregate their races in every public facility. Thus began the heyday of “ Jim Crow” legislation. In Justice John Marshall Harlan’s lone dissent, he realized it was a mockery. He wrote, “ We boast of the freedom enjoyed by our peoples above all other peoples. But it is difficult to reconcile that boast with a state of the law which, practically, puts a brand of servitude and degradation upon a large class of our fellow citizens, our equals before the law.

This thin disguise of 'equal' accommodations for passengers in railroad coaches will not mislead anyone, or atone for the wrong this day done." Not until sixty years later, in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (347 U. S. 483 [1954]), was *Plessy* overturned. Chief Justice Earl Warren declared the unanimous opinion of the court by saying: "We cannot turn the clock back to 1868, when the Amendment was adopted, or even to 1896, when *Plessy v. Ferguson* was written." In today's world, "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." This decision sparked racial tensions all across America. In 1957, President Eisenhower had to call federal troops into Little Rock, Arkansas, after the state's governor forcibly barred black children from entering white schools. In 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested and fined, for not moving to the back of a public bus, setting a pattern of boycotts by black of bus companies. And a number of "sit in" were being held by blacks in still segregated restaurants in the South.

Responding to those and other incidents, Congress passed a variety of new laws, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Civil Rights Act of 1968. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, particularly titles VI and VII, seem to prohibit any form of racial discrimination.

Affirmative action existed in obscurity for years before current-day affirmative action was executed after President Lyndon B. Johnson signed Executive Order 11246. As conceived, current day affirmative action was to promote greater equality of opportunity by expanding access and increasing inclusiveness. President Johnson, in his 4 June 1964 commencement speech at Howard University, addressed the motivation behind Executive Order 11246, which he signed into law a few months after this speech. He said, "

You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, ' You are free to compete with all the others' and still justly believe that you have been completely fair." Adding, he said that the U. S. must have " not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result." (Pinkerton, James P. " Ending Quotas Should Help End Racism" in Los Angeles Times, 4 June 1995, p. M5) In 1969, the Department of Labor exposed widespread racial discrimination of the Construction Department so President Richard M. Nixon decided to incorporate a system of " goals and timetables" to evaluate federal construction companies according to affirmative action. This idea of " goals and timetables" provided guidelines for companies to follow and comply with affirmative action regulations. During the presidency of Gerald R. Ford, he extended affirmative action to people with disabilities and Vietnam veterans but there were no goals or timetables for these two groups. This type of affirmative action required recruitment efforts, accessibility, accommodation and reviews of physical and mental job qualifications.

President Jimmy Carter consolidated all federal agencies that were required by law to follow the affirmative action plan into the Department of Labor. Before Carter did this, each agency handled affirmative action in its own individual way, some were not as consistent as other agencies were. He created the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Program (OFCCP) in 1978 to ensure compliance with the affirmative action policies. The first Supreme Court case to directly deal with affirmative action was Regents of California v. Bakke (438 U. S. 265 [1978]). Alan Bakke, a white male, was turned down

for admission, even though his test scores and grades were higher than those of some candidates admitted through a “special” program.

Bakke argued that he was a victim of reverse discrimination because he was white. Four members of the Supreme Court took the view that admission to a state medical school must be on a completely “color blind” basis; another four contended that “a racial criteria may be used by a state for the purpose of overcoming the chronic minority underrepresentation in the medical profession.” The remaining justice, Lewis Powell, had the controlling opinion in the case. Powell agreed in part with both sides. He believed that a “legitimate justification might exist for using race as a criterion in medical school admission,” yet he opposed “explicit” racial classifications. Another landmark case about affirmative action was *United Steelworkers of America v. Weber* (433 U. S. 193 [1979]).

Unlike Bakke, Weber deals with a private company who voluntarily creates an affirmative action policy. Brian Weber, a white worker, was passed over for admission to a training program in favor of a black worker with less seniority. He brought suit under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Supreme Court ruled against Weber on two grounds: 1) the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was aimed at relieving the plight of blacks, not whites 2) the Civil Rights Act of 1964 “did not intend wholly to prohibit private and voluntary affirmative action efforts.” Affirmative action began to go downhill when Ronald Reagan and later George Bush came into office. Affirmative action lost some gains it had made and was more or less ignored by the Republicans in the White House and in Congress. Affirmative action was silently being “killed” by our federal administrators. But among this destruction there was one positive

aspect, the passage of Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Finally to the Presidency of Bill Clinton. The Republicans are attempting to scare people into changing their party lines by misusing affirmative action. They are saying that affirmative action is nothing more than a quota or reverse discrimination. President Clinton supports affirmative action, but he clearly states: " I'm against quotas. I'm against reverse discrimination. I'm against giving anybody unqualified anything they're not qualified for. But I am for making a conscious effort to bring the American people together." (Speech on September 4, 1995, quoted by Michael K. Frisby, Wall Street Journal, September 6, 1995, p. A4).

Further, President Clinton added: The purpose of affirmative action is to give our nation a way to finally address the systemic exclusion of individuals of talent, on the basis of their gender or race, from opportunities to develop, perform, achieve and contribute. Affirmative action is an effort to develop a systematic approach to open the doors of education, employment, and business development opportunities to qualified individuals who happen to be members of groups that have experienced long-standing and persistent discrimination. (New York Times, " Excerpts From Clinton Talk on Affirmative Action" July 20, 1995, p. A9). Affirmative Action Today. Affirmative action has had its greatest amount of success in city, state, and government jobs. Since the 1960s the area of law enforcement witnessed the greatest increase in minority applicants, and in jobs offered to minorities. This should be viewed as an extremely positive thing, because prior to affirmative action these jobs were almost completely closed off to minorities and woman. The influx has

been greatest in the area of government, state and city, because this type of work is easier for affirmative action to watch over and regulate.

Affirmative action has experienced considerably less success in integration in big business. This is due to the fact that big business has been more resistant to affirmative action and harder to regulate. I believe that increasing minority and female applicant flow would be very easy for a company to do. They simply need to include minority colleges and universities in campus recruitment programs, place employment opportunities in minority oriented print and broadcast media, and retain applications of unhired minority applicants to be reviewed as a position opens.

This would be a great opportunity for applicants and employers. Affirmative action is also needed to help black women to compete in today's corporate world. Black women in corporate America are still scarce: According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' report for 1984, among the classification "executive, administrative, managerial, and professional, specialty," there were only 1, 474, 000 black women 5. 9% of the total, as opposed to 22, 250, 000 white women, 91% of the total number of working women in this category (Cyrus, Virginia. *Experiencing Race, Class, and Gender in the United States*. Second Edition. 1997. p. 122). Another area affirmative action addresses is preferential hiring programs.

Many times people of color have been excluded from hiring pools, overtly discriminated against, unfairly eliminated because of inappropriate qualification standards, or have been rendered unqualified because of discrimination in education and housing. Court decisions on affirmative



action have rendered illegal those qualifications that are not relevant to one's ability to do the job. They have also mandated hiring goals so that those employed begin to reflect the racial mix of the general population from which workers are drawn.

There is no legal requirement to ever hire an unqualified person. There is a mandate that in choosing between qualified candidates, the hiring preference should be for a person of color when past discrimination has resulted in white people receiving preferential treatment. Sometimes people and companies argue that affirmative action means the best qualified person will not be hired. However, it has been demonstrated many times in hiring and academic recruitment that test and educational qualifications are not necessarily the best predictors of future success. This does not mean unqualified people should be hired. It means basically qualified people who may not have the highest test scores or grades, but who are ready to do the job may be hired. Employers have traditionally hired people not only on test scores, but on personal appearance, family and personal connections, school ties and on race and gender preferences, demonstrating that talent or desirability can be defined in many ways. These practices have all contributed to a segregated work force where whites hold the best jobs, and people of color work in the least desirable and most poorly paid positions.

Affirmative action policies serve as a corrective to such patterns of discrimination. They keep score on progress toward proportional representation and place the burden of proof on organizations to show why it is not possible to achieve it. Opponents of affirmative action want to see the "most qualified" people be hired, regardless of sex, race, age, etc. However,

a person's experience should be taken into consideration during the hiring process and if certain groups are blocked from competing, when they are finally allowed to compete they may have every other qualification, but will lack what they were blocked at competing in the first place (Cyrus, p. 265). While companies continue to permit discrimination in the hiring process they are overlooking a very staggering reality. According to a Workforce 2000 study by the Hudson Institute for the U. S. Department of Labor., it is estimated that 85% of the 26 million net new American workers in this decade will consist of women, minorities, and immigrants.

The companies that refuse to share power with those discriminated against may be shooting themselves in the foot, compared to the companies who choose and promote a more diversified workforce {Cyrus, p. 463}. Another argument raised against affirmative action is that individual white people, often white males, have to pay for past discrimination and may not get the jobs they deserve.

It is true that specific white people may not get specific job opportunities because of affirmative action policies and may suffer as a result. This lack of opportunity is unfortunate; the structural factors which produce a lack of decent jobs needs to be addressed. It must not be forgotten that millions of specific people of color have also lost specific job opportunities as a result of racial discrimination. To be concerned only with the white applicants who don't get the job, and not with the people of color who don't, I believe, is also showing racial preference. But how true is it that white male candidates are being discriminated against or are losing out because of affirmative action programs? If one looks at the composition of various professions such as law,  
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medicine, architecture, academics and journalism, or at corporate management, or at higher-level government positions or if one looks overall at the average income levels of white men one immediately notices that people of color are still significantly underrepresented and underpaid in every category.

People of color don't make up the proportions of these jobs even remotely equal to their percentage of the population. They don't earn wages comparable to white men. White men are tremendously overrepresented in almost any category of work that is highly rewarded except for professional athletics. According to a 1995 government report, white males make up only 29 percent of the workforce, but they hold 95 percent of senior management positions (Sklar, Holly. *Chaos or Community?: Seeking Solutions, Not Scapegoats for Bad Economics*. Boston.

South End Press. 1995. p. 115). Until there is both equal opportunity and fair distribution of education, training and advancement to all Americans, affirmative action for people of color will be necessary to counter the hundreds of years of affirmative action that has been directed at white males. It cannot reasonably be argued that white males are discriminated against as a group if they are overrepresented in most high status categories.

Affirmative action is not a cure all. It will not eliminate racial discrimination, nor will it eliminate competition for scarce resources. Affirmative action programs can only ensure that everyone has a fair chance at what is available. I believe, the larger question should be to ask is why are there not

enough decent paying, challenging and safe jobs for everyone? Why are there not enough seats in the universities for everyone who wants an education?

Expanding opportunity for people of color means expanding not only their access to existing jobs, education and housing , but also removing the obstacles that cause them from obtaining their goals. I believe, affirmative action is the best shot they have in order to achieve their dreams.

### **African American History Example Essay Sample 6**

Affirmative action is the nation's most ambitious attempt to redress its long history of racial and sexual discrimination, however in modern times and approximately forty years after the establishment of this policy, society is plagued with the issues of whether affirmative action is necessary, whether it is a benefit or detriment to society, and why it incites rather than eases the nation's internal dilemmas after so many years of having been in effect. In the following paragraphs the issues surrounding this debate, such as what is the definition of affirmative action, how and why affirmative action was established to begin with, who is affected by this policy, whether affirmative action is still necessary in today's society or if such policy should be done away with, and, finally, possible resolutions to this dilemma, will be reviewed, beginning with the explanation of how affirmative action came about.

In March 1961, less than two months after President John F. Kennedy took office, he issued an Executive Order (10925), which established the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity. Its mission was to

end discrimination in employment by the government and its contractors. The order required every federal contract to include the pledge that “ The Contractor will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, creed, color, or national origin. The Contractor will take affirmative action, to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin.” (QUOTE) Here for the first time the government called for “ affirmative action.” Soon, thereafter the Civil Rights Act of 1964 restated and broadened the application of this principle with the Title VI, which declared that “ No person in the United States shall, on the ground Or race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” But within one year President Lyndon B. Johnson argued that fairness required more than a commitment to impartial treatment. In his 1965 commencement address at Howard University, he said:

“ You do not take a person who for years has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, “ you’re free to compete with all the others,” and still justly believe that you have been completely fair. Thus it is not enough just to open the gates or opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates .... We seek not...just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result.”

And so several months later President Johnson issued Executive Order 11246, which stated that “ It is the policy of the Government of the United

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States to provide equal opportunity in federal employment for all qualified persons, to prohibit discrimination in employment because of race, creed, color or national origin, and to promote the full realization of equal employment opportunity through a positive, continuing program in each department and agency." Two years later the order was amended to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex.

While the aim of President Johnson's order was similar to that of President Kennedy's, President Johnson's eliminated the Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity, transferred its responsibilities to the Secretary of Labor, and authorized the Secretary to "adopt such rules and regulations and issue such orders as he deems necessary and appropriate to achieve the purposes thereof." (QUOTE) Acting on the basis of this mandate, the Department of Labor in December 1971, during the administration of President Richard M. Nixon, issued Revised Order No. 4, requiring all contractors to develop "an acceptable affirmative action program," including "an analysis of areas within which the contractor is deficient in the utilization of minority groups and women, and further, goals and timetables to which the contractor's good faith efforts must be directed to correct the deficiencies." Contractors were instructed to take the term "minority groups" to refer to "Negroes, American Indians, Orientals, and Spanish Surnamed Americans." The concept of "underutilization" meant "having fewer minorities or women in a particular job classification than would reasonably be expected by their availability." "Goals" were not to be "rigid and inflexible quotas" but "targets reasonably attainable by means Or applying every good faith effort to make all aspects of the entire affirmative

action program work.” (QUOTE) Such policies instating preferential treatment required that attention be paid to the same criteria of race, sex, and ethnicity that had previously been deemed irrelevant. Could such use of these criteria be morally justified?

That is the key question in a debate that has continued for more than three decades. Many agree that injustices have occurred, that their victims deserve compensation, and that strenuous efforts should be made to try to prevent any further wrongdoing while striving to achieve a more enlightened society, yet many also disagree in issues such as determining exactly who has suffered injustice, what is appropriate compensation to them, and which steps should be taken to promote justice and amity. Affirmative action has been a divisive issue in the United States. And with recent attempts by referendum, legislation, and judicial action to change current policies, emotions have intensified. What is most needed now is not increased passion but greater attention to recognizing and analyzing the subject's complex nature.

Why should affirmative action be done away with? Supporters of doing away with affirmative action believe in doing so for reasons such as its promoting discrimination, that it provides unfair advantage to otherwise unqualified candidates, the belief in allowing the free market to let the best candidate rise to top, the ideals that the government and constitution are supposed to be color-blind, and the argument that when does the white man stop paying for his forefathers' mistakes. When affirmative action was first introduced, its primary purpose was to give minority groups the same — or better — chance as their white counterparts. What that meant was that if two entrance

candidates were equally qualified on all levels, yet one was a minority and the other was white, the minority would automatically be accepted. There are times, however, when an under-qualified minority wins out over a qualified white male just to meet the necessary quota. Affirmative Action lowers standards in education and the workplace by letting unqualified people get ahead. By the late '70s, however, flaws in the policy began to show up amid its good intentions. Reverse discrimination became an issue, epitomized by the famous Bakke case in 1978. Allan Bakke, a white male, had been rejected two years in a row by a medical school that had accepted less qualified minority applicants the school had a separate admissions policy for minorities and reserved 16 out of 100 places for minority students.

The Supreme Court outlawed inflexible quota systems in affirmative action programs, which in this case had unfairly discriminated against a white applicant. In the same ruling, however, the Court upheld the legality of affirmative action. A backlash against affirmative action began. To conservatives, the system opened the door for jobs, promotions, or education to minorities while it shut the door on whites. In a country that prized the values of self-reliance and pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps, people resented the idea that some unqualified minorities were getting a free ride on the American system. " Preferential treatment" and " quotas" turned into bitterness and anger. The public began to feel an injustice was being committed, especially in light of the fact that minorities who had also experienced terrible adversity and racism Jews and Asians, in particular managed to make the American way work for them without government handouts. So then the policy of affirmative action for minorities



came to be felt as more of a hand out, instead of earning their place and status in society and as a result being discriminated against for it, which essentially defeats the purpose of the originating discrimination.

Anti-affirmative action supporters believe that special rights should not be given to certain groups while others are left out or discriminated against in turn. Anti-affirmative action supporters believe that the most complete solution is also the very clearly stated in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which clearly forbade employment discrimination against either sex and against any racial or ethnic group, including white males. Another central issue is while many gifted white and Asian students are affluent, a disproportionate number of gifted students from underrepresented minority groups are severely disadvantaged, and for myriad reasons, do not end up on a track genuinely preparing them for college, and therefore anti-affirmative action supporters believe that affirmative action should be economically based and replaced with a policy that pursues the college preparation of gifted students from disadvantaged communities, or in other words, if you are willing to work to prepare yourself for college, we as a society will provide the resources to ensure that you are prepared. Substantial increases in resources directed toward disadvantaged communities for after-school tutoring programs, accelerated summer school programs in literature, mathematics and science, and bridge programs early on in life would level out the playing field early on and thus, eliminate the need for such policies as affirmative action. The use of racial preferences is like placing attractive wallpaper over a decayed social infrastructure, and a cheap, cosmetic fix

to deeply rooted social problems is not going to solve this complex of an issue.

Why is affirmative action still necessary? It's necessity comes from the fact that the playing field is far from level and the need to protect disadvantaged minorities is still as critical as it was years ago. Despite the enormous gains made by the civil rights and women's rights movements women and people of color still face unfair obstacles in business, education and even in every day society. Many minorities are not offered economic and social opportunities that white males are, such as their consistent status in roles such as heads of state and other powerful positions that minorities rarely have the opportunity to partake in. " White men hold 95% to 97% of the high-level corporate jobs. And that's with affirmative action programs in place. Imagine how low figures would be without affirmative action."

(QUOTE) The years of oppression are still felt in today's society through the discrimination against races and against gender. " For every dollar earned by men, women on a whole earn 74 cents, African American women earn 63 cents and Latina women earn 57 cents." (QUOTE) According to the Census Bureau, only 25% of all doctors and lawyers are women. Less than 1% of auto mechanics are women. And women are only 8. 4% of engineers. " Black people continue to have twice the unemployment rate of White people, half the median family income, and half the proportion who attend four years or more of college (see Figure 1 below) (QUOTE)." " And, without affirmative action the percentage of Black students on many campuses would drop below 2%." (QUOTE) This would effectively cut off Black access to higher education and limit progress toward racial equality. Supporters of doing

away with affirmative action believe that if certain minorities, such as Jewish and Asian Americans can rapidly advance economically despite the hardships in their ancestry, then African Americans should be able to do the same, however this comparison ignores the unique history of discrimination against Black people in America.

Considering that the Jim Crow Laws and the barbaric practice of lynching existed well into the '60s, and that other forms of racism in housing, employment, and education persisted well beyond the civil rights movement, conservatives impatient for blacks to “ get over” the legacy of slavery needed to realize that slavery was just the beginning of racism in America. As historian Roger Wilkins has pointed out, Blacks have a 375-year history on this continent: 245 involving slavery, 100 involving legalized discrimination, and only 30 involving anything else (Wilkins, 1995). Jews and Asians, on the other hand, have immigrated to North America — often as doctors, lawyers, professors, entrepreneurs, and so forth, and are also more readily accepted into society and due to their features, and more able to function as part of the White majority as a result. To expect Blacks to show the same upward mobility as Jews and Asians is to deny the reality that Black people have faced for years and continue to face on a daily basis. Advocates of doing away with affirmative action also cite the reason that it fights discrimination with discrimination and creates reverse discrimination, primarily against white males, however this notion uses the same word — discrimination — to describe two very different things. Job discrimination is grounded in prejudice and exclusion, whereas affirmative action is an effort to overcome prejudicial treatment through inclusion. Of 3000 federal court decisions in

discrimination cases between 1990 and 1994, only 100 involved claims of reverse discrimination; only 6 of those claims were found to be valid.

(QUOTE) Additionally, in stating that it the policy of affirmative action discriminates, so do other widely-accepted policies, such as Veterans often receiving preferential treatment in workplaces and on campuses which usually benefit men more than women.

The children of alumni get preferential treatment over others in admission to college. Friends help friends and acquaintances get jobs. Affirmative Action helps open doors for women and people of color who often don't have those connections. On the other hand, women experience yet another form of discrimination, which is why an additional amendment was added, and often times, a discrimination far more powerful than that of race, as even within a race a woman may be unfairly judged and treated. Women are discriminated against through stereotypes in that they cannot match the power or mental ability of men. Anti-Affirmative Action supporters tend to state that the policy undermines the self-esteem of women and racial minorities, however, although affirmative action may have this effect in some cases, interview studies and public opinion surveys have found that such reactions are rare. For instance, a recent Gallup poll asked employed Blacks and employed White women whether they had ever felt that others questioned their abilities because of affirmative action (Roper Center, 1995c). " Nearly 90% of respondents said no (which is understandable — after all, White men, who have traditionally benefited from preferential hiring, do not feel hampered by self-doubt or a loss in self-esteem)." (QUOTE) In fact, affirmative action may actually raise the self-esteem of women and minorities by providing them

with employment and opportunities for advancement, making them feel better about themselves and their ability to function as a vital role of society. There is also evidence that affirmative action policies increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment among beneficiaries.

And, yet, the majority of families depend on the income of women, especially in a society where single-parent families are more common-place and the woman is usually the one performing the single-parent responsibilities. When Affirmative Action opens up education, employment, and business, families and communities have greater economic security. Business leaders and heads of state understand that affirmative action is necessary to develop a strong workforce, which is why affirmative action has not been done away with and why in many legal battles the legal system is divided. Women and people of color have a lot to offer their communities. Affirmative Action helps insure that everyone gets the chance to contribute.

The debate about affirmative action has grown more murky and difficult as the public have come to appreciate its complexity. Many liberals, for example, can understand the injustice of affirmative action in a case like *Wygant* (1986): black employees kept their jobs while white employees with seniority were laid off. And many conservatives cannot come up with a better alternative to the imposition of a strict quota system in *Paradise* (1987), in which the defiantly racist Alabama Department of Public Safety refused to promote any black above entry level even after a full 12 years of court orders demanded they did. The Supreme Court Justices have been divided in their opinions in affirmative action cases, as well; partially because of opposing political ideologies but also because the issue is simply so

complex. The Court has approached most of the cases in a hesitant fashion, focusing on narrow aspects of policy rather than dealing with the matter overall. Even in the Bakke case, the closest thing to a landmark affirmative action case, the Court was split 5 to 4. In the last decade the tide has turned against affirmative action, and two states, California and Washington, have gone so far as to do away with it.

Yet the questions of fairness and racial equality remain troubling for most of those not at the ideological poles of the issue. Affirmative action remains an ambitious attempt to redress its long history of racial and sexual discrimination,