

More than a color

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You scored a perfect score on your SAT's; your GPA is a 4.

0. You have dreamed of attending that one university for your whole life. But when all your college results letters arrive and your dream school is not one of them, you can't help but wonder why. You check on Facebook and find that Alexa, who scored nowhere near you on her SAT's, was accepted into your school. How can that be possible? Affirmative action is a program commonly used in college acceptances that gives minority groups such as African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics preferential treatment when applying to universities and jobs in order to close the socioeconomic gap: since public schools rely on city/county taxes, the relative wealth of an area directly affects the school's budget, leading to poverty-stricken students receiving much poorer education than their wealthier counterparts.

Affirmative action's goal is to undo any past discrimination against minorities by providing better opportunities for them, although it was originally the exact opposite. On March 6, 1961, President Kennedy issued an executive order that said to "take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin." However, modern affirmative action is an unfair and unsuitable practice. Affirmative action is biased and part of a concept called "reverse racism." Its goal is to level the playing field for ethnic groups who have been discriminated against in the past, but instead, it unfairly punishes whites, even those who are incredibly determined and intelligent, as well as Asians, who have managed to become highly represented in American universities and job markets despite the fact

that they are a minority group that has experienced a long history of discrimination.

“ Affirmative Action: Twenty-five Years of Controversy” by Claire Andre, Manuel Velasquez, and Tim Mazur points out that these programs “ impose the burden of compensation on white males who seek jobs or higher education,” as if these very males were the ones who caused this discrimination. Using race as the basis for acceptance also creates another problem. As Joe Messerli of BalancedPolitics.org points out, many minorities fall into the middle or upper class while countless whites live in poverty. According to the United States Census Bureau, the national poverty rate for whites was 11.

6 percent between 2007 and 2011, meaning that the family’s income was less than its threshold (size of the family and ages of the members); while in 2009, 38.4 percent of black households were considered middle class and 8.1 percent were upper middle class (blackdemographics.org). This may cause a hardworking and smart but poor white student to be passed over by a wealthy minority student who does not put in nearly as much effort.

Some people argue that affirmative action gives minority groups a well-deserved chance to succeed. However, it may do quite the opposite.

Demanding schools have challenging criteria to match because they are extremely difficult to graduate from. Students who are accepted because of their race but do not actually meet the standards may have a very hard time succeeding in their school, for they are surrounded by students whose

grades were truly sufficient. If affirmative action did not exist, all applicants would be sent to the school that fits them best.

Furthermore, applicants may feel that they were accepted only because they are a part of an underrepresented group instead of their ability. This leads to a feeling of inferiority. Affirmative action programs also “ encourage dependency and reward people for identifying themselves as victims” (Affirmative Action: Twenty-five Years of Controversy). People learn to rely on sympathy instead of hard work and determination. In addition, because affirmative action lowers the standards necessary to be accepted into a prestigious college, this leads to a decrease in work ethic from people that these programs target.

For example, prior to the Supreme Court case Gratz v. Bollinger of 2003, the University of Michigan gave incredibly strong preferential treatment to minority groups, as this college used a 150-point system to rank applicants, with a score of 100 needed to guarantee acceptance. The university gave an automatic 20 points to underrepresented minority groups while a perfect SAT score only gave the applicant 12 points. So why would a student targeted by these programs strive to have an incredible GPA and SAT score when he or she will likely be accepted with mediocre grades? The goal of affirmative action is to end racism and to create a “ color blind society” in which everyone has equal opportunities. However, it has grown to be the opposite of this, for applicants’ races determine their acceptance.

Messerli explains that when applying for a job one is not asked for their hair color, as this has no relation to their skills or intelligence level. It is well

known that hair color, height, weight, etc., are irrelevant in large decisions, so skin color should not be any different. People are more than just colors. There is a better solution to close the socioeconomic gap in American societies.

Rather than giving minorities a stepping stool, we should level the playing field completely. People can voice their opinions to law makers suggesting that a larger percentage of tax money go to the schools. Because poorer cities or counties cannot allot as much money to schools as wealthier ones can, the federal government should get involved. Public schools that are known to be behind should be invested in. They should be given the opportunity to hire the best teachers, buy the best books, and offer after-school classes to help those that want to excel. This prepares these students so that they can compete for spots in colleges and careers, and only then, will they truly be equal.