

# Affirmative action - goals and effects

[Sociology](#), [Human Rights](#)



## **Affirmative Action**

As early as 1619, discrimination has been a major problem in the United States. From slavery, to segregation, to prejudice, African American's have been handed the short hand of the stick in our supposed "land of the free". The sins that our country has committed is unthinkable and the debt that our country is in for those sins is un-repayable. However, slight reparations for the unthinkable have been established to try to mend the seams of equality. In 1965, President Johnson stated that "You do not take a man who, for years, has been hobbled by chains, liberate him, bring him to the starting line of a race saying you are free to compete with all the others and still believe you have been fair." (Sue Lecture) One of these atonements that have been instilled to slowly, but surely, start repaying our debt is affirmative action. The scheme behind affirmative action is to provide members of deprived minority groups equitable possibilities to obtain employment or admission status at higher education institutions. Affirmative action is necessary to inculcate in the United States to advocate the idea that discrimination, sadly, still exists, and we are trying to dismantle the practice. Not only does affirmative action make an advancement to heal the remorse our country feels about past practices, but it also assists minorities growing up in underprivileged areas attain educational or occupational goals. Southeastern Oklahoma University, an institution that honors the idea of affirmative action, posts on their website that

"America is a stronger country today because of affirmative action. Diversity pays - economically and psychologically. Our country is strong because of

the rich diversity of our culture, not in spite of it. Educational institutions benefit from the contributions of diverse populations, as does our workforce.” (Affirmative Action, Retrieved December 10, 2014, <http://homepages.se.edu/affirmativeaction/4/>) It is because of these anti-discriminatory acts that minorities are able to assimilate into universities or workplaces that they may not have been able to be a part of without affirmative action.

Ever since affirmative action was made an executive order in 1961, millions of minorities have been able to secure jobs that they could not have before. It has helped certain companies overcome their image of a biased demographic and it has helped diversify companies. Usually, “white males held an almost total monopoly of all top and mid-level professional and managerial jobs in the US. Blacks...who were qualified could not penetrate the barriers to white collar employment except in very special niches.” However, now, “five million people of color have gotten their jobs through affirmative action.” (Staples, Robert. “Black Deprivation-White Privilege: The Assault on Affirmative Action.”) Discrimination is very common among employers. Normally, under qualified white males would be hired for a position over qualified African American males. By implementing affirmative action we have avoided these hiring malpractices and began to encourage minorities to apply for jobs they are rightfully qualified for. Not only has affirmative action assisted people of color secure jobs, but it has also helped minorities secure their positions at higher education institutions. The University of California school system is well known for obliging to the idea of affirmative action. In 1995, out of the twenty-two percent of minorities that <https://assignbuster.com/affirmative-action-goals-and-effects/>

applied to a University of California school, eighty-one percent were admitted. Having a more diversified campus enhances everyone's experience. (Sue Lecture) It is beneficial to not only people of color, but Caucasians too. Having a more eclectic campus, you are able to become a well- rounded individual by being able to learn about many different cultures, and different ways other groups of people grew up that are different to your own experiences. However, not everyone has this optimistic idea of affirmative action. Many people argue that it is, in fact, victimizing Caucasians. Caucasians believe that they are being punished and denied certain jobs and admission to schools because of the school needing to meet certain quotas for different races. However, in the 1978 case of Regents of University of California v. Bakke, the Supreme Court ruled that racial quotas were unconstitutional. (McBride, Alex. " Regents of University of California vs. Bakke." PBS. PBS, n. d. Web. 09 Dec. 2014) As a result of this ruling, Caucasians have no need to worry about being treated unfairly. The whole point of affirmative action is to give qualified minorities an equal opportunity to be considered for a position or a spot at an institution of higher education.

The mistakes our country has made in the past regarding the well being of African American's has cast a dark shadow on the history of the United States in both the public and private sector of daily life. As far back as 1619, African American's have been taken from Africa and shipped overseas in the most horrifying of circumstances. This cruelty remained in the United States culture all the way until the year of 1865 but even then being a free man really meant nothing due to insanely polarized white privilege. After the abolition of slavery, African American's were still harshly discriminated

against. The United States made rules to segregate them from the Caucasians. They were forced to sit at the back of the bus, attend different schools, and even drink out of separate water fountains. We can only thank Civil Rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks for standing up for racial equality in these times which led the way for the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned all acts of segregation. These inhumane acts against African American's can never be made up for, however, we can begin to demonstrate the great remorse our country feels by supporting their continual empowerment in our society and trying to eradicate racism and racial bias as much as possible. Since the US is so responsible for these many acts of discriminations, they have decided to implement acts of reverse discrimination to try to right the wrong. Affirmative action is one way to achieve this and does so very effectively. " The history of affirmative action in the United States is a true success story. Affirmative action programs, including recruitment, outreach and training initiatives have played a critical role in providing women and people of color with access to educational and professional opportunities they would otherwise have been denied despite their strong qualifications." (Affirmative Action, Retrieved December10, 2014, <http://homepages.se.edu/affirmativeaction/4/>)

Not only have minorities suffered discrimination outside their households, but they have also been discriminated in their attempt to choose a house. Practices such as redlining have congregated minorities in areas that are usually low-income. Areas of lowincome tend to be composed of underprivileged school districts. Most of the times, these school districts don't have the proper material to properly educate their children.

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Jonathan Kozol, author of *Savage Inequalities*, talks about how he moved to East St. Louis to teach at an underprivileged school. He spoke about how the teachers at this school could not properly teach because they weren't provided with the necessary supplies. He also described the conditions of the school describing the bathroom as not even having toilet paper or functioning sinks. " Anyone who visits in the schools of East St. Louis, even for a short time, comes away profoundly shaken. These are innocent children, after all. They have done nothing wrong. They have committed no crime. They are too young to have offended us in any way at all." (Kozol, Jonathan. *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*. New York: Crown Pub., 1991.) Affirmative action helps these children of these underprivileged schools to have the same opportunities to attend a university as middle class Caucasian students do. Most of these students who grow up under these circumstances are at a disadvantage to get into a school because of other opportunities that middle-class Caucasians have such as the materials to learn, funded extra-curricular activities, and the ability to pay for SAT preparatory courses. Affirmative action encourages minorities to apply for college, because they now a large chance to be admitted.

Affirmative action has made a tremendous gesture to begin the process of healing the wounds we have made to racial inequality. However, we can only make affirmative action better. Some ways we can potentially make affirmative action more effective is limiting some race-based qualifications. For example, at the University of Michigan, " in the undergraduate case,

additional points are actually given on a scale, which one hundred points eventually assures admission. Twenty points are given for color of skin.”

(Dyson, Michael E. “ Debating Affirmative Action.”) Twenty points based solely on race is a huge advantage over non-minority students. “ Limiting the size of racial preferences means making smaller, race-based adjustments to applicant qualifications — or, to put it differently, not ignoring very wide differences in academic preparation across racial lines.” (Sander, Richard, The Opinions Expressed in This Commentary Are Solely Those of Richard Sander, and Stuart Taylor Jr. “ Keep Affirmative Action but Reform It.” CNN. Cable News Network, 01 Jan. 1970). The idea of keeping equality in hiring and admission processes is important. As a “ free” country, we must end all acts of discrimination. Affirmative action helps ensure that every race can be a part of the land of the free.