

Student applicants for colleges in the united states and the issue of affirmative...

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



Does affirmative action still have a future in the United States?

As a student applies for colleges, for a ticket out of poverty and a step in the direction of a lifelong career, should they have to worry about the color of their skin? Should they fear that they will be rejected because they are a minority? This used to be a reality, and not a long time ago. Some students still consider race and other physical factors when applying to colleges.

There are parents and grandparents who will remember the Civil Rights Act, Executive Order 11246, and Order no. 4. Affirmative action is taken by institutions and organizations in an active effort to create and maintain equal opportunity for groups of people who have been historically excluded and discriminated against (Fullinwider). These groups include minorities like African Americans, Hispanics, and women. Affirmative action was originally directed towards places of employment, then its focus turned to universities and their admissions policies. The issue is one of great controversy and many stances have been argued throughout the years, supporting, disclaiming, and, in more recent decades, inferring that it is outdated.

Affirmative action was written on ideas held in a society that no longer exists. It is outdated and its basis could stand to be rewritten. Affirmative action as it exists today should not be continued. That is not to claim that it is unnecessary; it is to say that a similar program ought to be enacted with today's standards. Schools and companies should be required to provide equal opportunity for all genders, sexualities, races, ethnicities, and religions. Affirmative action was written for working people originally, as much for companies as schools and in a different society, but Affirmative

Action and outreach programs have increased college diversity and minority opportunity drastically, and regardless of the past, all people deserve an equal chance at life.

The Civil Rights Act paved the way to ending discrimination. It has a section titled “ IV Desegregation of Public Education” in which public colleges are mentioned, not private ones (Civil Rights Act). It never mentions the words ‘ affirmative action’. That was the term used by politicians to explain the steps needed to achieve equality. Lyndon B. Johnson, one of the first to use the term, used it in Executive Order 11246 exactly one time: “ The contractor will take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, color, religion, sex or national origin” (Executive Order). It is only in regards to the workplace. There is no mention of university, or affirmative action in admission decisions and so, only construction companies, factories, and companies were made to deal with the changes, until 1972. The Secretary of Labor created a Revised Order No. 4, which implemented the Executive Order fully and encompassed a much greater range of industries, including American Universities (Fullinwider). The Orders both remain geared toward industry (Executive Order), and there is not an Order written directly for equal admissions opportunities, rather a blip written into a wider law, to include them almost as an afterthought. An order or series of laws written in today’s society and pertaining to today’s social issues would do a lot to include people from all walks of life and create equal educational opportunities.

Affirmative action must not be eliminated completely. Over time it has certainly improved quality of education available to minority students and jobs available to working people. Affirmative action has had positive effects throughout its effective years. For example, through affirmative action policies, the University of California has changed quite a bit (Hispanic Outlook). In the year 1984 Hispanics made up 7 percent of the student population and 70 percent was white (Hispanic Outlook). A decade later, the number of Hispanic students had jumped to 13 percent (Hispanic Outlook). Effects have also been visible in medical schools. In 1968 . 6 percent of students in medical school were black, not including predominantly black schools in which they were still only 71 percent of student population (Bundy). In just 10 years that rose from 211 black medical students to 3000 black medical students in predominantly white schools (Bundy) A graduating class “ ought roughly to represent the state’s population, ethnically and racially” (Fullinwider). In 1990 more than half of the United States work force consisted of minorities, immigrants and women (Roosevelt). “ American businesses are now filled with progressive people – many of them minorities and women themselves” (Roosevelt). It seems that while affirmative action has helped to create equal hiring and admissions opportunity, it is not up to date on the other needs of these minorities and women. They do not need to just be admitted to the workforce and into schools but need equal opportunity to excel and lead (Roosevelt). This is where glass ceiling and glass escalator come into play. Meaning that the system is geared toward letting certain people succeed and lead a strong and healthy career while others are pushed down and have a much more difficult time making a

career for themselves. This can include many things like unequal pay, and discrimination but it is primarily manifested through lack of opportunity to get promoted to higher level jobs. If people cannot climb the ladder like the white male, than why are they in that job or school in the first place. This shines a light on the fact that while affirmative action is good and helpful, it needs to be rewritten by today's standards to include a larger range of issues and it must acknowledge what our society needs for people currently, not 50 years ago.

Lastly, opposition to any form of affirmative action may claim that discrimination, racism, slavery and segregation are each a thing of the past. They may claim that there is no need to, in lieu of an apology, treat minorities and women specially. Without going into detail in that, one can simply argue that regardless of whether or not they ought to be repaid for their suffering, all humans deserve equality. Race, ethnicity, gender, and religion do not affect intelligence. Affirmative action does not treat students or workers with lower standards of work or intelligence, it just lets them have a chance. At the University of California, the grade point average of the average Hispanic student is 3.7 (Hispanic Outlook). All students admitted to the school must be in the top 12.5 percent of their graduating high school class (Hispanic Outlook). These students, as in other colleges and universities, are held to the same standards as any white or male student. Man, woman, nonconforming, black, Hispanic, white, Asian, native, mixed, it does not matter until someone makes it matter. Outreach programs must continue bringing students to college and affirmative action must remain,

lest it disappears and equal opportunity vanishes with it. Affirmative action must be recreated to continue to offer all that it can to minorities and women in need, because everyone can grow intelligent and everyone can succeed.

To conclude, a student should never be required to fear their own identity, affirmative action has helped society become more integrated and diverse through schools and the workplace (Fullinwider). The Orders were written many years ago, and the policies are outdated. They were written originally for the workplace and universities were added in a later revision, not as a primary concern. Affirmative action has helped considerably, but must be revised with modern sociopolitical issues in mind in order to continue offering the best chance for equality and easy diversity. Diversity is beneficial to students of all races, “ Students who experienced the most racial and ethnic diversity in classroom settings and in informal interactions with peers showed the greatest engagement in active thinking processes, growth in intellectual engagement and motivation, and growth in intellectual and academic skills” (qtd. in Fullinwider). All students should have equal opportunity to succeed because the color of a person’s skin or the composition of their x-y chromosomes cannot determine intelligence. While background can have an effect in the success of a student, and lower income students are less likely to apply for college, which is all the more reason to continue affirmative action in a modern form. Outreach programs to bring those students to colleges are just as important. Equal opportunity ought to be easy, not a struggle, and certainly not a debate.