

Developing affirmative action

Life



“ An action or policy favoring those who tend to suffer from discrimination, especially in relation to employment or education” - affirmative action, also commonly referred to as the paradox positive discrimination. Affirmative action was designed as a temporary measure to insure a “ leveled playing field” for all Americans specifically minorities and women. The affirmative action measure was created to be a catalyst in ending racial and gender discrimination in the workplace and was to be retracted once the presumable “ playing field” was leveled.

However, through various flaws and shortcomings in the policy, it grew into a form of reverse discrimination where individuals that were well qualified for positions were turned down in lieu of minorities. When it was created, the affirmative action policy was a necessary step in insuring equality for all, but twenty-first century America has many restrictions and guidelines to prevent employers from discriminating against someone based on their race, gender, religion and national origin, proving affirmative action to be irrelevant.

The essayist chose this topic because of her interest in the diversity of America’s current workforce. After various courses in economics as well as a course on public policy she became interested in programs designed to enhance social welfare in the United States of America. Also with growing concerns of immigration and the dwindling of whites as a majority in the United States, the topic of changes in the American workforce are sure to arise. The idea of affirmative action has drawn many supporting and opposing views since President John F. Kennedy first introduced it 1961 with the Executive Order number 10925. The order commanded all federal contractors (the public sector) to take “ affirmative action to ensure that

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applicants are treated equally without regard to race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

As years went on, the progressive Civil Rights' movement evolved the idea of affirmative action and called for it to encompass all public and private sectors in the United States. Affirmative action had many supporters including the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission that was created to insure equal opportunity in the workplace for all Americans. The idea of positive discrimination was rejected in the 1978 landmark court case Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, where the United States Supreme Court ruled that race could not be used as an admission standard to a university and "disadvantaged minority students" were not permitted to have admission spots reserved for them. Supporters of affirmative action believe that aiding those who have been historically disadvantaged will insure the end of the cycle of poverty and call for a justified wealth distribution throughout the United States. It is statically proven that on average, minorities are less wealthy than whites.

Statistics also prove that individuals in low-income households are less likely to receive a college education therefore making them unqualified for most jobs in America's current workforce. This cycle continues as these unqualified workers who were not able to get high paying jobs have children who are subsequently born into low-income households. In order for this cycle to discontinue, a policy should be put in place that will provide them an advantage over the wealthy white job seekers; the affirmative action policy provides this advantage. Sacrificing the well being of white males for a short period of time in order to catapult minorities and women into becoming

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qualified employees is a belief that many supporters of affirmative action hope for. Although the affirmative action policy was meant to be a temporary aid, a decade after it was created it morphed into a hypocritical attempt to fix a solution. College students from St. Norbert College, believe that “[it’ s] really justifying racism by it's own actions. Its policies totally judge people solely on skin color and gender. That is discrimination in itself. ”

Those in opposition of affirmative action believe that it is not fair to discriminate against someone that has worked hard to become qualified for a job position. They believe that other programs such as scholarships and extra tutoring programs for the underprivileged are better solutions to solving inequality in the workplace. Once minorities become equally educated and acquire skills for jobs in today’s workforce, they will inherently level the playing field on their own. The issue of affirmative action has acquired many praises and oppositions. From when it was enacted over fifty years ago, it has transformed into a controversial subject. Although this topic was more relevant during the period of the Civil Right’s Movement, it has recently gained momentum with the growing minority population.