

Affirmative action in higher education



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Affirmative Action The political debates over affirmative action seem less genuine than the goals. By this, I mean that the goals are noble. There is nothing wrong with promoting a diverse student body. It is certainly just to redress previous incidents of racial discrimination. The problem is politics. How much affirmative action is too much How much affirmative action is inadequate How do we treat the victims of affirmative action policies The politicization of these questions leads to an extremism that strays from common sense and fairness.

Those that favor affirmative action go so far as to advocate and defend the awarding of points to minorities. These points are substantial. At the other extreme, those that oppose affirmative action advocate the repeal of the concept in its entirety. What the political process needs, in my view, is a little more compromise. It is unfortunate that a white student is denied her dream after working so hard for so many years. It is equally unfortunate that a racial minority is denied the opportunity to study. Both deserve the opportunity to study in a college or university.

The conservative commentators present some valid arguments.

Discrimination, for instance, is wrong. Reverse discrimination punishes innocent students for the misdeeds of their predecessors. This is a difficult argument to overcome. Nonetheless, this argument seems too rigid. We don't live in a world of absolute truths. Thus, it seems to me that minor attempts to remedy decades of racial injustice are reasonable.

The liberal commentators emphasize the fact that minority students are still subject to disadvantages. There are social, cultural, and economic factors which affect their performance on standard entrance examinations. Racial discrimination, despite protests to the contrary, still exists. The argument for

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a level playing field, even if there is some intervention on behalf of minorities, is an appealing one. The real question is the degree of intervention that is required to level the playing field.

The United States Supreme Court was divided. In the end, they applied a balancing test to determine the outcome. I have learned that the Supreme Court can serve as a moderating force. They accepted neither the conservative viewpoint nor the liberal viewpoint. They decided the cases on their facts and sought a reasonable balance. This seems the best that we can do with an issue that polarizes people so intensely.

The Wage Gap

The wage gap affects me directly. As a woman, I am required to pay the same amount of money for products and services; at the same time, I am paid less for providing my services. My output, in financial terms, is the same. I contribute as much as a man. Despite this, there remains a very real possibility that I will not be paid the true worth of my contributions.

In the modern era, wage inequality is subtle. There is very little wage inequality among men and women under the age of twenty-five. This fact, however, is misleading. The older I become, and the higher I rise in an organization, the greater the likelihood is that I will be a victim of the wage gap. Why should I work harder if I am not going to receive complete compensation? It is a concern that many women have. It should also be a major concern for employers. If large sections of the labor force are disillusioned, and lacking motivation to excel, then an organization's productivity will very likely be affected.

Many women have to sacrifice a family lifestyle in order to compete with men in the labor market. They are compelled to work longer hours, to be

more productive, and to demonstrate a stronger commitment to their organization. These efforts, in the end, may not even result in wage equality.

I have an aunt who works as an attorney for a major law firm. For seven years she has worked extraordinarily hard to try and become a partner. She works so hard that she doesn't have time to get married. She doesn't have time to have children. She is sacrificing everything for an opportunity to become a partner in the law firm. The frightening thing is that her law firm only has a small percentage of female partners. Her chances of succeeding are not good. The men dominate the highly paid partnership positions.

As a country we should be worried about the wage gap for many reasons.

First, it is immoral to use gender as a basis to pay less money. Second, from an economic point of view, women will be less productive if they feel they are not being treated fairly. Finally, families need to have two wage earners today. Closing the wage gap will allow families to contribute more money, for example, on education. This, in turn, can save the government money.

Eliminating the wage gap, in the long run, is good for everyone.

Works Cited

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