

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

A MYTH DISPELLED

If slavery were a figment of one's imagination, if the Jim Crow laws had never existed, only then would Proposition 209 be acceptable, only then would all anti-affirmative action acts be justifiable. According to Civil Rights activist Jesse Jackson, "After 250 years of slavery, 100 years of apartheid, and 40 years of discrimination, we cannot burn the books and start anew at this point by instituting a color blind code of justice." Affirmative action consists of procedures to identify, recruit, or promote qualified members of disadvantaged minority groups and women in order to overcome the results of past discrimination and to deter employers from engaging in discriminatory practices in the present. Cries of "reverse discrimination" prevail from some members of the working class who complain that jobs are unjustly delegated to less capable minorities. Students alike feel that the detriments of affirmative action regarding university admissions far outweigh the benefits. In actuality, affirmative action opens the door to capable minorities to attain success in areas that in previous years would be denied to them. Affirmative action has also proven beneficial to whites as well.

Reverse discrimination provides a scapegoat for the capitalist ruling class to deny the underlying reason for wanting to abolish affirmative action: They have depended on the lower, underprivileged laborers to maintain their self-proclaimed high status. Less than 2% out of 90,000 employment discrimination cases before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission have actually been declared reverse discrimination. Racism is necessary in order for the capitalist class to exploit the working class economically and control the working class politically. Ever since the days of slavery capitalists have fostered and exploited racist divisions as a necessary divide-and-rule strategy for political domination over the working class (PLP, "Defend Affirmative Action"). Disavowing any action that could elevate the status of the working is essential to the maintenance of the ruling class which is dominated by White males. They constitute 80% of tenured professors, 80% of the House of Representatives, 86% of major law firm partners, 90% of Senators, 92% of Forbes 400, 97% of school superintendents, 99.9% of professional athletic team owners, and 100% of U.S. Presidents (Jackson, "The World & I"). According to Jackson, "It is clear that the notion of the angry White male is not grounded in reality. Rather, it is an error in perception that has been wrongfully validated by divisive political tactics" (Jackson, "The World & I").

The ruling class fails to realize that affirmative action benefits Blacks as well as Whites. Minorities and

women have attained admittance into fields such as county, state, and federal government jobs, the steel and textile industries, and Black firefighters have increased from 2.5% to 11.5% over a thirty year span due to affirmative action. Incomes for minorities and women at companies with affirmative action are on average five to six thousand dollars higher than companies without. Similarly, studies have proven that White males employed by these by these same pro-affirmative action firms receive higher incomes than non-affirmative action companies as well. White people not only benefit from affirmative action monetarily, but mentally and intellectually. By working along side Blacks, or by attending a diverse school, many whites broaden their perception of minorities, causing them to realize that that many people of color are equally as competent, if not more so. "When Affirmative Action brings Whites into greater contact with people of color it enables Whites to see that people of color are intelligent and hard working... it is White men who work where there are no provisions for affirmative action who are the most racist in their attitudes" (PLP, "Defend Affirmative Action"). Those who proclaim "reverse discrimination" ought to realize that not only does Affirmative Action provide equal opportunity for all, regardless of race or gender, it is a tremendous uniting force between the races and social classes. "When blacks and whites work together, white workers and professionals are more likely to discard racist stereotypes and unite in class solidarity with black workers in the struggle that benefits all workers" (PLP, "Defend Affirmative Action").

Affirmative action has come to benefit society as a whole. Eliminating affirmative action, as in California, causes the nation to regress to the days of overt racism when considering minority applications for jobs or colleges was not even fathomable. Decreasing diversity decreases one's knowledge about another, stifling the intellectual and mental growth of this nation; a lack of knowledge is ignorance. Protesting the aid that affirmative action provides a more integrated displays tremendous ignorance and little desire toward toward equal opportunity and improved race relations as well as denies the racist attitudes that already prevail in society. Prior to becoming California Governor, Pete Wilson claimed, "The affirmative action programs as a necessary means to achieve equity. It must come from the heart, but we must have goals to do it" (Jackson, "The World & I"). This nation has proven repeatedly in history that without the facilitation of Civil Rights laws, and Equal Opportunity laws, advancement for all persons, regardless of race or sex, ceases to exist.

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