

FACE OFF

ACTION

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Businesses, schools and other institutions gloat "equal opportunity" without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age or national origin, consistent with the law. President Johnson's executive order that initiated 'affirmative action' stated that "the contractor will not discriminate against any employee or applicant because of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin." It continues, saying, "the contractor will take affirmative action to ensure that employees are treated during employment, without regard to their race, color, religion, sex, or national origin."

Both of the above statements describing 'equal opportunity' and 'affirmative action' are consistent with each other and also are consistent with the following two statements:

"I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'"

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character."

Several presidencies have dealt with the affirmative action controversy, and, consequently, affirmative action has dramatically changed over the years.

Quotas and similar means of implementing affirmative action programs have driven the program away from its original purpose. These implementations have caused affirmative action programs, in their futile attempt to 'undo discrimination,' to become forms of

'reverse discrimination,' giving preference to 'minorities' with regard to their race, color, religion, sex and national origin.

Today quotas and other similar means of implementing affirmative action are no longer constitutional. Consequently, many affirmative action programs have been quieted and placed in the basement of South Building. And minority representation in institutions like Carolina has dropped. Although, past affirmative action programs have created noticeable and sought-after results, at least statistically, they have done so using stigmatizing tactics.

Furthermore, affirmative action never has reached down into the lower classes of our socio-economic system. Affirmative action has only benefited the middle class, with the greatest benefit going to white females. Students in the poorest schools, such as New York City's

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Public School 261, which is 90% colored and also an old roller skating rink, would never be assisted by affirmative action. After spending 18 years receiving a

poor education in our public school system, while experiencing persistent poverty, hunger, drug abuse and violence, these children have already been thrown away by our society. They are already destined to repeat this cycle in future generations. While violence, sexual promiscuity and racial discrimination are constantly promoted through the media, affirmative action does nothing to reach out to those who are in the most 'trifling' situations.

Today, black people have a middle class. Although middle-class Blacks can feel a little more economic security, the wealthy white men have gained even more ground, making socio-economic classes very distinct and unfair. And at the very bottom, in East St. Louis, N.Y.C. Public School 261 and Durham's Hillside High, our poorest people continue to suffer more and more.

For affirmative action programs to be worthwhile they must reach out to the most disadvantaged people and level the playing field, making true merit a reasonable basis for judgement.