

YOUNG ADULTS

Hello. My name is Jacob Jones. I'm 22, and I've just graduated from college. Since my Mom died six years ago, my younger brother Michael and I have lived with my Dad.

I've been looking for a good job that will get me started on a career, but I'm not having any luck finding one. I worked really hard to do well in college, but that doesn't seem to be enough anymore.

Some employers have told me that I'm not being considered because too many other people applying for the job have advanced degrees. Now I'm trying to decide if I should go on to graduate school and get an advanced degree myself. The problem is, I already have big education loans to pay back, and graduate school will put me even more in debt.

Other employers tell me that I'm qualified for the job. But they all have Affirmative Action goals for hiring more minorities and women. I know Affirmative Action is designed to make up for past discrimination—but I wasn't around then and wasn't part of the discrimination. It's frustrating.

My Dad can't get over how much attitudes have changed about who gets jobs—and why—since he was 22 years old. Back then, white males seemed to be favored. That wasn't fair, but I'm not sure what's happening to me is fair either. My girlfriend went to the same college I did, and she got a great job offer before she even graduated! I'm happy for her, but it also makes me feel really frustrated. I can't help being white or male—I was born that way.

The thing that stops me from getting too down about my job search is my brother Michael. He has bigger challenges

to face than I do because he was born physically disabled. He gets around in a wheelchair.

Disabled people, like minorities and women, have suffered from the kind of job discrimination that Affirmative Action is supposed to fix. Michael is only a freshman in college now, so he hasn't experienced any job discrimination yet.

But he sure does get treated badly sometimes.

I've seen people be rude to him when his wheelchair blocked a sidewalk. I've seen people talk down to him as though he were a little child. But mostly I see people who are so uncomfortable about his disability that they try to ignore him, pretend he's not there.

I hope in a few years when Michael is looking for a job he'll be helped by the fact

that employers have become more willing to hire people who are different. I know he'd make friends on the job just as he has in college. When people get to know my brother, he's not "different" anymore, he's just Michael.

As for me, if I don't go to graduate school I have to decide where I want to live. I don't want to stay at home forever, even though we live in a fun, diverse neighborhood in the city. A lot of my friends grew up in the suburbs and drive in for their jobs. They say the city has too much crime and is dirty. I don't want to be mugged, but I love the city's diversity and think I'd miss all the energy and nightlife. And I don't think I could afford the housing in the suburbs.

I'm not sure where I fit in. There's a lot to consider when you're not a kid anymore.



Meet Jacob. He's trying to find a job.

ASK JACOB

When the subject of jobs comes up, I keep hearing the words "Affirmative Action." What is it, and where did it come from?

Affirmative Action is the name of a program set up by the federal government 30 years ago to make up for past discrimination against minorities and women. The thinking was that African Americans and women had been discriminated against for so long that they needed extra help to gain equality with white men in jobs and education.

Today many people feel that after 30 years of Affirmative Action it is unfair to "prefer" one group over another—even if the goal is equality. Others feel we still have a long way to go to achieve equal treatment for minorities and women and should continue Affirmative Action.

DEIVERSITY TIDBITS

In Los Angeles, California, you could visit the Museum of Tolerance, the Japanese American National Museum, the California Afro-American Museum, and the Korean Cultural Museum. In the future, you might visit the Museum of Chinese American History, a Latino Museum of History, Art and Culture, and other proposed museums that reflect the diversity of this West Coast city.

Look through the newspaper or library for information about the museums in your area. What sort of diversity do you find in your museums? If you could choose, would you change what is offered? Why or why not?