Ending Affirmative Action

by Shannon Mikesky

Affirmative action was the name of a policy first issued by President Lyndon B. Johnson, in September of 1965. This executive order was put into effect so that federal contractors would take “affirmative action” to ensure that all qualified applicants were considered for jobs, regardless of race (Mosley 69). This initial affirmative action policy set into motion a wave of anti-discriminatory practices that still affect the American people today. At the time, the policy was created with good intentions and moral reasons; the civil rights movement had recently ended, and some parts of the nation needed to be forced to view all Americans as equals (Vertreace 58). However, over the years, affirmative action programs and ideas have begun to have the reverse effect. Although anti-discriminatory policies may have been crucial after the civil rights movement, they are no longer necessary, fair, or beneficial to the American people.

In 2003, the University of Michigan was awarding minority applicants an automatic twenty points on their admissions process. To gain entry to the University, they would only need a total one hundred and fifty points (New Criterion 68). For no reason other than the nature of their skin-color, non-white applicants were being given over thirteen percent of points they would need to be accepted as undergraduate students. Unfair preferences such as these are still being given to minority groups all over the United States. However, there is something that the many supporters of affirmative action do not realize. By giving preferential treatment to the minorities, they are only continuing the cycle of discrimination based on race (New Criterion 2015 Schulenburg Campus Emerging Writers Contest Winner
69). Despite all these affirmative action programs have done, racial discrimination still exists. Ironically, the tables have turned, and minority groups are no longer the targets.

Steven Yates asserts that “affirmative action has replaced discrimination against women and minorities with discrimination against white men—reverse discrimination” (qtd. in New Criterion 71). Schools and businesses are now being coerced into admitting and hiring people of all colors, while the majority, white men, are being left out. The enraging effect of this is that those being passed up are often more qualified for the job they are pursuing. Even though the United States currently has a huge number of unemployed citizens, the government is still trying to force employers to hire minority workers and “get their numbers right” (“A Race” A12).

The issue of meeting racial quotas first came into effect when “The 1964 [Civil Rights] Act . . . provided a private right of action, allowing an individual to pursue civil remedy in the courts for proven employment discrimination. Several very expensive individual and class action settlements and verdicts followed, and employers began to pay attention to their responsibility to ensure equal employment opportunity” (Vertreace 58). The issue of companies meeting racial quotas is still prevalent today. In fact, the Investor’s Business Daily describes our current Assistant Attorney General as “a radical race-baiter who’s already estranged the nation’s largest lenders by falsely accusing them of racism” (“A Race” A12). In fear of being sued for discrimination companies are losing the ability to freely choose who they employ. This phenomenon of reverse discrimination is currently a major problem within the American society.

Not only is reverse discrimination morally wrong, it is also unconstitutional. For affirmative action to work the way it was designed to, one race must become unequal in order to
make another equal. “If the Constitution prohibits exclusion of black and other minorities on racial grounds, it cannot permit the exclusion of whites on similar grounds; for it must be the exclusion on racial grounds which offends the Constitution and not the particular skin color of the person excluded” (Bickel vi). If racial discrimination is the act of differentiating between two people based on their descent, how can racial quotas be Constitutional if they require employers and admissions offices to hire and admit their members based on their ethnicity? Because discriminating against minorities is illegal, it must also be illegal to discriminate for minorities.

One of the main reasons the majority population feels it is necessary to give preferential treatment to racial minorities is because the minorities are predominantly African American. Because of the wrongs their ancestors committed during the times of slavery, whites feel it is their duty to pay reparations to black Americans. Yet surprisingly, the “white guilt” these people feel is not entirely self-imposed. “Propaganda and emotional manipulation are used to teach whites to think the best about ‘people of color’ and the worst about themselves” (Roberts and Stephen 80). From young on, children are taught about the atrocities of slavery in an overly simplified manner—what the evil white people did to the innocent black people. They are told of the absolute worst scenarios, where slaves were whipped, beaten, and forced to work until they collapsed. The guilty conscience these white children develop is carried with them throughout their lives, which is why they do not fight back when they are pushed behind African Americans.

In no way is this argument against white guilt justifying the awful crimes committed by slave workers and owners. The practice of slavery was a horrible injustice and those affected by
it did deserve compensation, but the time for repayment must eventually come to an end. At some point, the sacrifices owed to those who were harmed have to stop. “[Those who argue for continued repayment to minorities] seem to take for granted that to deserve something is to obligate others to supply it” (Gross 36). Although we will never forget, the time has come to forgive and move on as a free and equal nation.

The truth is, over fifty-five years after affirmative action first was implemented, the United States has matured as a nation. Policies that force all races to be viewed equally are no longer necessary. No further proof of this is needed than seeing that the current president, Barack Obama, is the son of an African American man. Affirmative action programs that still linger on today only cause opposition and conflict among American citizens (New Criterion 68). In addition, “[affirmative action] is counterproductive, for what it reinforces is the perception that African Americans can only succeed if held to lower or different standards” (Mosley and Capaldi 83).

Those who support affirmative action argue that the programs continue to provide qualified minorities with a chance to compete with white males. They claim that by ruling in favor of discrimination cases, the Supreme Court has provided the minorities with a “fair chance to compete” (Scott 108-109). While this is true in some scenarios, there is still no denying that discrimination in one way or another is occurring. Both parties for and against reverse discrimination will agree that differentiating on the basis of race is wrong. Therefore, the argument is not whether one should support the minorities or the majorities; it is that a new race-free solution is needed.
Luckily, one promising solution to this problem has already been found and produced positive results. Rice University has implemented an admissions program that admits applicants based on the circumstances they have overcome, rather than their ethnicity. They carefully examine the applicant’s childhood, individual traits, and overall uniqueness to determine if they will be accepted into the University. “By considering a wide range of life experiences without discussing race . . . Rice admissions officials have admitted and enrolled freshmen classes that have been racially diverse” (Roach 32). In addition, many scholarship organizations are now beginning to focus financial aid on the underprivileged rather than strictly giving to minorities.

In order for the nation to become whole and unified, racial discrimination on any level must go away. The great American melting pot has been taken off the burner; the American people now embrace all the differences that each race possesses. The truth is stated by Miro M. Todorovich when he says “we do not see how you can possibly hope to create color-blindness out of color consciousness and nondiscrimination out of preferential treatment” (Todorovich and Glickstein 22). Success stories such as the admissions process at Rice University have to be spread and put into effect by colleges all over the country. The United States has outgrown the need to be coerced into treating all cultures equally. Now it is up to the government to trust its citizens enough to remove the fear of being sued for discrimination.

Differentiating between any two people based on ethnicity is unconstitutional and morally wrong. Whether it is in the workplace or when dealing with an application process, taking race out of the equation is the best solution. Rice University has proven that this method of choosing applicants by analyzing their life circumstances, rather than the color of their skin,
can and will work. In addition, the United States has matured to a level where repayment to African Americans can now come to an end. Although compensation may have been necessary to the African American people immediately after the time of slavery, the years that have passed have healed the wounds. America has become a nation that welcomes unique and independent citizens. Now it is the government’s turn to realize that its people have outgrown the need of babysitter watching their every move. It is time for America to move on as one united nation of equal beings—free of fear and colorblind.
Works Cited


