

# AFFIRMATIVE ACTION



## Vocabulary

**Redressing** : Remedy or set right (an undesirable or unfair situation).

**Legacy** : An amount of money or property left to someone in a will.

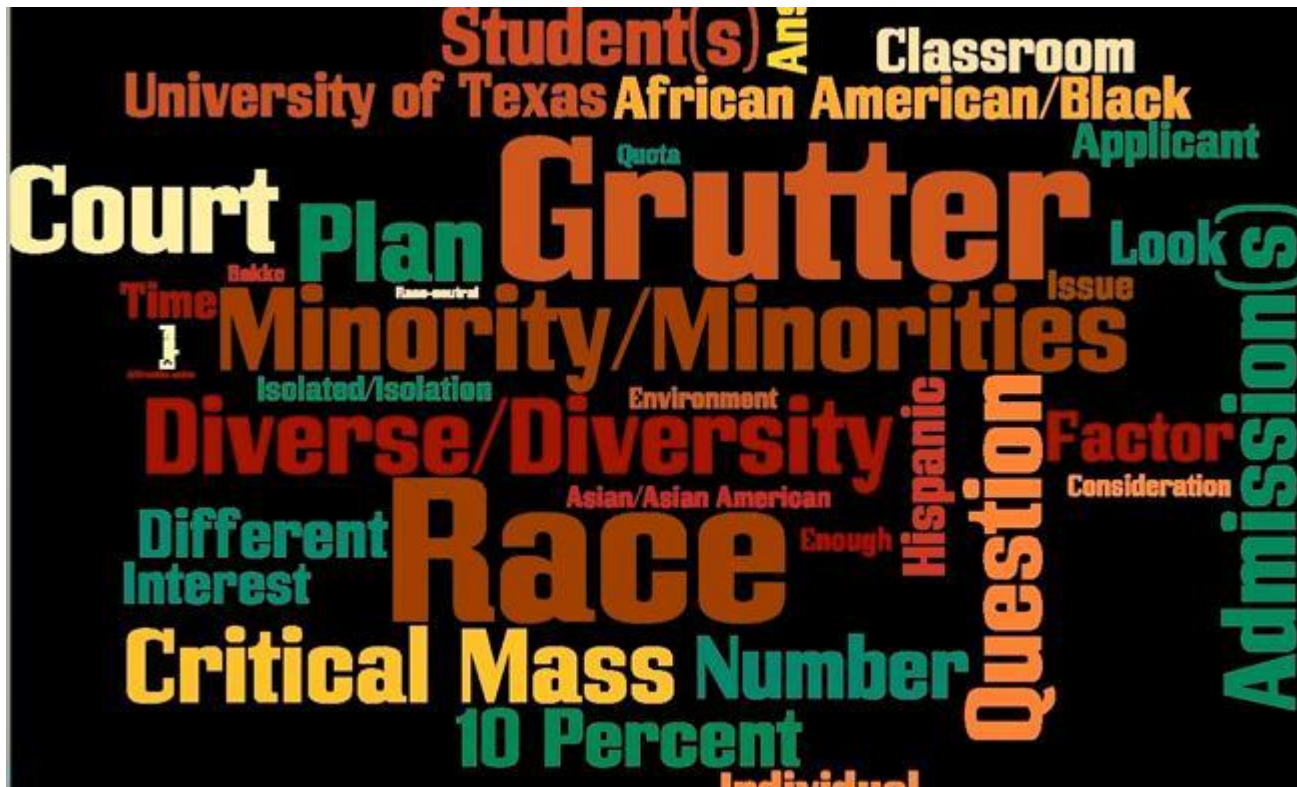
**Eradicated** : Destroy completely; put an end to.

**Underrepresented** : Provide with insufficient or inadequate representation.

**Oppression** : Prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or exercise of authority.

**Amplify** : Enlarge upon or add detail to (a story or statement).

Affirmative action is one of the most effective tools for redressing the injustices caused by our nation's historic discrimination against people of color and women, and for leveling what has long been an uneven playing field. A centuries-long legacy of racism and sexism has not been eradicated despite the gains made during the civil rights era.



Affirmative action policies are those in which an institution or organization actively engages in efforts to improve opportunities for historically excluded groups in American society. Affirmative action policies often focus on employment and education. In institutions of higher education, affirmative action refers to admission policies that provide equal access to education for those groups that have been historically excluded or underrepresented, such as women and minorities.



## Ten Myths About Affirmative Action :

- The only way to create a color-blind society is to adopt color-blind policies.
- Affirmative action has not succeeded in increasing female and minority representation.
- Affirmative action may have been necessary 30 years ago, but the playing field is fairly level today.
- The public doesn't support affirmative action anymore.
- A large percentage of White workers will lose out if affirmative action is continued.
- If Jewish people and Asian Americans can rapidly advance economically, African Americans should be able to do the same.

- You can't cure discrimination with discrimination.
- Affirmative action tends to undermine the self-esteem of women and racial minorities.
- Affirmative action is nothing more than an attempt at social engineering by liberal Democrats.
- Support for affirmative action means support for preferential selection procedures that favor unqualified candidates over qualified candidates.



# The Affirmative Action Debate

**Supporters of affirmative action** make the following arguments:

- Colleges and universities reach out to groups that are underrepresented and urge students to apply. Institutions often offer financial aid to underrepresented students and provide on-campus support programs to improve their academic success.
- Affirmative action programs have resulted in doubling or tripling the number of minority applications to colleges or universities.
- Graduates who benefited from affirmative action programs say that they have received better jobs, earned more money, and ultimately are living better lives because of the opportunity they received.
- Diversity in higher education provides an educational advantage for all students, both personally and intellectually.
- Affirmative action policies are necessary in order to compensate for centuries of racial, social, and economic oppression.

**Critics of affirmative action** make the following arguments:

- The policy is outdated and causes a form of reverse discrimination by favoring one group over another, based on racial preference rather than academic achievement.
- Affirmative action policies lower standards and make students less accountable..
- Affirmative action policies do not necessarily help economically disadvantaged students.
- States should focus on other policies or programs that encourage equal opportunity, such as setting high expectations for all students and improving their college readiness.
- Many opponents believe that diversity in higher education is extremely important, but that affirmative action only serves to amplify racial prejudice.





## Questions

1. Do you favor or oppose affirmative action programs for minorities and women for job hiring in the workplace?
2. In general, do you think we need to increase, keep the same, or decrease affirmative action programs in this country?
3. Do you favor or oppose affirmative action programs for minorities and women for admission to colleges and universities?
4. Are there any ways that affirmative action can be improved?
5. What's the difference between equal opportunity and affirmative action policies?
6. Is affirmative action a form of reverse discrimination?

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