

On Affirmative Action (with regard to Asian-Americans)

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A little bit about me: I am Asian-American, and I am one of the first in my family to have been born and raised in the United States. I live in Brookfield, Wisconsin—a rich, peaceful neighborhood with top-ranking high schools and hundreds of opportunities for success. My family and I go on vacation every year; we've been to Puerto Rico, London, and multiple places within China. My family has enough money that, if I need something, I can get it - no restrictions (well, for the most part). I am not the kind of person that you would think *needs* affirmative action to become a reality.

I am also, however, a high school student that has had limited exposure to the outside world. I don't know what it's like to be rejected from a job because of your race. I don't know what it's like to compete against everyone else in the pursuit of making it into some sort of university. Generally speaking, I have never faced discrimination. To be frank: Asian-Americans, from my perspective, don't deal with as much discrimination as other minorities do.

Now, I can't give you a straight answer as to whether or not I support affirmative action. The phrase itself is frustratingly vague. Originally, "affirmative action" meant that employers had to hire without regard to race, religion, or origin. That sounds pretty good on the surface, if you ask me. But somehow, the meaning has changed so that "affirmative action" refers to "positive discrimination"—favoring minorities and/or groups that have been wrongfully harmed in the past. And *that* is an entirely different story. We're essentially trying to correct history with this new definition of "affirmative action."

Even without buckets of knowledge on this topic, I can see that there are a lot of issues with this modern definition. First of all, I really doubt that *all* minorities (certainly not all Asians, either) need these benefits that affirmative action provides. Some of us—my family included—are doing just fine without all this aid. Second: affirmative action has created a sort of battlefield between the various minorities residing in the United States. Take Asians for example. We fall into this weird no-man's-land where we don't necessarily feel the pressure of discrimination as intensely as others, but are unwilling—for lack of better word—to bend to the white majority. The "about-me" paragraph at the top is proof of this. Third: affirmative action is not our only option. What if, instead of focusing on race, we focus on financial statuses?

In the perfect utopian world (fun fact: "utopia" means "nowhere"), race would not be an issue. There might be only one race, or we might have true color-blindness, or race might not even be a concept. But that utopia doesn't exist and the odds are strong that it never will. Race is an issue that will constantly plague our personal beliefs, our laws, and our society. Affirmative action is a solution that was created to address inequality but it doesn't look like it holds all the answers. It will be a while before we find a solution that does.