

Discrimination And Inequality -- The Reasons Behind All Affirmative Actions, And Why Hasn't The Problem Been Solved Yet?

Racial, sexual, and religious discrimination has existed in human societies since the beginning of time. In fact, we can even call it a part of our culture. However, people living in such societies commonly agree that it's not ethical to discriminate, and educational institutions are doing their very best to teach new generations about it. So why isn't the problem solved already? Is it possible to ever solve the problem? And if yes, how can we solve it? **By William Chen**

What Is Affirmative Action?

Imagine the following scene: Two men, A and B, were exactly the same except their skin color -- they even had the equally handsome hairstyle. The two men came to a company at the same time to meet the employer, hoping they would be the lucky one to get hired. Even though they were both the perfect candidate for the job, the employer decided to hire A immediately, because he took their races into consideration. He thought that A was racially "better" than B.

This is a type of discrimination, and it is one of the reasons behind an affirmative action.

Later, B went back home sadly and told the story to his friends. And B's friends decided that the employer's decision was unfair. So they organized a demonstration at the company arguing B should have the same chance of getting the job as A.

Now, this is an affirmative action: An action or policy favoring those who tend to suffer from discrimination, especially in relation to employment or education.

Lawsuit Against Harvard -- An Example

A good example of affirmative action would be the lawsuit against Harvard in the news recently. Basically, a group representing Asian-Americans sued Harvard for its bias against Asian students during the process of rating applicants, which lowered their chances of being admitted into the university. It turned out that the suspicions of Asian-American students and applicants were right all along: Harvard was indeed taking racial factors into the rating of students. Harvard disagrees, saying that there is no discrimination, but there were simply too many Asian students at the university and that seeking diversity is a valuable part of student selection.

The Rudimentary Problem

Coming back to the main problem: Why are discrimination and inequality still problems? Don't people agree that discrimination against specific groups is wrong?

Well, the biggest hindrance to solving this issue is that people stereotype against a certain group of people according to what they see and hear about the group. This is actually a very important skill that our brains develop over time to help us survive in this world, and it isn't something that education and social standards can change easily. We experience and analyze this world, and decide what is the right thing to do, which involves a whole lot of assumptions and judgments. Remember that "unfair" employer in the beginning? Maybe he had hired employees who were the same race as B, but they were mostly lazy, inefficient, or mean to other people. Maybe he had heard about people with the same race as B being bad workers. All these information and experiences would take place in his decision to hire A, but abandon B.

To solve the problem of discrimination, we will need most people to value each and every person; We will need people to not make assumptions on individuals purely based on previous experiences with specific racial, sexual, or religious groups; It means that people must betray their primordial instinct, and adopt a new way of thinking... There will be ways to solve this problem, but certainly, the transition is going to be very difficult.