

Protect Fairness and Equality

In November, voters will decide the future of affirmative action.

In the United States, access to the American Dream is often framed as a race in which the swiftest runners win. Critics of affirmative action say that such policies give some runners an unfair head start in an otherwise fair race. At the same time, many supporters of affirmative action say we need these policies to assist “disabled” runners. In their focus on the runners rather than the track, both of these perspectives miss the point. Affirmative action isn’t about advancing “disabled” runners, but about repairing damaged lanes and removing the barriers that block the pathways to opportunity that only some runners face. Policies that promote inclusion, such as affirmative action, are designed to equalize the conditions of an otherwise unfair race and give everyone a fair chance to compete.

As long as such inequalities exist, treating everyone fairly does not mean that we should treat everyone the same. Instead, we must support and defend policies that remove the numerous barriers that obstruct the lanes of women, Latinos, Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans and others disadvantaged by their racial, gender and class backgrounds.

DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE! COMMON MYTHS ABOUT AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

MYTH 1: *Affirmative Action is preferential treatment.*

FACT: **Affirmative action creates a fair competition by removing the barriers that obstruct the lanes of women and minorities in the race toward the American Dream.**

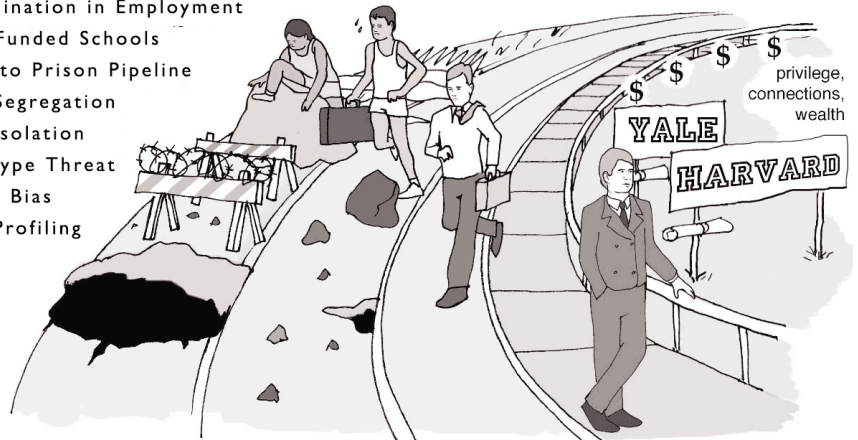
For example, because female business owners remain outside traditional old boy networks, they often receive only a fraction of the public contracting dollars that men do. Similarly, women and minority job seekers are frequently shut out of good jobs in trades where opportunities go only to those who are in the loop. Efforts to ensure that outsiders have equal access to opportunities are only fair and do not amount to “preferential treatment.”

MYTH 2: *Affirmative action is no longer needed in America.*

FACT: **Since exclusion and unfair treatment persist in America, we need remedies to deal with them.**

Affirmative action opponents turn a blind eye to the effects of race and gender on access to opportunity. But common sense tells us that any attempt to solve a problem by ignoring it makes no sense at all. Imagine trying to eliminate the deadly consequences of lead poisoning by being blind to lead paint! If we want to cre-

Discrimination in Employment
Under Funded Schools
School to Prison Pipeline
Hyper-Segregation
Racial Isolation
Stereotype Threat
Implicit Bias
Racial Profiling



Give everyone a fair chance to compete. Support affirmative action!

In an ideal world, the lanes on the track would be the same, and we would all have equal access to opportunities. In reality, the paths of women and minorities continue to be blocked by many obstacles, including racial and gender discrimination, residential isolation, poverty, glass ceilings, lack of access to good schools, and more. Some runners can realize their potential more easily because these barriers do not block their paths, while still others benefit from privileges like wealth and family connections that give them a head start.

ate opportunities that are truly equal, we need to address the barriers to opportunity. Promoting equality and supporting affirmative action go hand in hand!

MYTH 3: *Affirmative action rewards the unqualified.*

FACT: **The real myth is that we have an equal playing field and that the most qualified people are the ones who get ahead. In fact, affirmative action helps to offset barriers that unfairly block the pathways of qualified Americans who are fully able to succeed. In so doing, it promotes equal opportunity.**

The world is full of people whose talents are not always recognized by traditional measures of intelligence. For example, although he went on to be one of the most gifted orators of the 20th century, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. scored very poorly on a standardized verbal test in his youth. Research has shown that such tests and similar criteria are often biased and underestimate the capabilities of working class individuals, women, and people of color, and that they do not accurately predict professional or educational success. In countering built-in discrimination, affirmative action policies offset limited measures of merit and identify individu-

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als whose talents and potential might otherwise be overlooked.

MYTH 4: *Opposing affirmative action is consistent with Dr. King's dream of a colorblind America.*

FACT: Dr. King and other civil rights leaders never believed that racial inequality could be fixed by ignoring the problem of racism. In fact, Dr. King supported affirmative action and advocated the use of race-conscious measures to provide opportunities for minorities.

MYTH 5: *Affirmative Action only targets African Americans.*

FACT: Affirmative action targets many people who continue to face opportunity barriers, including women, Native Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, South Asians, African Americans, Arab Americans, and others. By opening fair access to more Americans, affirmative action benefits families, businesses, coworkers, communities, and our entire society.

MYTH 6: *Affirmative Action should be about class, not race.*

FACT: Race and gender discrimination continue to be significant problems in our country, and race- and gender-conscious policies are needed to correct them. For example, a recent study showed that job applicants with "white-sounding names" were twice as likely to be called back for interviews as applicants with "black-sounding names" who had the same qualifications. Another study found that a white job applicant with a criminal record was more likely to receive a second interview than a similarly qualified African American applicant with no criminal record. Policies that address only class issues cannot address such injustices, and are not sufficient to combat the barriers limiting opportunities for racial minorities. Fortunately, many affirmative action programs do take economic status into account, so race, gender and class need not be pitted against one another in the pursuit of equality. Local decision-makers should remain free to determine the scope of affirmative action in their communities, and national campaigns should not impose a one-size-fits-all version of equality.

Stop the Civil Rights Rollback!

In 2008, Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska and Oklahoma will be affirmative action battlegrounds. Ward Connerly and the American Civil Rights Institute (ACRI) are attempting to dismantle an array of equal opportunity programs by introducing anti-affirmative action ballot initiatives—so-called "civil rights" initiatives—in these states. Don't be fooled: join the fight to keep fairness and equality alive by defending affirmative action.

Q: *Who is Ward Connerly and what is the American Civil Rights Institute?*

A: The ACRI is a right wing institute supported by wealthy conservatives working to end affirmative action throughout the nation.

As a member of the Board of Regents of the University of California (UC) system in the early 1990's, Ward Connerly, a conservative African American businessman, led the charge to eliminate affirmative action in the UC system. Connerly and the ACRI have also waged successful campaigns in California, Washington and Michigan to end affirmative action in state contracting, public education, and employment. The ACRI is supported by wealthy conservatives who hide behind Connerly and other people of color promoting discriminatory political initiatives. Connerly supporters include Rupert Murdoch, Joseph Coors, William Hume, the Bradley Foundation, the American Enterprise Institute, the Center for Individual Rights, the Heritage Foundation, the Jacqueline Hume Foundation, and others.

Q: *What do these ballot initiatives propose to do?*

A: End affirmative action and other programs designed to address race- and gender-based barriers to equal opportunity in public education, public employment and public contracting.

A successful anti-affirmative action ballot initiative in your state will have far-reaching consequences, dramatically reducing the participation of women and minorities in public education, state contracting and employment. In states where ACRI initiatives have passed, they have been used to challenge a whole host of affirmative action programs, including targeted outreach, mentoring, admissions, hiring, and data collection. For example, in California, the ACRI-sponsored Proposition 209 was used as the basis for dismantling programs that required contractors bidding on city proj-

ects to document efforts to include minority and women subcontractors in their bids, and to challenge data collection requirements that would help the government identify racial and gender discrimination. Even battered women's shelters and domestic violence programs have been challenged in California as promoting gender-based "preferences."

Q: *I believe in equality, and am against discrimination and preferential treatment. Will the ACRI's initiatives promote civil rights?*

A: No. The ACRI tells voters that its initiatives will end "discrimination" and "preferential treatment," when in fact they will end a broad range of programs that promote fairness and equality.

The ACRI is attempting to mislead voters by mischaracterizing the initiatives' purpose and hiding the fact that they will end affirmative action. It's no accident that the ACRI calls its initiatives "civil rights" initiatives, despite the fact that they actually work against civil rights. The ACRI deliberately co-opts this and other language of the Civil Rights Movement to confuse voters.

In addition, ACRI petitioners have deliberately and systematically worked to convince voters that their initiatives actually support affirmative action rather than seek to abolish it. A federal court found evidence of systematic and widespread voter fraud by the ACRI and has denounced the organization's tactics as fraudulent, but Connerly has continued to use the same dirty tricks in other states, determined to confuse and divide American voters.

Affirmative action is about fairness and equality, not preferential treatment. It's a matter of simple justice.

DEFEND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND STOP THE CIVIL RIGHTS ROLLBACK.