

# Official Statement regarding #AffirmativeAction



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On August 24th, 2017, *The New York Times* published an article entitled "Even With Affirmative Action, Blacks and Hispanics Are More Underrepresented at Top Colleges Than 35 Years Ago." This article shares the result of a WHAT study that shows that the number of students of color at top colleges and universities have declined since 1980. examines the percentage of underrepresented minorities of color's presence in different colleges and universities throughout the United States. It results that there are more students of color at less selective institutions of higher education but their presence in elite campuses are limited and has even decreased within the past 35 years.

The National Association for Ethnic Studies firmly advocates for the increased admission and inclusion of students of color at institutions of higher learning. There are imperative issues that warrant scrutiny within conversations in relation to affirmative action. Several myths exist that continually frame affirmative action as unnecessary or an unfair practice. Critics of affirmative action consistently disregard the socioeconomic realities of continuing unequal opportunities in economics, education, health, housing, environmental exposures. Those critics that do acknowledge such inequalities, often simply blame the individuals as solely responsible for their struggles.

The findings of this recent study show that college and university policies are not disadvantaging white students, and in fact are failing at providing increased access to students from all of the nation's communities. Institutions of higher education that use a simple process for college admission which applies the same criteria of test scores and student grades for evaluating student achievement. It is important to reiterate that race is one factor among many that are taken into consideration in the student admissions process.

Affirmative action was first introduced in the 1960s. It aimed at fighting against racial discrimination through admission policies that provide access to education for groups that have been historically excluded or underrepresented. However, almost 60 years later, students of color continue to be misrepresented in higher education. Even though racial-conscious admissions have assisted students of color in gaining a bridgehead into institutions of higher education, there has been real pushback with affirmative action being attacked as a mechanism of reverse racism. This argument totally disregards the fact that the vestiges of discrimination have not yet disappeared.

It is indispensable to acknowledge the fact that potential low levels of achievement are not the sign of a lack of effort and/or will but rather the result of unequal access to key educational resources such as skilled or culturally-competent teachers as well as a curriculum of quality. In other words, since people of color do not receive the same learning opportunities as other more privileged groups, they do not have the same chances to access an institution of higher education; hence the importance of affirmative action.

In the current political context, it is crucial to be clear about the layers of information hidden behind the concept of "affirmative action," as well as to understand its impact on communities of color and the institutions that appear to be once again pushing them to the social margins.

We ask you to join us in the fight for ever-increasing and targeted opportunities for students of color who should have access to a high-quality education.

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