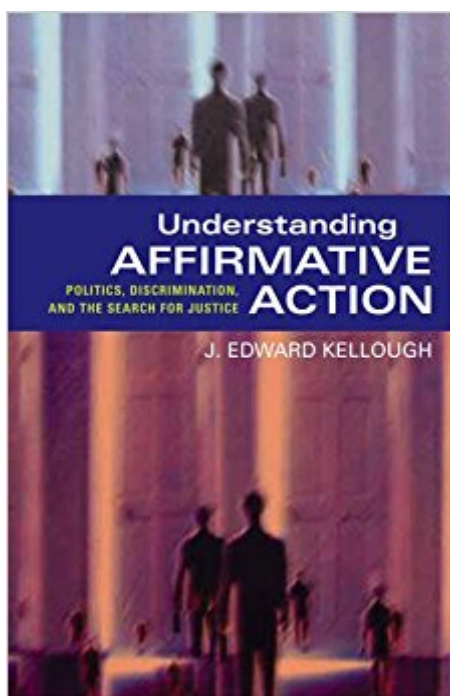


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# Understanding Affirmative Action: Politics, Discrimination, And The Search For Justice



## Synopsis

For some time, the United States has been engaged in a national debate over affirmative action policy. A policy that began with the idea of creating a level playing field for minorities has sparked controversy in the workplace, in higher education, and elsewhere. After forty years, the debate still continues and the issues are as complex as ever. While most Americans are familiar with the term, they may not fully understand what affirmative action is and why it has become such a divisive issue. With this concise and up-to-date introduction, J. Edward Kellough brings together historical, philosophical, and legal analyses to fully inform participants and observers of this debate. Aiming to promote a more thorough knowledge of the issues involved, this book covers the history, legal status, controversies, and impact of affirmative action in both the private and public sectors—and in education as well as employment. In addition, Kellough shows how the development and implementation of affirmative action policies have been significantly influenced by the nature and operation of our political institutions. Highlighting key landmarks in legislation and court decisions, he explains such concepts as "disparate impact," "diversity management," "strict scrutiny," and "representative bureaucracy." *Understanding Affirmative Action* probes the rationale for affirmative action, the different arguments against it, and the known impact it has had. Kellough concludes with a consideration of whether or not affirmative action will remain a useful tool for combating discrimination in the years to come. Not just for students in public administration and public policy, this handy volume will be a valuable resource for public administrators, human resource managers, and ordinary citizens looking for a balanced treatment of a controversial policy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"A condensed single author treatment of affirmative action, rather than the raft of edited volumes available on the market, is a welcome contribution to the field, especially for students requiring a brief introduction to past and present policies." •Teachers College Record

"Kellough offers a well-rounded presentation of one of the most grossly misunderstood social and academic policies in American history. His discussion manages to bridge the most salient points concerning this policy into one book, offering readers a one-stop shop of information concerning affirmative action. In succinct fashion, Kellough provides a well-balanced discussion that highlights arguments in support of and in opposition to affirmative action." •AMERICAN JOURNAL OF EDUCATION

"Understanding Affirmative Action serves to fill a critical gap in the literature on affirmative action by giving a developed history of the policy development along with the current status of scholarship on the topic. The book has the potential to become a classic in the field. This book serves as an excellent handbook for those who are active in scholarship concerning affirmative action and an exceptional guide for graduate students and scholars looking to begin work in affirmative action research." •Kenneth J. Meier, Texas A&M University

Understanding Affirmative Action is a mediocre work ignorant of the actual effects of governmental racism on society. Since author Kellough doesn't understand the benefits of allowing civil society and the free-market to correct for racism, and of the inherent and inevitable injustice in trying to avenge oneself collectively for past societal wrongs on innocent young people and others while at the same time lowering the educational and employment bar and thus societal expectations for governmentally-privileged minorities, his analysis of many important points, and of thinkers who both disagree and agree, is faulty. His work does have, however, some value as legal history. For example, his obliviousness to the widespread and debilitating effects of academic mismatch, first observed by economist Thomas Sowell—who was roundly condemned for his perspicacity by liberals throughout the higher education system—is typical. One would never learn, from reading this book, for example, that black college applicants have been automatically simply granted 150 + points often on their Academic Index (a combination of SAT scores plus class rank and GPA) to make them more 'admissions-competitive' with whites and Asians; neither would one learn that this is called 'race-norming'; neither would one learn that initial as well as later cohorts of black students

admitted via affirmative action often did and still perform disastrously because of their lack of academic preparation; neither would one learn that these black students unsurprisingly have much lower graduation rates, which can affect them psychologically for years to come; neither would one learn that when these black students attend lower tier colleges, they do much better, graduating at much higher rates and thus getting better jobs after graduation precisely because there was no academic mismatch to start with and also because prospective employers understood that they didn't get into these lower-tiered colleges for racist reasons. No, you won't get THAT kind of understanding and THOSE kinds of facts from this book. Typical as well are his lauding of the sad Patricia Gurin, whose amicus brief for the Supreme Court has been ably deconstructed in depth by Thomas Wood (described by Kellough as a 'white male academic', as if that has anything to do with the truth of his arguments) in *Race and Higher Education*. A third, more detailed example is that of his analysis of Bok and Bowen's influential book *The Shape of the River*, which allegedly demonstrated that racist preferential treatment in elite colleges is effective-and from which similar earlier ideas were used by the clueless Justice Powell to ground his Bakke opinion and in presenting the presently fashionable 'diversity rationale' for affirmative action. Kellough evaded mentioning, or was ignorant of, any of the numerous flaws of *The Shape of the River* and that it actually failed to prove in any conclusive way what its two liberal university president authors intended. For example, Bok and Bowen, in *The Shape of the River*: a) ignored addressing the earlier work of Elliot and Strenta which had disputed their findings, b) used data which was not made available publically, but only to select researchers-who then however found that the data often didn't support Bok and Bowen's conclusions, c) failed to specifically test for the varying degrees of racist preference and thus academic mismatch and whether that was correlated with increased academic problems, which it likely was-thus proving nothing about preferential treatment per se as opposed to simple attendance at these elite colleges (since mismatched and matched students were lumped together), d) ignored the worse mismatch effect in lower-tiered schools, which they could have measured, and which, given the much greater number of students, would have resolved the issue one way or the other. If they were interested in proving the benefits of racist preferences, doing this would have shown how wrong their general thesis was. e) claim that these affirmative action policies were instrumental in helping form the emerging black middle class. However, given how huge the black middle class is-around 15 million as of 2000-and how minuscule the numbers of blacks graduating with advanced degrees from these elite colleges-something in the order of thousands-one can only shake one's head at the boldness of this attempt by Bok and Bowen to take credit for economic effects virtually entirely unrelated to affirmative action. William Bowen later

distinguished himself in 2006 in the Duke lacrosse case by co-authoring, with Julius Chambers, a report vindicating the cowardly and politically correct actions of Duke dean Richard Brodhead. In the process he ignored a great deal of contrary evidence, some brought forward by the Coleman Report, vindicating the three young white male lacrosse players and pointing to their innocence. In effect, Bowen saw racism in these three young white students where there was none.-----A fourth example-Kellough's treatment of the effects of California's Proposition 209 in 1997, which abolished affirmative action in the University of California system for a period of time-also shows him getting it wrong. In particular, contrary to the liberal fear that it would have a 'chilling effect' on minorities, the effect was actually the opposite: a 'warming effect':a) applications from EVERY ethnic group, from black to Asians, INCREASED, likely because a) black and minority students liked the idea of competing on equal terms and not being labeled with the stigma of being an 'affirmative action baby', and b) because white and Asian students realized they weren't going to be being punished for their skin color. The black 'yield rate', i.e., the decision by those students accepted by Berkeley to actually enroll, shot up by over FIFTY percent in 1998.b) given that blacks and Hispanics were no longer admitted for racist reasons, it's true that their acceptance rates to Berkeley initially dropped by half. However, because the mismatch effect was no longer occurring, subsequent GRADUATION rates for black and Hispanics as a group increased dramatically, precisely because many more of these students could now hack the courses. In fact, their absolute graduation rates, even given the lower numbers of blacks, eventually EXCEEDED the earlier graduation rates. Transfer students also graduated at much higher rates after Prop 209.c) the black students who DIDN'T get into Berkeley simply went to other lower-tiered colleges in the UC system (seven out of eight of which ALSO experienced increased applications) and thus ended up in a college for which they were better prepared, and as a result were more successful there, exactly as mismatch theory would predict. Thus, the lives and college experience of these students were also made better by Prop 209,d) because black and Hispanic graduates were now better matched with their college, they also were much more successful on STEM courses: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. For example, graduation rates for those majoring in Engineering in the whole UC system increased by 50 percent after Prop 209.e) likely the Berkeley grads after Prop 209 had better chances of getting accepted into good jobs, which effect some empirical research has shown. Once employers realize that a college is not using racist criteria, and thus that the grades of minorities are 'real', the tendency is to have more confidence in the actual abilities of black graduates. They also likely had a better chance of staying in those jobs.f) there is also some research evidence to show that, in California, black high school students started getting

better scores on various tests like the SAT after 1997 because they realized they could no longer count on getting the benefit of the easier affirmative action standards. And this effect would be entirely expected, and was expressed in general form by George Bush when he condemned 'the soft bigotry of low expectations': when we raise our expectation level, kids give more effort to reach higher standards.-----Far superior for imparting an understanding of affirmative action and the value of using natural consequences as a societal corrective would be: 1) Sowell's *Race and Culture* and his *Affirmative Action Around the World*, both of which show that ethnic groups have vastly differing levels of achievement and performance in various areas, all likely due to the effects of their subcultures-and not lingering racism, as Kellough constantly suggests. Sowell also shows the incredible ethnic animosity and hatred engendered throughout the world by using the government to privilege one group at the expense of others, 2) Walter Williams's *Race and Economics*, which demonstrates how the standard liberal political solutions of minimum wage laws and governmental welfare grants-and not white racism-have helped contribute to damaging the black family, 3) Richard Epstein's *Forbidden Grounds*, which functions as a superior legal history and demolishes any justification for a wide variety of anti-discrimination laws and the rationale for the agencies which enforce them, 4) Steve Farron's *The Affirmative Action Hoax*, densely packed with history and argument, and 5) Sanders and Taylor's *Mismatch*, one of greatest books ever written on the disastrous results of academic racism. (Sanders and Taylor go into excruciating detail in many areas related to affirmative action, showing for example with regard to research and the social sciences how liberals in academia (with the examples of researcher's Clydesdale, Ayres and Brookes, and Barnes), publishing (with the example of various scholarly journals), and accreditation agencies (like the ABA and testing bodies like the LSAC, which administers the LSAT) have consistently misrepresented or evaded the results of studies showing the destructive effects of affirmative action.) My concluding advice to Kellough-which I do hope he heeds-would be to take a lengthy sabbatical pondering the wisdom of the above-listed works, returning only when he can understand and accept the power of their arguments and his own role in propagating the liberal 'urban legend' that governmentally-mandated, -sponsored, or -protected racism can help anyone. (Note: this review references the works listed above in numerous instances.)

I enjoyed reading this book. It is written in a very thorough and clear way. Author is not biased and outlines both sides of the issue

Everyone should own a copy of this book regardless of their occupation or beliefs. It explains both

sides of an issue so often misunderstood.

An excellent review of background for Affirmative Action (AA) programs and issues. It also discusses many contemporary issues surrounding AA and brings in court cases that are relevant. My students who were against AA to start with thought the book was biased in favor of AA. What could I say? I did ask them what a book about this subject that was more "Fair and Balanced" or a book that was against AA would look like. About all they could bring up is that AA is biased against white people. Maybe it is, somewhat, but I agree with the argument that any bias embedded in AA is intended to make up for eons of bias that closed many professional and even ordinary work fields and educational opportunities to blacks.

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