Latinos and Middle Eastern Americans: Work Discrimination

Key Words:
- Latino
- Middle Eastern American
- Work Discrimination
- Affirmative Action
- Religion

Description:
This issue brief demonstrates how both Latinos and Middle Eastern Americans suffer from discrimination in the workplace. It highlights the issue that affirmative action is evidently not doing enough for the minority groups it is meant to affect, and should be applied to Middle Eastern Americans, many of whom are Muslim and thus suffer from work discrimination on the basis of their religion, too.

Key Points:
- Latinos and Middle Eastern Americans both suffer from discrimination in the workplace
- For Latinos, this is primarily because of their ethnicity, whereas for Middle Eastern Americans, this is because of their religion.
- Affirmative Action must do more to help Latinos
- Affirmative Action must be applied to members of the “white” category in the American census as Middle Eastern Americans find themselves to be part of this majority yet suffer from discrimination on religious grounds.

Issue Brief:
Studies show that both Latinos and Middle Eastern Americans suffer from discrimination in the workplace in the United States today. This can take the form of discharge from or harassment in a job or disproportionately low wages vis-a-vis the American population as a whole. Such discrimination is often made on religious or linguistic grounds or has to do with other considerations such as immigration status or the faltering economy.

The Latino ethno-racial population currently makes up 17% of the nation’s population and, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in June 2012 they accounted for 16% of the US labor force. It is the fastest growing population in the United States today and is expected to constitute over a quarter of the nation’s population by 2060. As a result, it is problematic
that Latinos only make up 20% of management positions. In a survey conducted in 2007, nearly 30% of Latino workers indicated that they have experienced discrimination or unfair treatment in their work places, which might explain their overwhelming employment in low-paid jobs. This discrimination is continuing to increase as in 2007, 58% of Latinos thought that work discrimination was a major problem, in comparison with 41% in 2002. Latinos have suggested that the causes of this discrimination are primarily language skills and immigration status.

A lot of negative sentiments have been directed towards Middle Eastern Americans, particularly in the aftermath of 9/11. According to a poll by the Pew Research Centre, the public’s view of Islam has deteriorated considerably from 41% of Americans viewing Muslims positively in 2005 to only 30% this year. These bad sentiments have caused Middle Eastern Americans to be discriminated in the work place, especially because they are often assumed to be Muslim; although they account for less than 2% of the US population, nearly one quarter of the religious discrimination claims filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 2009 were on behalf of Middle Eastern Americans. An example of such discrimination is in 2010, a 17 year old filed a suit against the clothing retailer Abercrombie and Fitch for allegedly not employing her because she wore a hijab; the EEOC was awarded $20,000 in compensation. Such claims of “wrongful discharge” (NYTimes) directly contradict the Civil Rights Act of 1964 wherein workplace discrimination is prohibited on the basis of religion, national origin, race, or sex. A difficulty with such work discrimination is that Middle Eastern Americans are defined as “white”, the majority ethno-racial group in the USA. Therefore, they are excluded from affirmative action projects, that arose out of the Civil Rights Act, that ensure that members of minority groups, as identified in the American census, are hired and educated.
Middle Eastern Americans and Latinos suffer from work discrimination. It is evident that Affirmative Action projects must do more to ensure that Latino’s are employed but also educated so that they can take on managerial positions. It is problematic that Middle Eastern Americans are a minority but are nevertheless defined by the American census as “white”, the majority group, thus do not benefit from affirmative action; affirmative action must not be restricted to minority groups as defined by the American census in order to stop work discrimination on the basis of religion, which is a cross-cutting cleavage and thus not restricted to minority ethno-racial groups.

Works Cited and other General References:
http://www.nbcnews.com/id/39081887/ns/business-careers/t/muslims-face-growing-bias-workplace/#.VIYX5MrLVo
http://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/release/9-17-09b.cfm

Images:

in reference to Muslim allegations concerning discrimination because of their religion in the workplace.

Source: Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

Relevant websites:

learnlivegrow.org
http://www.adc.org/
http://www.eeoc.gov/