Affirmative Action for Asian Americans

Description:
This brief focuses on the effect of and need for Affirmative Action for Asian-Pacific Islander Americans within the realms of higher education and professional roles.

Key Words:
Asian-Pacific Islander Americans, Professional/Workplace, Admissions/College, Equality, Diversity

Key Points:
▪ Affirmative Action does benefit Asian-Pacific Islander Americans
▪ The majority of Asian-Pacific Islander Americans support Affirmative Action
▪ Asian Pacific Islanders experience a pay gap compared to white counterparts
▪ There exists a spectrum of needs and opinions within this ethnoracial group in relation to Affirmative Action and higher education

Images:
Chart 1:                      Chart 2:
Brief:

Affirmative Action is a policy, resulting from the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, that was created to provide equal opportunity for minority groups and women in the realms of education and employment, (NCLS, 2014). Asian-Pacific Islander Americans, making up roughly 5% of the United States Population, (US Census, 2014), are considered within these policies, which incorporate their population to create more diverse professional and intellectual communities and assure that they receive equal access to and benefits from these realms. As demonstrated in Chart 1, the majority of this ethnoracial group support Affirmative Action.

In the professional sphere, Asian-Pacific Islander Americans are still discriminated against, for example, on average white males receive $34,000 yearly, while Asian-Pacific Islander American men receive $31,000 and women receive $22,000. Further, Asian-Pacific Islander Americans make up 7.3% of private sector jobs, (which require college degree), and 2.8% of the administrative and management positions, compared to the 82% and 87%, respectively, that white workers possess. This data proves the need for Affirmative Action efforts because the root of these issues lie in the fact that minority groups and women have “limited access to capital and credit, and connections.” The number of Chinese and Indian immigrants outnumbered that of Mexicans in 2013, providing a possible example of why some Asian-Pacific
Islander Americans can struggle to access professional successes. In addition, it is possible that historical events have played a role in today’s disparities, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act and World War II Japanese Internment Camps, which provoked/solidified decades of discrimination, (The Economist, 2015). However, it should be noted that progress has been made: IBM, Mobil, Proctor & Gamble, Ford, and the liking have endorsed Affirmative Action. Further, in the 1990s, minority owned businesses grew by 30%, (AAJC). Affirmative Action stands as a force in combatting the inequalities that are attributed to minorities, thus the acknowledgement of race in professional communities is essential to continue progression towards equality.

In the realm of education, the Supreme Court ruled that the consideration of race, among other factors, in the admissions process is constitutional, however, the use of racial quotas and rejection based strictly upon race are not, (PBS, 2006). Affirmative Action policies work to create more diverse student bodies and combat unconscious manifestations of discrimination, taking a holistic approach: test scores, extra-curriculars, socioeconomic standing, race, etc, are taken into account. As Chart 2 demonstrates, (AAPI Data, 2014), majority support from Asian-Pacific Islander Americans for Affirmative Action in education has been found. Asian-Pacific Islander Americans do benefit from Affirmative Action, especially students of lower-class and underrepresented communities (The Harvard Crimson, 2015). Data from the United States Census Bureau shows that Cambodian, Laotian, Vietnamese, and Hmong Americans have the lowest rates of educational fulfillment among all Asian-Pacific Islander Americans, comparable to the disparities faced by African Americans and Latinos, (AACR, 2015).

Contrarily, the enacting of SCA5, (a bill that allows the University of California education system to employ Affirmative Action in admissions), left a great number of Asian-
Pacific Islander Americans displeased, (Huang, 2014). Asian-Pacific Islander Americans who are in opposition believe that Affirmative Action results in the acceptance of less qualified students and that admission should be more numbers focused, (The Harvard Crimson, 2015). In reality, Affirmative Action’s holistic admissions perspective sheds light on the disproportionate access to certain levels of education, because test scores alone often put minorities on a lower rung, (AACR, 2015). This disagreement seems to be representative of the spectrum of socioeconomic backgrounds that exist in the Asian-Pacific Islander American group. Aforementioned, some Asian ethnoracial groups struggle to fulfill their educations, which complicates the model minority concept; based upon the fact that Asian-Pacific Islander Americans are the most successful minority, (The Economist, 2015). Laboni Hoq, litigation director of Asian Americans Advancing Justice, opposes race-blind, numbers focused, college admissions, stating: “...AAPIs overwhelmingly support these policies and will not be used as a racial wedge to disenfranchise other communities of color,” (AACR, 2015).

As for most minorities and women, Affirmative Action is a positive force for Asian-Pacific Islander Americans, in the process of reaching greater equality and being a component of broader diversity in education and the workplace.
Works Cited:


Relevant Websites:

- http://asianamerican civilrights.org
- http://www.advancingjustice-aajc.org
http://www.pbs.org/