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Race and Ethnicity in American Politics  
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### Middle Eastern American & Affirmative Action

**Key words:**

Middle Eastern American, Affirmative Action, discrimination, contradiction

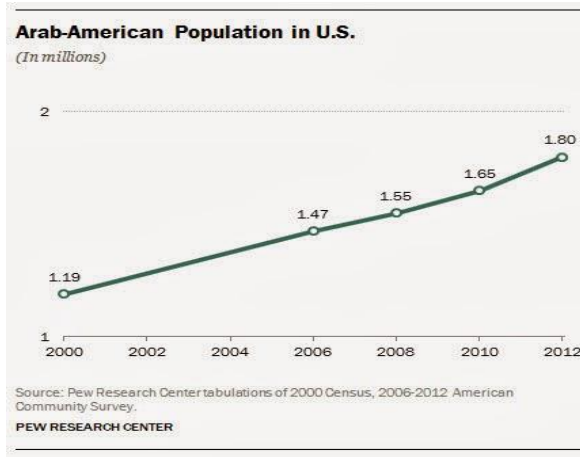
**Description:**

This issue brief describes Middle Eastern Americans' racial category in the U.S. Stating the contradictions between the "majority" status the Middle Eastern Americans have and the fact that they are under the protection of Affirmative Action, which is constituted for minorities.

**Key Points:**

- Middle Eastern Americans
- Categorized as "White" in official census
- Suffer racial minority discrimination issues
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**Images:**



### Issue brief:

The American citizens and its residences are defined into five categories in the United States of America. The categories are classified as following: White Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islanders (2010 Census Brief). Within the five groups, the "White " population is classified as "any persons having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, **the Middle East**, or North Africa." (2010 Census Brief) The Census defines Americans into such categories, however in reality there exist many misalignments that may need to be reconsidered by lawmakers.

The Affirmative action seeks to protect and promote individuals of racial minorities. It is defined in two ways: first, "the right of all persons to be accorded full and equal consideration on the basis of merit" (K.U Medical School), and second, "hiring and promoting qualified individuals in protected groups such as minorities, disabled veterans, Vietnam-era veterans and women" (U. of South Dakota)" These actions were drafted as an effort with its focus on education and employment, and they were created

in hopes of taking active measures. Moreover, disadvantaged groups that had previously suffered discrimination are to be ensured to have the same opportunities as whites under the framework of non-discrimination. It is clear that such legal actions do exist seeking to protect minority groups from discrimination, yet being defined as “white” attracts suspicions of whether they should be included in such legal legislations; however the answer is clear-they certainly should.

Middle Eastern Americans, although defined as “White”, constantly face identity issues. The problem they face towards Affirmative Action is the contradictory between their “white” identity and yet being a discriminated group. It’s clear that “white” is not included in the Affirmative Action group because “affirmative action seeks to distribute to racial minorities.” (Tamer, p.119), and being “white” clearly excludes the Middle Eastern Americans from being defined as a racial minority while in fact they actually are. Being categorized within the majority group, which is 72% of the whole U.S population (2010 census), Middle Eastern Americans suffer discrimination without any forms of protection usually granted to any groups defined as a “minority”. Being unable to be legally recognized or defined, Middle Eastern Americans has to endure more than that already suffered by the legally recognized minority groups. Although at least there are considerable decline of overt forms of racism, the continued discrimination against Arab Americans is never to be over-mentioned.

On the other hand, census is a statistical strategy, widely used by federal agencies, state and local governments, to determine critical issues including "education grants,

affirmative action programs, low-income housing tax credits, voting rights, employment rights, legislative redistricting, food stamps, and veteran benefits." (Deo, Seattle District No. 1, 11 J. Gender Race & Just. 409, 419, 2008) Also, Census data suggests that since the 1960s lawmakers have been using the strategy in creating legislations regarding race and ethnicity.

Citations/Reference/Website:

1. Arab Americans, Affirmative Action, and a Quest for Racial Identity, Christine Tamer, Texas Journal on Civil Liberties & Civil Rights; Fall 2010; 16, 1; pg.101
2. <http://www.nyu.edu/classes/jackson/social.issues/papers/AfActGrC.html>
3. <http://law-journals-books.vlex.com/vid/identified-census-myth-classification-64230817>