

What Can Be Done About the Results of Discrimination?ⁱ

BEFORE YOU READ

In this section, you will read about efforts to help people who have suffered discrimination.

VOCABULARY:	promote	affirmative action	admit
	quota	reverse	

Past discrimination hurt women, African-Americans and other minorities. Often they were not admitted to good schools or trained for good jobs. They were not **promoted** at work. They did not make as much money as white men. They did not have positions of power in business and government.

Helping Women and Minorities

Some civil rights laws and court decisions said that certain businesses and schools must make changes. They must include more women and minorities. Other companies and schools also began to do this.

For example, a business might try to hire more minorities and women. A university might look for and **admit** more minority students. A factory might make a rule that some minority workers must be promoted to supervisor. These special programs to help women and minorities are called **affirmative action** programs.

What Other People Say

Some people don't agree with affirmative action programs. One of them is Alan Bakke. Bakke, a white man, had good

grades, but he wasn't admitted to medical school. Some minority students had lower grades than Bakke. But they were admitted because the school saved 16 of every 100 places for minority students.

Bakke said that saving places for minorities was not fair to him. He said the affirmative action plan of the medical school did not give him the same chance as minorities. He said this was **reverse discrimination** against whites.

Bakke's case went to the Supreme Court. The Court said that **quotas**, or saving a certain number of places for women or minorities, are not legal. But businesses and schools *can* consider sex or race as one reason (like good test results or job experience) to take persons from groups that have suffered discrimination.

Recent Supreme Court decisions have limited affirmative action programs and made it harder for workers to prove discrimination on the job. At the same time, Congress, states, and cities are passing more civil rights laws. The struggle for civil rights will continue to be a controversial subject in the 1990s.

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

1. What are some effects of past discrimination against women and minorities?
2. Give some examples of what affirmative action programs can do.
3. In the Bakke case, what did the Supreme Court say affirmative action programs could not do? What did the Supreme Court say they could do?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

1. Is the person who gets the best score on a test always the best student? The best person for a job?
2. What do you think is the strongest argument for affirmative action programs? What do you think is the strongest argument against affirmative action programs?
3. Besides affirmative action, what else could be done to make opportunities more equal for women and minorities in the United States?

VOCABULARY EXERCISE

Complete these sentences which have vocabulary words from this section.

Example: Because Bihn knows how to cook everything on the menu very well, the Lincoln Restaurant is **promoting** him to kitchen supervisor.

1. Leo received a letter telling him he has been **admitted** to study at _____.
2. Everyone in the singing club is selling tickets to their spring program. Mark couldn't sell his **quota** of 10 tickets because _____.
3. The Harristown Police Department has an **affirmative action** program for women and minorities. The Police Department wants to _____.
4. Alan Bakke said it was **reverse discrimination** against him when Davis Medical School _____.

What Rights Should They Have?

In a small group,

1. Read the following situations;
2. Write a dialogue to show what happened in the situation and practice reading it;
3. Decide what rights you think the person should or should not have; and
4. Read the dialogue to the rest of the class and tell what rights you think the person should or should not have and why.

EXAMPLE

Rosa: My hands hurt. They get red and sore from the chemicals I use at work. My company doesn't give us safety gloves. So I got some of the women to complain to OSHA. You know, that's the government agency that can make companies protect the health of workers. The boss guessed that I was the leader. Then he fired me! Can he do that?

Write a dialogue to show Rosa talking with her boss.

Dialogue:

Rosa: *Here I am, Boss. Do you want to talk to me?*

Boss: *Rosa, it was you, wasn't it? I bet it was you. Did you get the other women to sign a complaint with OSHA?*

Rosa: *Well-uh-yes, I did. We need special gloves when we work with these chemicals. We had the gloves at the other place I worked.*

Boss: *Listen, Rosa, gloves for everybody will cost a lot of money. I think you're gonna cause me trouble. So here's your last paycheck. Good-bye, Rosa, and don't come back!*

We think Rosa should have the right to protect her health and the health of her friends at work. The company should not be able to fire her.

Susan: You know, my friend Charles used to teach math at Mills High School, but now he has to work in the school office. Last month, his principal saw him on TV in a demonstration for gay rights. The principal asked Charles if he was a homosexual. Charles said that he was. Well, the principal said parents wouldn't want a homosexual teaching their children. So Charles isn't teaching. Some kids from Charles' classes are mad because Charles can't teach now. They say Charles explains math really well. Does Charles have a right to get his job back?

Write a dialogue between two students from Charles' class telling what they think about what the principal has done.

Harold: Man, I been lookin' for work for months. Seems like there should be work. There's holes in the streets and sidewalks and half the buildings are fallin' down. Yesterday I went to apply for a job at a construction company. After I filled out the application, the manager told me 300 people applied for that job. I told the manager he should give me the job because I need money for my family. The manager told me, "That's what everybody says." I'm upset. My family can't live on welfare money. Shouldn't a guy have the right to work and support his family?

Write a dialogue telling what happened when Harold talked to the manager at the construction company.

Mrs. Jones: My boy, Bobby, has the HIV virus- that's the virus that causes AIDS. We're new in town and I need to find a medical clinic for Bobby. I called a clinic yesterday, but the lady told me they don't take people who are infected with HIV. I said this was the third clinic I'd called and where was I going to find a doctor to take care of my boy. She just said, "Sorry, Mrs. Jones, that's your problem." Well, I told her what I thought of that! Shouldn't I have a right to get a doctor for my kid?

Write a dialogue telling what happened when Mrs. Jones talked with the lady at the clinic.

What You Can Do If You Think Your Rights Are Violated—

Remember that civil rights may be protected by federal, state, and local laws. *Some laws have time limits so you should act quickly.* These are some possible actions:

- Contact a national, state or local government agency that works on human rights or fair employment. These agencies will help you make a legal complaint. (Often the general information number for your state or city can give you the agency you need.)
- Contact a community organization for the names of local groups that may help you.
- Contact a private organization interested in the problem such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), or the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).
- Talk to a lawyer to find out what can be done. If your family is low income, you may be able to get free legal help. Call your local Bar Association (a lawyers' organization) for names of legal clinics or legal assistance offices.
- Protest by talking, writing a letter or demonstrating.
- Contact the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (1121 Vermont Ave., NW, Washington, DC, 20425, 202-376-8513) for general information on where to look for help or if you don't get an answer from other agencies.

If an organization you call cannot help with your problem, ask for the name of a group that may be able to help you.