

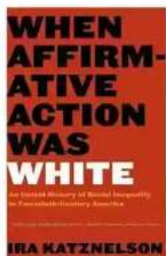
# When Affirmative Action Was White: The Unveiling of a Historical Injustice



For decades, the term "affirmative action" has been associated with promoting equal opportunities for marginalized groups, particularly racial minorities, in education and employment. However, not many people are aware that there was a time when affirmative action policies actually worked against these very groups. In "When Affirmative Action Was White," author Ira Katznelson sheds light on this lesser-known aspect of American history, painting a vivid picture of how our nation's past policies systematically excluded African Americans from benefiting from various government programs. This article will explore the key points raised in the book and discuss the repercussions of this historical injustice that still persist today.

## The Evolution of Affirmative Action

In the early to mid-20th century, the New Deal and other government programs were indeed instrumental in providing economic and social benefits to millions of white Americans. Programs like the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the GI Bill of Rights aimed to create a more prosperous and stable society after the Great Depression and World War II. However, what often goes unnoticed is how these programs left African Americans behind, intensifying racial inequality rather than eradicating it.



### When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century

**America** by Ira Katznelson(Reprint Edition, Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 1220 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 253 pages



Under the FHA's housing policies, for example, loans were made easily accessible to white Americans, allowing them to achieve homeownership and accumulate wealth. African Americans, on the other hand, faced significant obstacles due to racially discriminatory practices such as redlining and restrictive covenants. These policies denied them the opportunity to secure loans and live in desirable neighborhoods, thus perpetuating segregated communities and preventing the accumulation of generational wealth.

## **The GI Bill and Its Consequences**

Similarly, the GI Bill, which provided educational and financial assistance to returning veterans, further widened the gap between white and black Americans. While white veterans were able to attend college, obtain job training, and purchase houses at discounted rates, African American veterans faced considerable challenges in accessing the same benefits.

Rampant racial discrimination in educational institutions limited African Americans' ability to pursue higher education, creating a vicious cycle of limited opportunities. Furthermore, discriminatory employment practices prevented them from finding gainful employment or climbing up the career ladder. Thus, the GI Bill, widely seen as a cornerstone of the American dream, became a catalyst for cementing racial inequality.

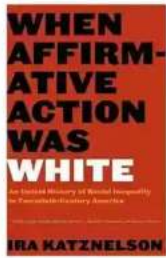
## **The Legacy of Historical Injustice**

"When Affirmative Action Was White" forces us to confront the lasting impact of these policies on racial disparities in present-day America. The wealth gap between white and black households, lingering segregation, and unequal access to quality education are all consequences of past discriminatory practices. While affirmative action policies aimed to rectify these disparities, the damage caused by the exclusion of African Americans in the past cannot be easily undone.

This book provides crucial historical context to the ongoing debates surrounding affirmative action. It enables us to understand that affirmative action is not solely a remedy for past discrimination but a necessary corrective measure to address deeply entrenched systemic inequalities.

When we think of affirmative action, it's crucial to recognize that it wasn't always designed to uplift marginalized communities. The historical injustices illuminated

in "When Affirmative Action Was White" remind us of the importance of acknowledging our nation's past and understanding how systemic discrimination has shaped our present reality. It is only by confronting and actively working to dismantle these injustices that we can pave the way for a more equitable and inclusive society for all.



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A groundbreaking work that exposes the twisted origins of affirmative action.

In this "penetrating new analysis" (New York Times Book Review) Ira Katznelson fundamentally recasts our understanding of twentieth-century American history and demonstrates that all the key programs passed during the New Deal and Fair Deal era of the 1930s and 1940s were created in a deeply discriminatory manner. Through mechanisms designed by Southern Democrats that specifically excluded maids and farm workers, the gap between blacks and whites actually widened despite postwar prosperity. In the words of noted historian Eric Foner, "Katznelson's incisive book should change the terms of debate about affirmative action, and about the last seventy years of American history."



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