

**Myth:** Affirmative action gives preference to undeserving, unqualified women and people of color solely on the basis of their gender and/or race.

**Fact:** Affirmative action does not mean the hiring of unqualified people. In fact, these activities are specifically prohibited by law. Affirmative action allows competent and qualified women and minorities to compete and excel in areas where they are or have been under-represented.

**Myth:** Affirmative action forces employers to set quotas for the number of women and minorities they will employ.

**Fact:** Quotas are illegal in affirmative action programs. Agencies set goals for the employment of women and minorities in areas where they are underrepresented. Agencies also set a time frame for achieving their goals.

**Myth:** Affirmative action means establishing a "quota" system for women and minorities.

**Fact:** There is a difference between goals and quotas. Ideally, the percentage of women and minorities working in the position should be similar to the percentage of women and minorities qualified for such positions.

**Myth:** Affirmative action is reverse discrimination; it gives preferential treatment to people of color and women.

**Fact:** Racism is power plus discrimination. The parameters of discrimination based on race are distinguished by the power dynamics. Reverse racism is not, therefore, a reality if people of color are not in positions of power and perpetuating the discrimination.

**Myth:** Affirmative action hurts Whites.

**Fact:** Though affirmative action is believed to have harmed white men, this contradicts the reality that white men hold structural power in society today. For example, a *Washington Post* study shows that 95% of top corporate executives are white males. According to statewide statistics, the public sector's workforce (all state agencies combined) is composed of: 75.7% whites; 14.8% Blacks; 7% Hispanics and 2.5% others.