

A History Of Affirmative Action 1619-2000 - Philip F. Rubio

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What is it about affirmative action that makes this public policy one of the most contentious political issues in the United States today? The answer to this question cannot be found by studying the recent past or current events. To understand the current debate over affirmative action, we must grapple with all of America's racial history, from colonial times, through slavery, Reconstruction, the Jim Crow era, the Civil Rights era, to the present day. Philip Rubio argues that misunderstanding the history of affirmative action is the principal reason that most white people have difficulty in seeing their historical and current privilege. He combines African American, labor, and social history with thirty years of personal experience as a blue-collar worker, labor and community activist, jazz musician, and writer to examine the roots of this debate. He maintains that we are not asking the right question. The real issue, he argues, is not whether African Americans should receive compensatory treatment to correct past and present discrimination, but, rather, why whites should continue to receive preferences based on skin color. He argues that America was conceived and continues to reshape itself not on a system of meritorious achievement or equal opportunity but on a system of white preferences and quotas that are defended both actively and passively by white people. Tracing the development of the old legal initiative known as "affirmative action" (based on the principle of equity in English common law), he shows how affirmative action today has become transformed in American folklore and popular culture into something akin to the "Black Power" slogan of the late 1960s. Rather than a new and radical program, he shows that affirmative action is only the most recent challenge to the system of white privilege brought about by a long tradition of black protest. affirmative action is not simply legislated public policy or voluntary corporate policy. Instead, as Rubio points out, it is a social history that represents a tug-of-war within working-class America over whether there should exist a property value in whiteness. In presenting this history, Rubio is firm in the belief that, after the facts have spoken, readers not only will marvel that these programs are not even tougher but also will understand why. Philip F. Rubio is a Mellon Fellow studying history at Duke University. Words: action affirmative, affirmative action, american history of, cannot be found, english history of, law american, marvel action, of mississippi, rights legal, university of mississippi Author: Rubio,

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