

## **Abstract**

The term *affirmative action* (U. S. English), or positive discrimination (British English) means positive steps taken to increase the representation of women and minorities in areas of employment, education, politics and business from which they had been historically excluded.

In search for the roots of affirmative action I start at the very beginning of the US history describing institutionalized forms of slavery and later move on to segregation to demonstrate how deep and strong this exclusion was. Since the late 1960s this expression has been used to refer to policies that go beyond the simple prohibition of discrimination on grounds of race, national origin and sex in employment practices and educational system. These policies require further actions, *affirmative actions*, to make jobs and promotions and admissions to educational programs available to individuals from groups that have historically suffered from discrimination in gaining these opportunities or are, whether discriminated against or not by formal policies and informal practices, infrequently found in certain occupations or educational institutions and programs.

In an effort to create an *unprejudiced* picture of this phenomenon of American modern society, I try to open my work for arguments of both sides, the proponents and the opponents of affirmative action, with the awareness of how controversial this issue for American citizens is. The work however comes to a conclusion that affirmative action programs as they are and work at the moment, do not correspond with the present situation.

Keywords: Affirmative action, positive discrimination, discrimination, segregation, USA, African Americans, women, quotas, Czech Republic, Roma