



The Ironies of Affirmative Action: Politics, Culture, and Justice in America (Morality and Society)

John David Skrentny

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Affirmative action has been fiercely debated for more than a quarter of a century, producing much partisan literature, but little serious scholarship and almost nothing on its cultural and political origins. *The Ironies of Affirmative Action* is the first book-length, comprehensive, historical account of the development of affirmative action.

Analyzing both the resistance from the Right and the support from the Left, Skrentny brings to light the unique moral culture that has shaped the affirmative action debate, allowing for starkly different policies for different citizens. He also shows, through an analysis of historical documents and court rulings, the complex and intriguing political circumstances which gave rise to these controversial policies.

By exploring the mystery of how it took less than five years for a color-blind policy to give way to one that explicitly took race into account, Skrentny uncovers and explains surprising ironies: that affirmative action was largely created by white males and initially championed during the Nixon administration; that many civil rights leaders at first avoided advocacy of racial preferences; and that though originally a political taboo, almost no one resisted affirmative action.

With its focus on the historical and cultural context of policy elites, *The Ironies of Affirmative Action* challenges dominant views of policymaking and politics.

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