

## Affirmative Action - 1977

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Judaic tradition is dedicated to the dignity and worth of all persons. The concept of the “Oneness of God” includes the corollary of the oneness of humanity. Therefore, as a people and as a faith, we are committed to the opportunity for advancement for every man, woman and child. To create a society in which just conditions will prevail requires affirmative action to offset the tragic discriminations, oppressions and inequalities of the past. Whether these were on the bases of race, sex, ethnic origin, educational, economic or social factors, they denied not only individuals but also society the possible contributions of countless thousands. Further, they added immeasurably to the terrible human and economic costs engendered by these injustices.

The goals of affirmative action cannot be achieved through pious hope or words alone. Painful sacrifices may at times be required and patience in working out the details. While we are strongly opposed to quotas, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods urges its members to join in commitment to affirmative action. We associate ourselves with the following statement excerpted from a longer one of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (an agency in the United States which includes the Union of American Hebrew Congregations):

We reaffirm our support of affirmative actions, by both the government and the private sector, that provide:

- 1) Special provisions for compensatory education, training and retraining, apprenticeship, job counseling and placement, financial assistance and other forms of help for the deprived and disadvantaged...The sole criterion of eligibility for such special services must be individual need... not limited or offered preferentially on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion or sex.
- 2) Ongoing review of established job and admission requirements including examinations and other selection methods, (are necessary) to make certain that they are performance related and free of bias.
- 3) Individual merit is a touchstone of equality of opportunity... (but) individual merit is not susceptible to precise mathematical definition, and test scores, however unbiased, are not the only relevant criteria for determining merit and qualifications. Such factors as poverty, cultural deprivation, inadequate schooling, discrimination or other deprivation in the individual’s experience, as well as such personal characteristics as motivation, determination, perseverance and resourcefulness are also relevant and should be taken into account.

Absolute justice may be impossible to attain simultaneously for every person. But our Judaic dedication to social justice requires us consistently to work for affirmative action lest inequalities of the past destroy the future.