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Affirmative Talk, Affirmative Action: A Comparative Study of the Politics of Affirmative Action

Augustus J Jones

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Affirmative action programs have been implemented in over 50 jurisdictions in the United States, yet studies of a number of these communities have shown that most efforts to meet proposed race-conscious hiring goals have been unsuccessful. This unique comparative case study investigates the reasons for the success or failure of affirmative action programs in two Southern communities. Augustus J. Jones, Jr. challenges the findings in the literature that affirmative action efforts are doomed to failure. This analysis does what similar studies have failed to do: it identifies and defines those elements--communications, resources, commitment, political-social conditions, and bureaucratic arrangements--required for the successful execution of any public policy program, and then offers appropriate strategies in a detailed, step-by-step approach for successfully executing affirmative action goals. Research for the volume includes over 50 interviews of city, state, and federal officials responsible for implementing affirmative action goals, on-the-spot observations of the communities' affirmative action shops, and written records of city and country commission meetings.

Following an introductory chapter that outlines the purpose, justifications, and methodology of the work, the second chapter compares variables within the two communities, such as their civil rights records, political orientation, and progress in meeting affirmative action goals. Five subsequent chapters focus on the key elements in race-conscious hiring programs, including communications, resources, commitment, political conditions, and organizational arrangements. The final chapter offers conclusions, a recipe for successful affirmative action programs, and speculations about the future of these programs. This useful assessment will become a standard affirmative action how-to book for scholars, students, policy analysts, bureaucrats both inside and outside government, and equal opportunity officers at the federal, state, and local levels who are responsible for implementing and enforcing equal opportunity laws and affirmative action goals.

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