

Now we are going to talk about:

Why Affirmative Action Came to Be

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TheDots...

The United States was built on unpaid labor.

For nearly 250 years, enslaved people didn't just work fields. Legally stolen labor literally built this country: roads, ports, railroads, homes, businesses, and government buildings. Enslaved Africans helped construct the US Capitol and the White House. In New York, slavery powered shipping and banking. **Slavery wasn't just a "Southern" problem. It was a national business model — enforced by law, defended by courts, and protected by violence.**

Slavery ended in 1865. At the war's end, the US government ordered that newly freed families receive forty acres of land so they could build new lives. **But within just a few years, President Andrew Johnson reversed that order, returning the land to former Confederate plantation owners.** The formerly enslaved were betrayed by the government itself, their first real foothold in freedom handed back to their former enslavers. After that brief moment, reparations were never seriously considered. Not really. Over time, even saying the word became taboo — as if naming the debt were more offensive than creating it.

What followed was **a century of policy designed to keep Black Americans out.** Sharecropping replaced slavery in all but name. Jim Crow blocked access to good schools. Redlining made homeownership nearly impossible. Federal programs built the white middle class while excluding Black Americans. Slave labor created immense wealth - and Black Americans were locked out of it. **Even Black WWII veterans were denied benefits promised to all who served.**

That's why Affirmative Action was created under President John F. Kennedy. Not as a handout, but as a **course correction**, finally opening doors of opportunity for many groups who had been shut out. Ironically, the biggest workplace beneficiaries - were white women.

Like every step toward justice in America, it triggered backlash. Critics called it "unfair," ignoring that unfairness had been official US policy for centuries. Affirmative Action doesn't guarantee success, it guarantees a fair shot. That's not radical. It's overdue.

That's the bigger picture. Let's keep connecting the dots.

Ideas move
when people
MOVE them

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