



# Institutional Racism: A Primer on Theory and Strategies for Social Change

By Shirley Better

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## Institutional Racism: A Primer on Theory and Strategies for Social Change

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Many people associate racism with bigoted individuals and radical groups on the fringes of society. Shirley Better argues that racism is much larger than negative attitudes and that it touches the very core of our lives as Americans. In this enhanced second edition, Better explores the historical origins of institutional racism, details its devastating effects on contemporary society such as the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and outlines real possibilities for social, political, and economic change in the 21st century. Racism persists because dominant groups are unwilling to acknowledge, let alone give up, the benefits of whiteness. Through numerous examples, Institutional Racism demonstrates how inequality and racial exclusion are embedded within the fabric of American society. Better explores how racism has restricted equal access to educational opportunities, employment, and housing, and she considers the influence of racism in the criminal justice system. Beyond detailing the sometimes subtle institutional causes and pernicious effects of racism, Better offers numerous strategies for individuals and groups as they seek to combat this pervasive social problem. Institutional Racism is a must read for those whose seek to understand the underpinnings of racism and for everyone interested in the practical possibilities of racial pluralism and equality in the United States.

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### **Bibliography**

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#### **Review**

This second edition of Institutional Racism is a most timely publication for those who seek to understand the structural and institutional impediments to attaining a society of race and ethnic pluralism. This work critically examines and exposes the institutional dynamics that drive structured racism: It highlights a critical analytic case study of the Katrina horror and offers from here to where with welfare. This important work is a must for educators, students, community persons, and public policy framers who strive for justice in a diverse society... (Douglas Glasgow)

Shirley Better has produced an extraordinary book, offering an in-depth understanding of America's ongoing struggle with institutional racism and its efforts to eliminate it. A must read for social workers, social planners, social activists, and all those engaged in the fight for social justice. (William T. Merritt)

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#### **About the Author**

Shirley Better is professor emeritus in the School of Social Work at California State University at Los Angeles, where she designed and implemented an upper division theme of six courses focusing Institutional Racism. She is one of the founders of the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) and a founder of ABSW-Los Angeles. Dr. Better serves on the boards of several community-based organizations.

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