

# Introduction

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In 1991 two of us (Altbach and Lomotey) published the first edition of *The Racial Crisis in American Higher Education*. When we started working on the book in 1989, race-based campus conflict was much in the news. The scenarios were similar. A hate speech, a racist poster, or some other race-related campus incident stimulated protests and debate. Meetings were organized, protest marches took place, and controversy ensued. In more than a few cases, antiracist demonstrations organized by student groups, often with broad campus support, led to conflicts with university administrators and occasionally arrests.

While the number of campus racial incidents was small, the pattern of increased racial tensions was clear. Campus administrators, in most cases, were unable to deal constructively with the situations that arose. The general reaction was to minimize the incidents. Most universities did little if anything to address the campus racial tensions that the incidents reflected. Many administrators made the mistake of exacerbating campus tensions by summoning police or resorting to disciplinary measures before such measures were absolutely necessary. Academicians, politicians, and the general public strongly felt that race relations in U.S. higher education were deteriorating.

Our goal in *The Racial Crisis* edition was to highlight the issue of race on campus and especially to critically analyze both the underlying issues and the campus situation at the time. To do this, we commissioned essays by key researchers and observers of the campus racial scene. Our book succeeded in bringing together analyses of both background issues, such as demographic trends, and case studies of campuses that had experienced racial tension and unrest.

We were surprised at the time that there was so little analysis and discussion available on the topic of race in higher education. Indeed, one of our goals was to stimulate research and debate on campus race relations, yet the

issue remains underresearched. *The Racial Crisis* edition remains to this day one of few full-scale discussions of the topic.

Much has happened since the end of the 1980s. While data are hard to find, campus racial tensions have, to some extent, become less severe. The numbers of incidents have declined, and race is a *somewhat* less divisive issue on most campuses. At the same time, the location of racism has moved. E-mail and the Internet now seem to be a major source of racist messages and sentiments. Universities have had to consider how to maintain civility on the Internet, a matter of considerable complexity, with free speech and legal consequences.

Yet, as this book shows, there are still challenges. The issues have, to some extent, changed. If race relations among students have improved, the issue of race has moved to the arena of policy and the courts, where matters have become much more complex. *The Racial Crisis* edition was published at a time when affirmative action was widely accepted. Public opinion still largely supported it. University policies, legislative mandates, and executive authority were generally sympathetic to affirmative action. With hindsight, it is possible to see that public opinion was gradually changing and becoming less supportive. The end of the 1990s saw a variety of court decisions, voter initiatives, and election results antithetical to affirmative action; and the policy climate dramatically changed. For these reasons, we are more concerned here with the policy climate and with the legal and administrative aspects of race issues in higher education than we were in the first edition.

We are convinced that race remains a salient issue in U.S. higher education. The issues are much more complicated and nuanced but just as important. While there seems to be less direct overt strife on campus, the gains made in ensuring access to underrepresented racial and ethnic groups are deeply threatened in the current climate. Further, the racial and ethnic mosaic on campus has also shifted. The number of students “of color” has increased significantly; furthermore, their complexion has changed. Asian American students now constitute a larger percent of the student population nationally. In some parts of the country, Latina/o students are now the major racial group, and in some California schools, they represent a majority. The number of African Americans has increased in higher education. However, problems of persistence, access to some fields and disciplines, and related issues continue.

This volume provides an overview of the racial situation at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It is our hope that the analyses presented here will provide the catalyst for both thought and action. We are convinced that race remains a central issue of higher education—and of U.S. society.

The book is organized in a fashion similar to the first volume. In the first volume we considered student and historical issues in Part I. In this volume, we consider historical and contemporary issues first, to set the tone. Anderson broadly considers the issue of race in the larger U.S. society to set the scene

for a more specific discussion of race in higher education, which follows in the essay by Altbach, Lomotey, and Rivers. Solmon, Solmon, and Schiff provide a discussion of the changing demographic scene in U.S. higher education. Teddlie and Freeman explicate an interesting framework for an insightful documentation of desegregation in U.S. higher education during the twentieth century. Together those chapters set the scene for the subsequent detailed discussions of specific aspects of the racial crisis in U.S. higher education.

We next discuss student issues. Bowman and Smith describe students and race on campus in general. They highlight the growing racial complexity and climate that is emerging within our twenty-first century historically White colleges and universities. Hurtado focuses exclusively on Latina/o students, the fastest growing student population in U.S. higher education. Chang and Kiang provide an interesting assessment of the state of Asian American higher education. Lastly, Feagin, Vera, and Imani consider the concepts of educational choice, institutional reputation, and collective memory.

The third part of this volume (like the second part of Volume I) is devoted to faculty and administrative issues. Allen, Epps, Guillory, Suh, Bonous-Hammarth, and Stassen consider the status of college and university faculty by race and gender. Scheurich and Young reflect on the issue of racism as it is practiced by white faculty in U.S. colleges and universities. Villalpando and Delgado Bernal also add an important and new dimension to our discussion with an assessment of critical race theory as it impacts the status of faculty of color. Tierney and Chung provide a timely assessment of current affirmative action issues and their effect on higher education. Their contribution is particularly important in light of recent affirmative action developments in higher education.