

Did hurricane katrina expose racism in america?

[Sociology](#), [Racism](#)



Did Hurricane Katrina Expose Racism in America? (A Case Study) Before beginning this case study, Hurricane Katrina was a force of nature that ravaged the city of New Orleans, Louisiana in 2005 leaving thousands of African Americans homeless and impoverished. Assuming the affirmative position of the debate in question is Adolph Reed and Stephen Steinberg. They argue that Hurricane Katrina did, in fact expose racism in America. They want to emphasize the need to address race and poverty concerns and focus more on blacks. Opposing them is Shelby Steele. He believes that blacks should begin focusing more on ways to overcome their underdevelopment instead of blaming whites for their predicament. Reed and Steinberg begin their argument with a quoted statement from Barbara Bush. " So many of the people in the arena here, you know, were underprivileged anyway, so this, this is working very well for them. " This quote already shows the attitude of white America towards the situation of those suffering at the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. They also mention the " Move to Opportunity" program that basically only addresses a miniscule percentage of the poverty stricken homeless GIVEN if they were qualified. Needless to say the majority of them did not participate in this program; as a result, they were to fend for themselves. The extent of white racism was best illustrated by the signing of a government-sponsored resettlement program by 200-plus of the nation's most renowned social science names. This program is classified by Reed and Steinberg as a " relocation scheme" disguised as a voluntary program designed to remove impoverished and unemployed blacks out of the area in attempts to blot out some of the nation's more darker areas. " Move to Opportunity became a perverse

euphemism for policy abdication of the poor people left behind who are in desperate need of programs, services, and jobs. " Steele dispels the accusation placed on Hurricane Katrina in regards to exposing racism in America by sourcing the cause in blacks themselves. Steele explains that whites have in a sense, owned up to their responsibilities and made themselves witness to racism. That we as blacks blame our inferiority on white racism therefore increasing white shame. Subsequently, for whites to admit that black inferiority is a product of white shame, they are admitting racism. Steele advocates that both races, especially blacks accept responsibility for their shames as each race constantly tries to usurp power from the other. We are attributing our underdevelopment to whites in order to shame them instead of claiming responsibility for our own progress or lack thereof. The progression of blacks in America is undermined by the constant irresponsibility of the race as a whole. From things to not taking care of our children to crimes, we essentially placed ourselves into this predicament. We are not living up to our end of the bargain. Black responsibility needs to be acknowledged by us in order for us to progress. Were we to do this, our open acknowledgment of our own underdevelopment will allow whites to hold witness over us; however they will have to acknowledge our overcoming of our underdevelopment. In a nutshell Steele is saying we must hold ourselves accountable for our own underdevelopment and by doing so we can finally achieve the long awaited progression that we have been looking for. After evaluating both sides of the debate, I chose to identify with Shelby Steele's argument. Not only does his argument directly answer the question, it allows for more personal questioning among blacks. Are we really using whites as a

clutch as to why we have not progressed? Is it more of clutch or more of an innate bitterness between blacks and whites that has developed and evolved over centuries of conflict? Blacks have been at the bottom of the totem pole of society for centuries by the hands of whites. Although I believe that whites in fact do impede black progression in society due to concealed racism among other things, I do not agree however that it is entirely their fault. Both races are in a power struggle; straining to take control and to make the other look inferior. It is this childish nature of these two races that halt the progression of our country as a whole. When both races accept responsibility for their shames then proper progress can be possible. Until then, racism will always be a factor of white shame and inferiority will always be a factor of black shame. I believe that Hurricane Katrina played a part in exposing racism. I feel as if Hurricane Katrina forced racism out into the open. No white person would have expressed any racist concerns prior to Katrina. Katrina basically served as a mental agent for white America, effectively expressing their attitudes towards black America. Also, I believe that if the majority of the population ravaged by Katrina were white they would have been rescued almost immediately if not sooner. The painstakingly long response time to the crisis was evidently showed the amount of concern and sympathy the government had for the blacks of New Orleans. Racism is still alive they are just concealing it. Thousands of blacks in New Orleans depended on the government to rescue them from a travesty that they could not control. And additionally the government attempted to relocate the survivors of the incident to remove the poor blacks and replace the area with whites. This illustrated the true intentions of the government. The strife that

exists between whites and blacks are so low-key that it takes an act of God to bring it out of the shadows. There is no doubt that racism is still alive in America; however the extent of racism has definitely lessened over time. I chose to side with Steele's argument because I identify with the argument that blacks and whites have a complex that won't allow them to accept responsibility for their shames. If it were not for Hurricane Katrina, racism may have never been brought into the light.