



# For Discrimination: Race, Affirmative Action, and the Law

*Randall Kennedy*

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In the wake of the Supreme Court's recent decision regarding *Fisher v. University of Texas*, *For Discrimination* is at once the definitive reckoning with one of America's most explosively contentious and divisive issues and a principled work of advocacy for clearly defined justice. What, precisely, is affirmative action, and why is it fiercely championed by some and just as fiercely denounced by others? Does it signify a boon or a stigma? Or is it simply reverse discrimination? What are its benefits and costs to American society? What are the exact indicia determining who should or should not be accorded affirmative action? When should affirmative action end, if it must? Randall Kennedy, Harvard Law School professor and author of such critically acclaimed and provocative books as *Race, Crime, and the Law* and the national best seller *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word*, gives us a concise, gimlet-eyed, and deeply personal conspectus of the policy, refusing to shy away from the myriad complexities of an issue that continues to bedevil American race relations.

With pellucid reasoning, Kennedy accounts for the slipperiness of the term *affirmative action* as it has been appropriated by ideologues of every stripe; delves into the complex and surprising legal history of the policy; coolly analyzes key arguments pro and con advanced by the left and right, including the so-called color-blind, race-neutral challenge; critiques the impact of Supreme Court decisions on higher education; and ponders the future of affirmative action.

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