

PREVENT DISCRIMINATION:

Understanding Scientific Racism



In the United States and beyond scientific racism has justified the myth that human races are based in biological components distinct to each race. Through studying the evolution of race in America, we see these distinctions change and attempt to be demolished. Yet they still lie in many individuals as truth. Understanding the danger of these beliefs, especially for individuals of color, is crucial to having adequate treatment and rights for all humans regardless of race.

How it Started

Colonial America

In early Colonial America, the division of people based on race was more ambiguous. The social structure focused on a distinction between the elite and the labor. The development of racial categories and a racial hierarchy strengthened after Bacon's Rebellion in 1676, when poor whites were given more benefits as temporary servants while the status of Black enslaved people was permanent and inheritable. This separation was the beginnings of a race-based hierarchy in our society, which is crucial to understanding how race functions today.

Polygenism and Eugenics

Developed in the 19th century polygenism is the belief that human races are separate species from one another. At the time this was categorized based on methods like skull measuring. Many findings to come out of polygenism were used to paint people of color as a race meant for extinction and further inferior to the White race.

The Holocaust is the most famous example of eugenics and the methods that research encouraged. The Eugenics movement, popular in the late 19th and early 20th century promoted a selective breeding population, and sometimes even went as far as pushing extinction of 'less capable' individuals.

While many look back on these events in horror, the ideology that races have unique biological characteristics remains a common belief.

Where we are today

Scientific Racism Today

Dr. James Watson, famous for the discovery of the double helix DNA structure in 1962, believed the DNA showed direct link between lower IQ scores in Black individuals and higher in white individuals. Watson has since apologized for his statements, but is still adamant on the correlation of his findings. His professional background is still being used as a justification for racist policies.

In the Medical Field

While scientific racism has changed in the medical field, examples like a 2017 study attempting to calculate differences in Black and White individuals' likelihood and experience with asthma can be proof of individuals' racist interpretations of medical evidence. This study examined self-identified Black and White individuals and the biological reasonings for their experiences with asthma. The study wrongly attributed the differences in airways to biological racial differences rather than looking at social and environmental causes for these differences.

Genetic Testing

In recent years, ancestry testing has grown in popularity from the help of companies like 23 and Me. These tests compare your DNA to populations available in companies' databases today. While advertising the connection to family history, it also includes a geographic breakdown, which consumers may often misinterpret as a racial breakdown.

Beginners Steps for Combating the Myth that Race is Biological

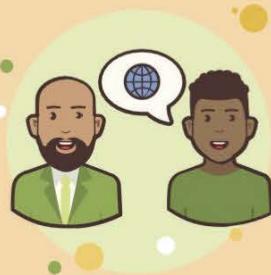
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Understanding Human DNA

Across the globe, humans share a high degree of genetic similarity with 99.9% of their DNA being identical. Of the 0.1% of the DNA that accounts for genetic variability among individuals, there are no genetic variations that can be uniformly found in populations of a specific race.



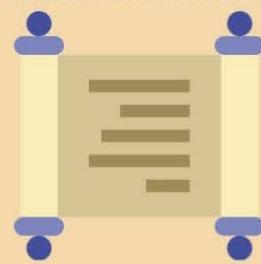
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Understanding Race vs Ethnicity

In the United States, race is often referred to as one of 5-7 selections. Typically these categories are presented as White, Black, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Hispanic or Latino, Asian, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. These categories often change on different documents and many only allow a person to choose one of the above categories. Ethnicity tends to be more specific. Often referring to specific cultural patterns and traditions, ethnicity often highlights specific countries or regions as opposed to arbitrary physical characteristics.

Some easy to understand examples would be an individual whose race would be classified as Asian, but ethnically they identify as Japanese or an individual that racially identifies as Black and ethnically identifies as Dominican.



3

Learn the Timeline of Racial Definitions

Throughout United States history, definitions of race have changed significantly. For example, the first US census in 1790 used three racial categories: Free White Persons, All Other Free Persons, and Slaves. Over time these categories were adjusted to be more catered to physical characteristics, later becoming more regional as we see today. The ever-changing racial categories stands alone as proof that race is a social categorization and has no biological standing.



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Reject Statements that Insinuate Race is Biological

Even when you can understand that race has no biological components, statements that insinuate racial differences are still prominent in the United States. Rejecting these notions and educating others to the best of your abilities of the construction and ever-changing existence of race in this country can begin to further debunk the myth that race is biological.

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