

Race Illusion Transcript Episode One

We are all living under this socially constructed reality called “white dominant culture”. A system that could work for all if the greedy people were willing to share. White isn't a person, white isn't a place, white isn't a country, white isn't even where you have a know exactly what to do wife, two forever happy children, nice house, a Tesla car and grass for the children to cut so they can earn some big white spending money. White is a socially constructed, narcissistic, delusional state of grandeur, a concocted concept baited to allure.

Race is a modern idea - it hasn't always been with us. In ancient times, language, religion, status, and class distinctions were more important than physical appearance. In America, a set of specific historical circumstances led to the world's first race-based slave system.

The concept of race did not originate with science. On the contrary, science emerged in the late 18th century and helped validate existing racial ideas and "prove" a natural hierarchy of groups. Throughout our history, the search for racial differences has been fueled by preconceived notions of inferiority and superiority. Even today, scientists are influenced by their social context.

Ideas and definitions of race have changed over time, depending on social and political climate. Historically, racial categories were not neutral or objective. Groups were differentiated so they could be excluded or disadvantaged, often in explicit ways. For example, in the early 20th century, U.S. courts had to decide who was legally white and who wasn't for the purposes of naturalized citizenship. This was done in arbitrary and sometimes contradictory ways.

There is not one gene, trait, or characteristic that distinguishes all members of one race from all members of another. We can map any number of traits and none would match our idea of race. This is because modern humans haven't been around long enough to evolve into different subspecies and we've always moved, mated, and mixed our genes. Beneath the skin, we are one of the most genetically similar of all species.

There is no question that individual human beings are different, one from the other. Our eyes confirm this day in and day out. Skin color. Body shape. Hair form. Eye shape. For several hundred years we have used these visual differences to classify people into four or five groups we call races.

We have a notion of race as being divisions among people that are deep, that are essential that are somehow biological or even genetic, and that are unchanging - that these are clear cut distinct categories of people.

Evolutionary Geneticist: And the beauty of the race business is that you can identify people by just looking at them. You don't even have to look at their genes because one manifestation of their genes is there - namely skin color or eye shape or hair shape - and then that's the key to everything.

NARRATOR: The idea of race assumes that simple external differences, rooted in biology, are linked to other, more complex internal differences. Like athletic ability. Musical aptitude. Intelligence. This belief is based on the idea that race is biologically real.

All of our genetics now is telling us that that's not the case. We can't find any genetic markers that are in everybody of a particular race and in nobody of some other race. We can't find any genetic markers that define race.

To understand why the idea of race is a biological myth requires a major paradigm shift, an absolute paradigm shift, a shift in perspective. And for me, it's like seeing, you know, what it must have been like to understand that the world isn't flat. And perhaps I can invite you to a mountain top and you can look out the window and at the horizon and see, "oh what I thought was flat I can see a curve in now," that the world is much more complicated. In fact, that race is not based on biology, but race is rather an idea that we ascribe to biology.

The idea of race as biology is ferociously persistent on America's playing fields. We can see differences among populations, but can populations be bundled into what we call races? How many races would there be? Five? Fifty-five? Who decides? And how different would they really be from one another?

The measured amount of genetic variation in the human population is extremely small. And that is something that, that people need to wrap themselves around. That genetically, we really aren't very different.

In fact, genetically, we are among the most similar of all species.

Among the many who challenge "racial science", It has been said, "There is not one, single, physical feature, including skin color, which all our Negro champions have in common which would identify them as a race different from the human race.

GOODMAN: Think about race in its universality. Where is your measurement device? There is no way to measure race. We sometimes do it by skin color, other people may do it by hair texture - other people may have the dividing lines different in terms of skin color. What is black in the United States is not what's black in India or what's black in Mali, Senegal, Brazil.

Under the skin, we really are effectively the same. And we get fooled, because some of the visual differences are quite noticeable.

To move forward we have to be able to see just how shallow and superficial the average differences are among human races even though in certain features like skin color and hair form the visual differences are fairly striking. They're based on almost nothing in terms of overall genetic variation.

Race as biology simply doesn't work, but what is important is that race is a very salient social and historical concept, a social and historical idea. We live in racial smog. Just because race isn't something biological, that doesn't mean it's not real. There are a lot of things in our society that are real and are not biological. Race as we understand it, as a

social construct, has a lot to do with where somebody will live, what schools they will go to, what jobs they will get, whether or not they will have health insurance.

Human beings outward appearances are evident by way of their phenotypical manifestation. But we attach meanings and construct assumptions, even laws, that create enduring social disparities.

Race is a human invention. We created it, we have used it in ways that have been in many, many respects quite negative and quite harmful. And we can create ourselves out of it. We made it, we can unmake it. The racialized society we live in has been under construction for many centuries. How can we unmake race unless we first confront its enormity as a historical and social reality, and its emptiness as biology?