



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on October 11, 2012

No, We Can't — Just Get Past Race

There is this idea among many that we can get past apparent differences by concluding they don't exist. This is reflected in the now common belief that racial distinctions are mere “social constructs.” In non-egghead terms, that means race is actually imaginary.

This idea isn't just espoused by liberals, but has become so mainstream that even many conservatives echo it. For example, just yesterday *American Thinker* writer Gregory Oatis asked if we could dispense with this “‘race’ nonsense, once and for all” and then [explained](#), “Categorizing humanity by ‘race’ as has been happening for all these centuries is simply not a scientifically valid proposition. There is just one race of people on this planet, the human race.” Ah, yes, tell that to Barack Obama's old pastor.



Now, the goal here isn't to impugn Mr. Oatis; he seems like a very nice fellow with pure motives. And like so many others, he no doubt recognizes that racial and ethnic hatred has cost many millions of lives and seeks to eliminate it. But is the solution to try to eliminate our conception of race itself, which Mr. Oatis calls “the single most overrated scientific myth” but which to common people is just common sense?

The idea of race as illusion originated in the 1960s (big surprise) with anthropologists (bigger surprise) and since then has gained great currency. For example, the *New England Journal of Medicine* [opined](#) in 2001, “Race is a social construct, not a scientific classification.... In medicine, there is only one race — the human race.” Sound familiar? It has become a talking point.

But just as new research in the 1990s debunked the '60s-spawned “gender-neutrality” nonsense of the sameness of the sexes, there has long been research pointing to the reality of race. For instance, *World Science* reported on a study conducted by Neil Risch of the Stanford University School of Medicine and [wrote](#), “It found that people's self-identified race is a nearly perfect indicator of their genetic background, contradicting the race-as-social-construct view.” In other words, what people see on the surface correlates almost perfectly with what's more than skin deep (read the [article](#) for a detailed explanation). And this works in reverse, too. Law enforcement can use [forensic phenotyping](#) to identify the race — as well as other characteristics — of an unknown subject.

The aforementioned correlation between race and more difficult to observe factors is why race is not only real — it's significant. For example, Pima Indians have the highest diabetes rate of any group, while black men suffer from prostate cancer at twice the rate of whites. Thus, what of a doctor who, in deference to race-as-social-construct dogma, refused to consider these and other race/disease correlations when recommending diagnostic tests for patients? He'd be guilty of gross malpractice.

Another common claim used to erase awareness of group differences is the assertion, “There's far more



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variation within races (or the sexes) than among them.” But this is relatively meaningless. Why? Because any major group will include the genius and the dolt, the eagle-eyed and the blind, the herculean and the fragile. And it goes without saying that variation between anomalous, polar-opposite individuals will be far greater than variation among groups, which are defined not by their anomalies but by the average of all group members. So the next time someone parrots the above-quoted assertion and implies that it should influence social policy, just respond, “Are you willing to merge the NBA and WNBA? I mean, after all, the average height difference between the sexes is insignificant compared to that between a giant and a primordial dwarf.”

Really, though, is the reality of race anything a five-year-old doesn’t understand instinctively? As World Science wrote in the same vein, “‘The public in general is much more honest’ about race than many academics are, ‘because the general public knows it signifies something rather than nothing,’ said Jon Entine, a journalist and author of a critically well-received book [on race].” Without a doubt, it often seems that intellectuals and intellectual dishonesty go hand in hand.

And believing that something signifies nothing rather than something brings to mind a beautiful passage from G.K. Chesterton’s *An Approach to Thomism*:

Since the modern world began in the sixteenth century, nobody’s system of philosophy has really corresponded to everybody’s sense of reality; to what, if left to themselves, common men would call common sense. Each started with a paradox; a peculiar point of view demanding the sacrifice of what they would call a sane point of view.... A man had to believe something that no normal man would believe, if it were suddenly propounded to his simplicity; as that law is above right, or right is outside reason, or things are only as we think them, or everything is relative to a reality that is not there. The modern philosopher claims, like a sort of confidence man, that if once we will grant him this, the rest will be easy; he will straighten out the world, if once he is allowed to give this one twist to the mind.

Yes, racial differences “are only as we think them.” And if we can just get past reality, says the academic confidence man, he will get us past race.



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