

TEN THINGS EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT RACE

1. **Race is a modern idea.** Ancient societies, like the Greeks, did not divide people according to physical distinctions but according to religion, status, class, even language.
2. **Race has no genetic basis.** Not one characteristic, trait or even gene distinguishes all the members of one so-called race from all the members of another so-called race.
3. **Human subspecies don't exist.** Unlike many animals, modern humans simply haven't been isolated or around long enough to evolve into separate subspecies or races. We are one of the most similar of all species.
4. **Skin color really is only skin deep.** Most traits are inherited independently from one another. The genes influencing skin color have nothing to do with those influencing hair form, eye shape, blood type, musical talent, athletic ability or forms of intelligence
5. **Most variation is within, not between, "races."** Of the small amount of total human variation, 85% exists within any local population – e.g., Italians, Koreans, or Cherokees. About 94% exists within any continent. Two random Koreans may be as genetically different as a Korean or an Italian.
6. **Slavery predates race.** For much of human history, societies have enslaved others, often as a result of conquest, even debt, but not because of physical traits or a belief in natural inferiority. Due to a unique set of historical circumstances, ours was the first system where all slaves shared similar physical characteristics.
7. **Race and freedom evolved together.** The U.S. was founded on the radical new principle that "All men are created equal." But our early economy was based largely on slavery. The new idea of race helped rationalize why some people could be denied the rights and freedoms that others took for granted.
8. **Race justified social inequalities as natural.** As the race idea evolved, white superiority became "common sense" in the U.S. It helped justify slavery, Indian conquest, the exclusion of Asian immigrants, and the taking of Mexican lands in spite of our belief in democracy and freedom. Racial practices were institutionalized within U.S. government, laws and society.
9. **Race isn't biological, but racism is real.** Race is a powerful social idea that gives people different access to opportunities and resources. Our government and social institutions have created advantages that disproportionately channel wealth, power, and resources to white people. This affects everyone, whether we are aware of it or not.
10. **Colorblindness will not end racism.** Pretending race doesn't exist is not the same as creating equality. To combat racism, we need to identify and remedy social policies and institutional practices that advantage some groups at the expense of others.