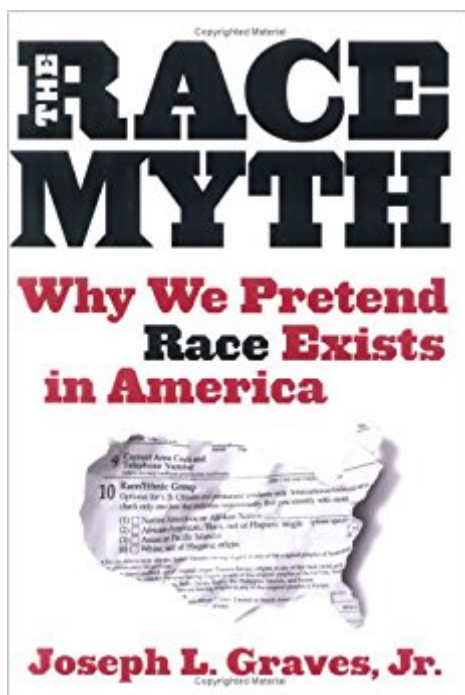


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# The Race Myth



## Synopsis

A leading scientist proves once and for all that race does not exist and provides solutions to end racism. While the public debate over the existence of race, racism, and affirmative action continues to rage, preeminent evolutionary biologist Joseph Graves will forever change how we think about race. According to his provocative argument, science cannot account for the racial categories used to classify people. He goes a step further to describe racism as an unintended consequence of evolution and offers creative, innovative ways to bring true equality to America. The Race Myth debunks the ancient fallacies still held as fact and perpetuated in everything from damaging medical profiling to misconceptions about sports. Through accessible and compelling language, Graves reveals the impossibility that any group of humans now in existence has a separate genetic line of descent. The Race Myth also explains why defining a race according to skin tones or eye shape is woefully inaccurate and why applying these false categories to assumptions about IQ, behavior, or predisposition to disease has devastating effects. Demonstrating that racial distinctions are social inventions, not biological truths, The Race Myth brings much-needed, sound science to one of America's most emotionally charged debates.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 304 pages

Publisher: Dutton Adult; 1 edition (June 17, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0525948252

ISBN-13: 978-0525948254

Product Dimensions: 6.3 x 1.1 x 9.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.3 out of 5 stars 20 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #699,343 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #75 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Sociology > Race Relations > General](#) #1320 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Minority Studies](#) #5917 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Anthropology > Cultural](#)

## Customer Reviews

A former professor of biology and African American studies summarizes the history and science of race from its early identity as a "scientific fact" to its current status as a social construction in this unevenly argued book. Graves is adept at simplifying complex ideas-such as natural selection,

sexual selection and genetic distance-so they can easily be understood by readers with only a passing familiarity with the basics of biology. And his first chapter, in which he uses evidence from the human genome project to prove that there is only one race of human beings and explains why physical differences are not an accurate reflection of genetic difference, is particularly fascinating. When it comes to discussing race as a contemporary cultural and political phenomenon, however, Graves rarely rises beyond half-hearted analysis, and he concludes almost exclusively with statements about white social domination. For example, when discussing the O.J. Simpson trial, he declares that "if they white people had Simpson at hand, they would have taught him ... that as a black man, he would never get away with violating a white female's innocence." Elsewhere, his diatribe against the mistreatment of minorities in academia is vitriolic enough to sound conspiratorial. ("Promotion and tenure for nonwhites," he says, "often boils down ... to how palatable ... they are deemed by those who maintain white social domination within that university.") Unfortunately, such broad generalizations pervade much of the book and suggest that it is less interested in provoking intelligent debate than it is on replacing one set of stereotypes with another. Fans of Stephen J. Gould may recognize many of this book's better arguments from his seminal volume *The Mismeasure of Man*, which presented them in much more thoughtful detail..Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Graves, an evolutionary biologist and professor, debunks numerous myths associated with the biological basis of race. His central premise is that there is greater variation within socially constructed races than between them, yet biological differences are often presumed to be an acceptable focus in areas of medicine, disease, and other public-oriented concerns. Graves attacks head-on the false assumptions associated with biological distinctions. Although he allows for certain genetic and biological points of differences, he asserts that their interplay with the environment and culture are too often overlooked and that, for example, differences in health and mortality rates between blacks and whites are more reflective of racism than biology. Noting the popular presumptions about blacks being biologically superior athletes, for example, Graves' analysis of track-and-field Olympic events undermines the weak basis of this and other popular fallacies on race. Graves' integration of science and objective analysis with popular biological assumptions about race makes this an enlightening and provocative work. Vernon FordCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

## EDUCATIONAL...

As others have noted, Graves has an "agenda" to what he writes, which spoils much of the good, factual, and truthful information in the book. Much better is Montagu's book on race.

Joseph L. Graves, a professor of Evolutionary Biology, explains in *THE RACE MYTH* precisely why Americans insist that race does exist even though genetically, as human beings, we are pretty much the same. The exception are differences caused by geography or environment. Examples we have all heard are the genetic diseases that certain "races" are more susceptible to such as sickle cell anemia in black people. He showed that although the people of Syria and Ghana don't look alike, they share the sickle cell gene and malaria. Kenyans and Ghanaians do resemble each other but the similarities end there. The Kenyans don't have the sickle cell gene, which is a defense mechanism against malaria, because in the high altitudes of Kenya, there are few mosquitoes and none carrying malaria. This is an example of how environment and geography play an important part in genetics. He explains that the race myth exists in America as an outgrowth of European dominance. When they first landed in the New World, they sought aid and advice from the indigenous people but that quickly faded as they decided to take the land from the previous owners. In addition, they began to import stolen Africans to cultivate the large tracts of land in their search for wealth. In order to make the system work, they had to establish the idea of "race" and along with that, the notion of superiority and inferiority. The Europeans were of superior intelligence, Indians down a notch and Africans on the bottom. According to Graves, this structuring of "race" is actually a social construct to maintain control. These ideas have persisted and are obvious in the distribution of employment, education and wealth in America. He goes on further to explore the myth that African Americans are more athletically inclined than European Americans including the history of the NBA and how and when African Americans began to "dominate" that sport. In conclusion, Graves calls for each of us to do our part in dismantling this social construct and to work for justice and equality. While he admits that everyone will not read or heed this book, history has shown that even small groups can bring about change and he urges us to do our part. Even though I've been hearing that race was a social construct, I have never seen it broken down and explained so thoroughly. Graves does an excellent job of giving us the scientific facts with the social examples to back his arguments. He demonstrates time and again how similar we are as human beings. He explains the so called gap in African American and European American scores on tests such as the SAT, the LSAT and the GRE, which are used to determine which students go to what college or

university. He explores the poverty, the under funded educational systems that exist in this country and how that affects the outcomes. He does a marvelous job of showing how this is by design and not by accident. He most definitely takes the authors of The Bell Curve, Herrnstein and Murray, to task for reenergizing the claim that genetics explained the differences in test scores. I would recommend this book for all thinking human beings. Reviewed by Alice Holman of the RAWSISTAZ fâ Ã â,,ç Reviewers

What a remarkable and readable book. Joseph Graves has penetrated scientific jargon to provide us readers with one of the most insightful explanations of race that I have ever read. He convincingly argues that the term "race" as it is commonly used to identify "caucasoids, mongoloids and negroids" is a figment of the 19th century imagination. At the genetic level, population groups do not fall into such neat packages. In the course of making his point about race, he explodes several related myths at the same time. American society's obsession with black athletes is just that, an irrational obsession. Graves makes the point that since there are more Europeans in the National Basketball Association than Africans, then the most logical conclusion that we can draw is not that "blacks" are superior athletes, but rather that the European rather than African side of African-Americans mixed ancestry might account for their superiority in this sport. The author raises and then persuasively answers some of those thorny questions about race that many of us surely ponder but feel too inhibited by considerations of political correctness to pose aloud: if skin color is genetic in the sense that it is based on a person's biology, then why isn't that person's race genetically valid? How could it be that a random white patient might find his black next door neighbor a compatible blood donor, while his white sister-in-law is not? If the races aren't real, then why can forensics specialists identify the race of a perpetrator in a crime from DNA evidence? Since blacks and not whites suffer from sickle-cell anemia, doesn't that validate the concept of race? Or, how can we be so sure that intelligence is not a function of racial inheritance since blacks consistently score 15 points below whites on IQ exams? If you're itching for the answers, then read this marvelous book!

I am really glad that I bought this book even though I initially hesitated after reading a very detailed but lukewarm review for it in this reviewers' section. Personally I loved the book. I am admittedly no expert on the subject, but the author struck just the right tone for me. He presented detailed scientific information demonstrating why "race" was not a genetically valid means of categorizing humans. But he did so in a persuasive and highly readable manner, which educated the lay person,

without (in my opinion) compromising the scientific-ness of his narrative. I was especially impressed with the introductory chapter explaining the meaning of genetic variability and genetic distance, and showing how they contradicted the belief in race as a biological construct. Also, I have in recent years read several books concerning black dominance in certain sports. But it was this author's perspectives on the subject that I found most convincing. I believe that Prof. Graves accomplished the goal he set out to meet, and that was to show far beyond a reasonable doubt that the punitive concept of "race" as it has been used to bludgeon people of African ancestry, while favoring Europeans has no place in modern science nor society.

This work is still quite valuable for understanding the ongoing confusion between biological and social definitions of race. This book is the only work that sets the current discussion within the context of evolutionary thinking concerning human genetic variation, and its lack of concordance with socially-defined notions. Dr. Joseph L. Graves Jr. also author of: *The Emperor's New Clothes: Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium*, RUP, 2005.

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