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What Is Racism?



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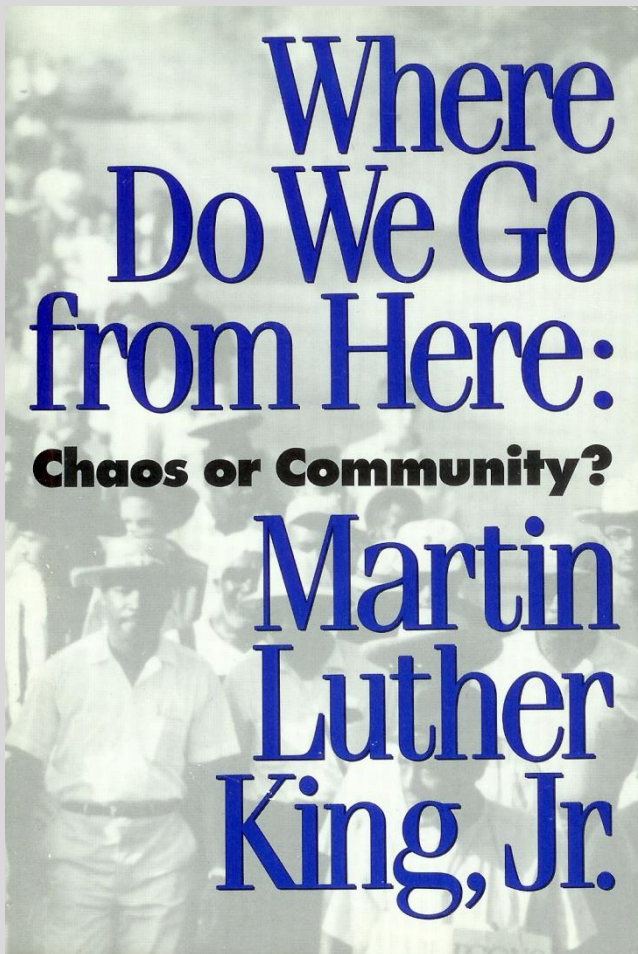
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This presentation was developed for use in the Martin Luther King Community Read in Ithaca, New York, 2009-2010.

Your comments, criticisms and suggestions are welcome...



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2018 pdf Document Updates Prepared for Ithaca Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) – click on titles to access...

[What is Structural Racism?](#)

[Structural Racism in Ithaca City and Tompkins County – 2017](#)

[Structural Racism in Ithaca City and Tompkins County – One-page Overview](#)

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What Is Racism?

The learning objectives for this slide presentation are:

- 1. To understand the nature of racism as a belief;
and**
- 2. To understand the main reasons why anthropologists and other scientists reject racism**

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What Is Racism?

Terms you should know at the end of this presentation are:

- racism
- stereotype
- prejudice
- correlation

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What Is Racism?

Sources and further reading:

- Benedict, Ruth. 1940. *Race, Science, and Politics*. New York: The Viking Press. The classic US anthropological refutation.
- Feldstein, Stanley. 1972. *The Poisoned Tongue: A Documentary History of American Racism and Prejudice*. New York: William Morrow & Company. Examples of racist beliefs throughout US history.
- Gossett, Thomas F. 1997. *Race: The History of an Idea in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Montagu, Ashley. 1997. *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: the Fallacy of Race*. Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press. 6th edition. The definitive encyclopedia of theories of racial superiority/inferiority and the biological and genetic refutations of them.. The best overall resource collection.

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Racism is...

- 1. A set of practices**
- 2. An element of institutions in society**
- 3. A set of beliefs**

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Racism Is...

1. A set of practices, such as

- **Housing segregation**
- **Separate and unequal schools**
- **Laws limiting the behavior of people according to a racial classification**
- **Laws against “intermarriage” among races**
- **Genocide: attempts to completely destroy entire peoples**

Racism Is...

2. An aspect of the institutions of society (institutional racism) such as

- **Patterns of income and employment (not necessarily resulting from specific laws)**
 - **Patterns of health and disease**
 - **Patterns of education and achievement**
 - **Patterns of incarceration, of political representation**
- ...resulting from the daily workings of society, and not necessarily desired by or caused by particular individuals**

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**These patterns are often referred
to as “institutional racism.”**

Or, systemic racism

Or, structural racism

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Institutional/Structural racism is the most difficult to identify and understand and is the source of a great amount of confusion and misunderstanding in today's USA.

See our new essay on What Is Structural Racism – click the title to access it

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Affirmative action programs were designed to try to overcome some elements of institutional racism but have become among the most controversial outcomes of the civil rights movement because of the lack of adequate public understanding of institutional racism.

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Racism Is...

3. A set of beliefs

In the remainder of this presentation, we shall consider racism as a belief only.

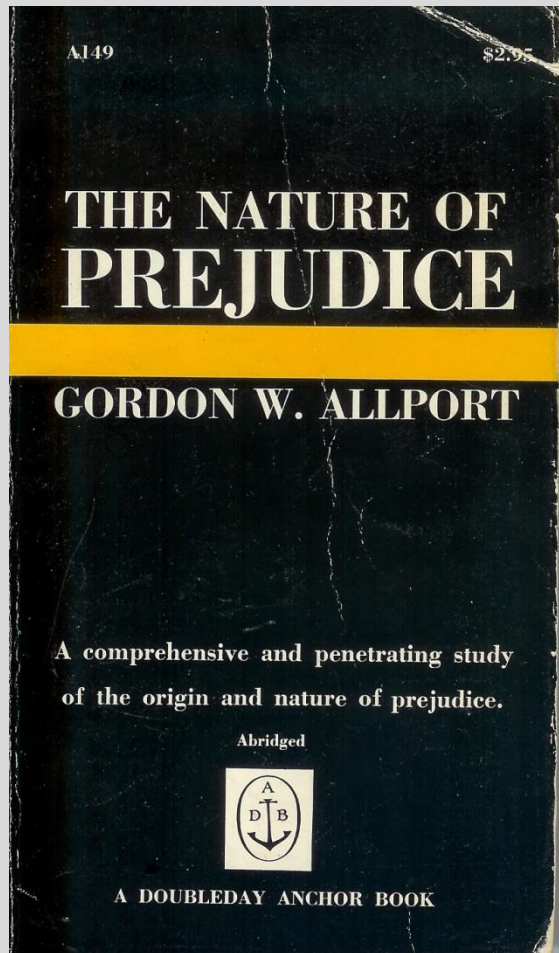
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Racism As a Set of Beliefs

Main psychological component is:

stereotyping

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In 1954 Harvard psychologist Gordon Allport wrote the classic work on prejudice. He defined a stereotype as...

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“...an exaggerated belief associated with a category [of people].”

Allport, Gordon. 1954. *The Nature of Prejudice*. New York: Doubleday-Anchor. page 187.

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Stereotypes are usually the basis of
“prejudice,” which Allport defined (p.8) as:

“An avertive or hostile attitude toward a
person who belongs to a group, simply
because he belongs to that group”

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Stereotypes and prejudice can occur in many ways and among any groups but in the history of the United States probably the strongest prejudices have been based on racial stereotypes.

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We can say that racism is a stereotype about a race of people, usually held by some other race of people.

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To fully understand racism and what is wrong with it we can make it into a set of beliefs based on certain ideas that might or might not be true.

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Then we can decide if racism has any basis
in fact or reality.

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Racism: A Three-Part Belief System

Belief #1

1. The belief that physical differences among races represent real genetic, biological barriers,

...and...

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Racism: A Three–Part Belief System

...and...

Belief #2

2. That therefore, at least some races are biologically “pure,” [which would make stereotyping logically OK]

...and therefore...

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Racism: A Three–Part Belief System

Belief #3

3. That some races are superior to others that are inferior.

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So, are any of these three statements true?

What's Wrong With Racism?

- 1. There are no definitive biological boundaries between the races of humans:**
 - All currently existing races have interbred and thus exchanged genetic material for at least the last 100,000 years of human evolution.**

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What's Wrong With Racism?

In other words...

there is no such thing as a pure race

What's Wrong With Racism?

- 2. There are no consistent correlations among racial traits: skin color does not predict stature, blood chemistry, or other physical features.**

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What's Wrong With Racism?

**We can see this scientifically by looking at
some geographic distribution maps:**

What's Wrong With Racism?

- The traditional four races**
- Stature**
- Skin color**
- Hemoglobin S (sickle cell)**

What's Wrong With Racism?

The following maps filter out known migrations and thus approximate the home base of the various races.

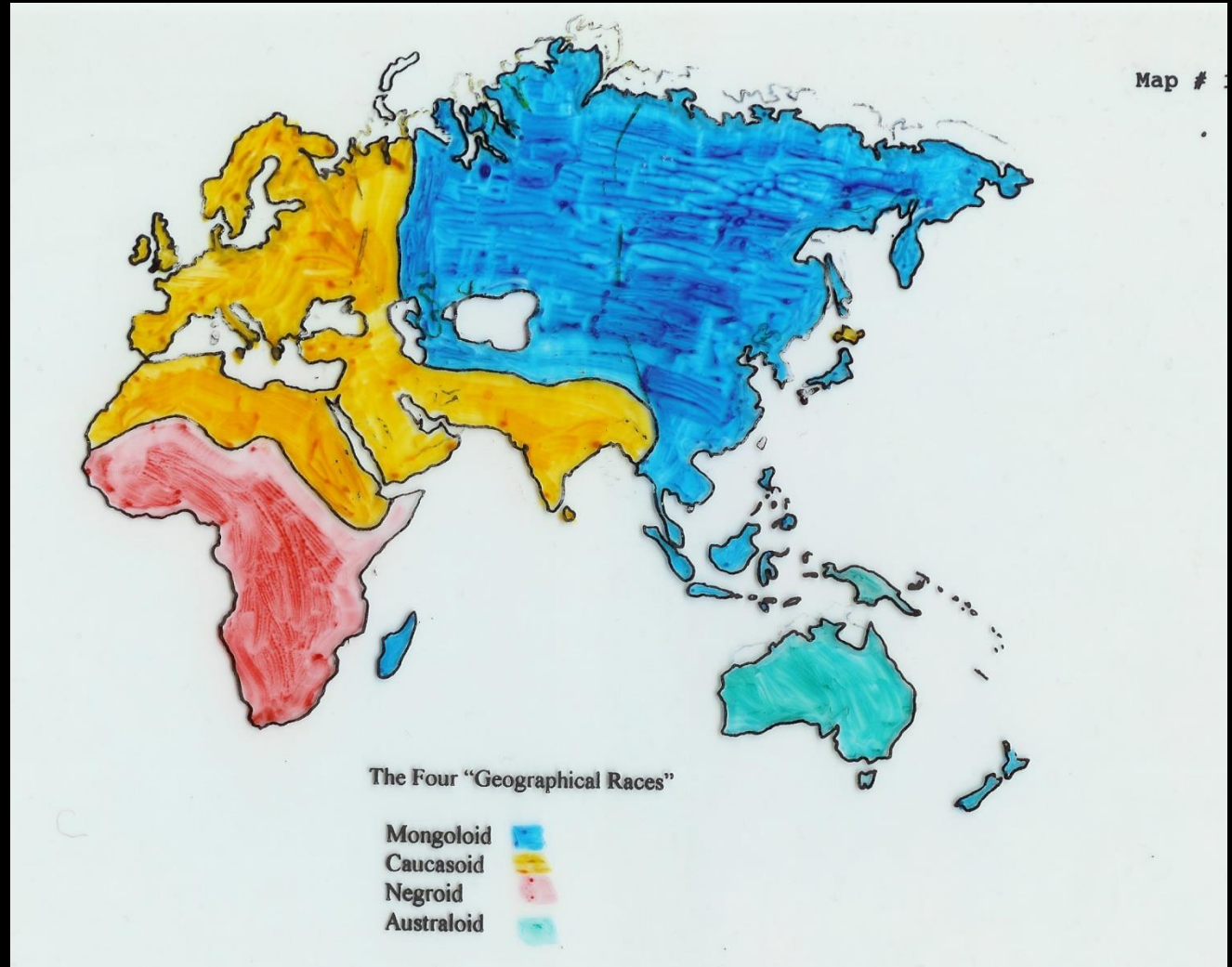
We only consider the Old World because the New World original races – the Native Americans – came from the Old World Asian peoples. Only one race was here originally.

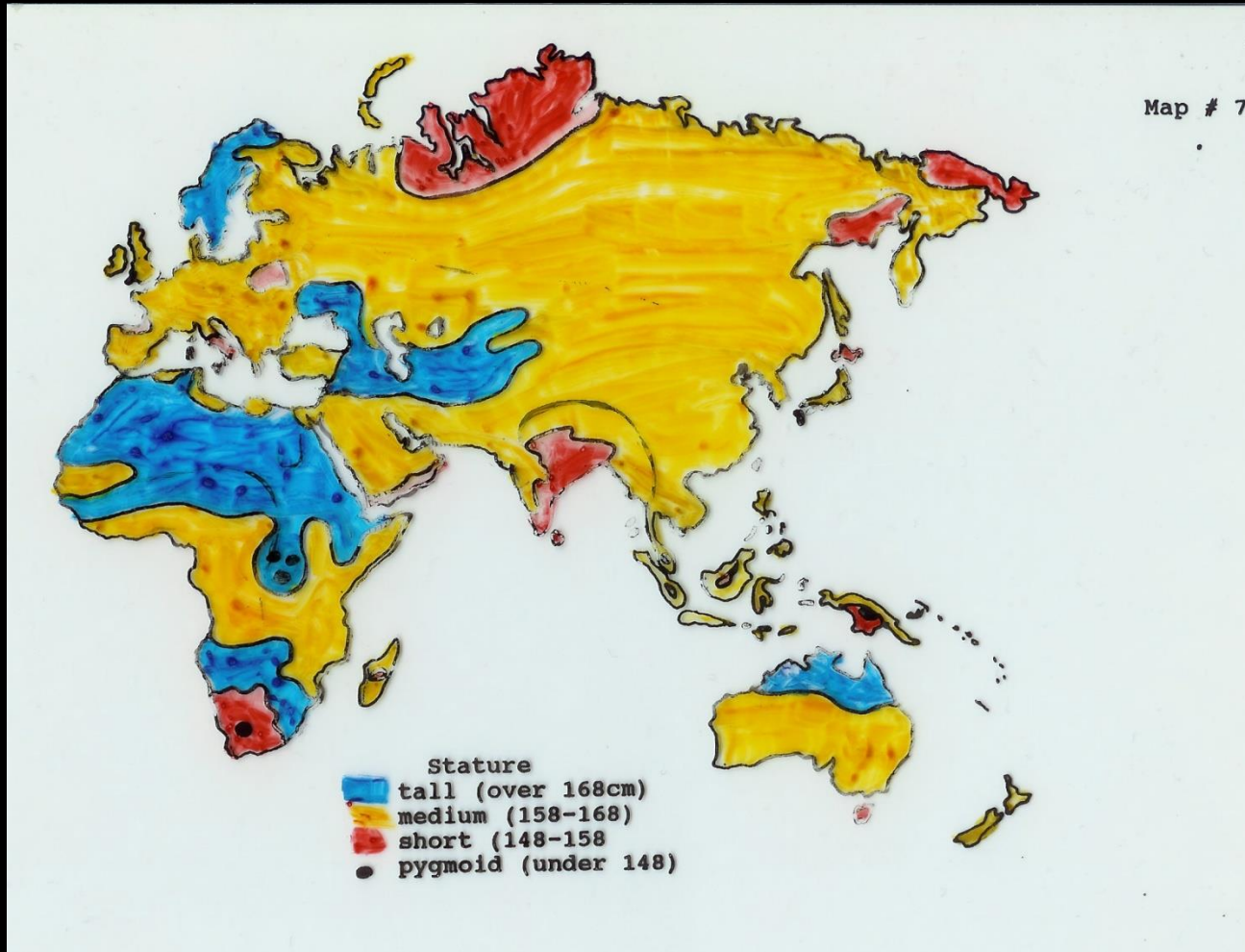
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What's Wrong With Racism?

First, let's look at each characteristic separately...

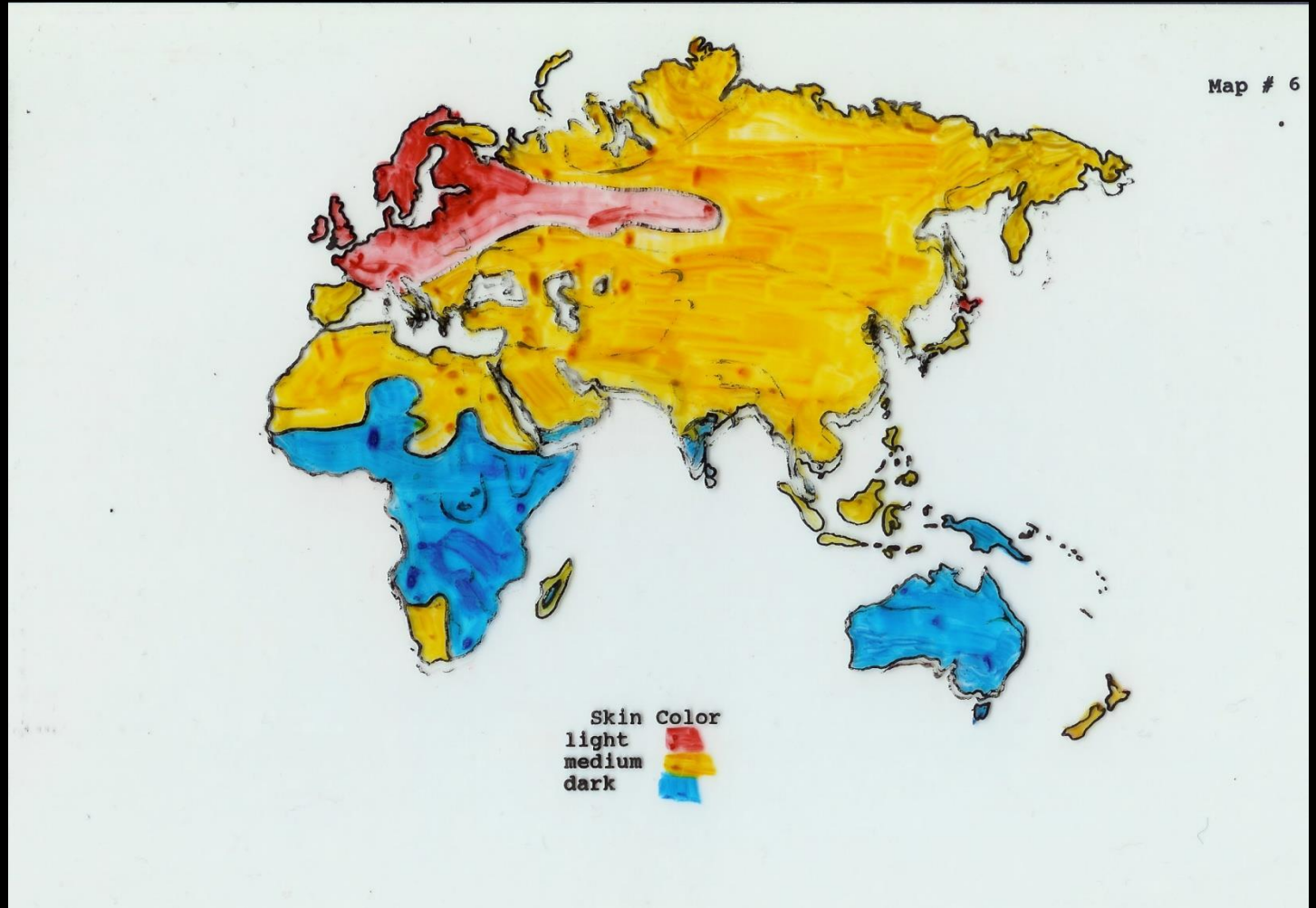
The Four “Traditional” Races

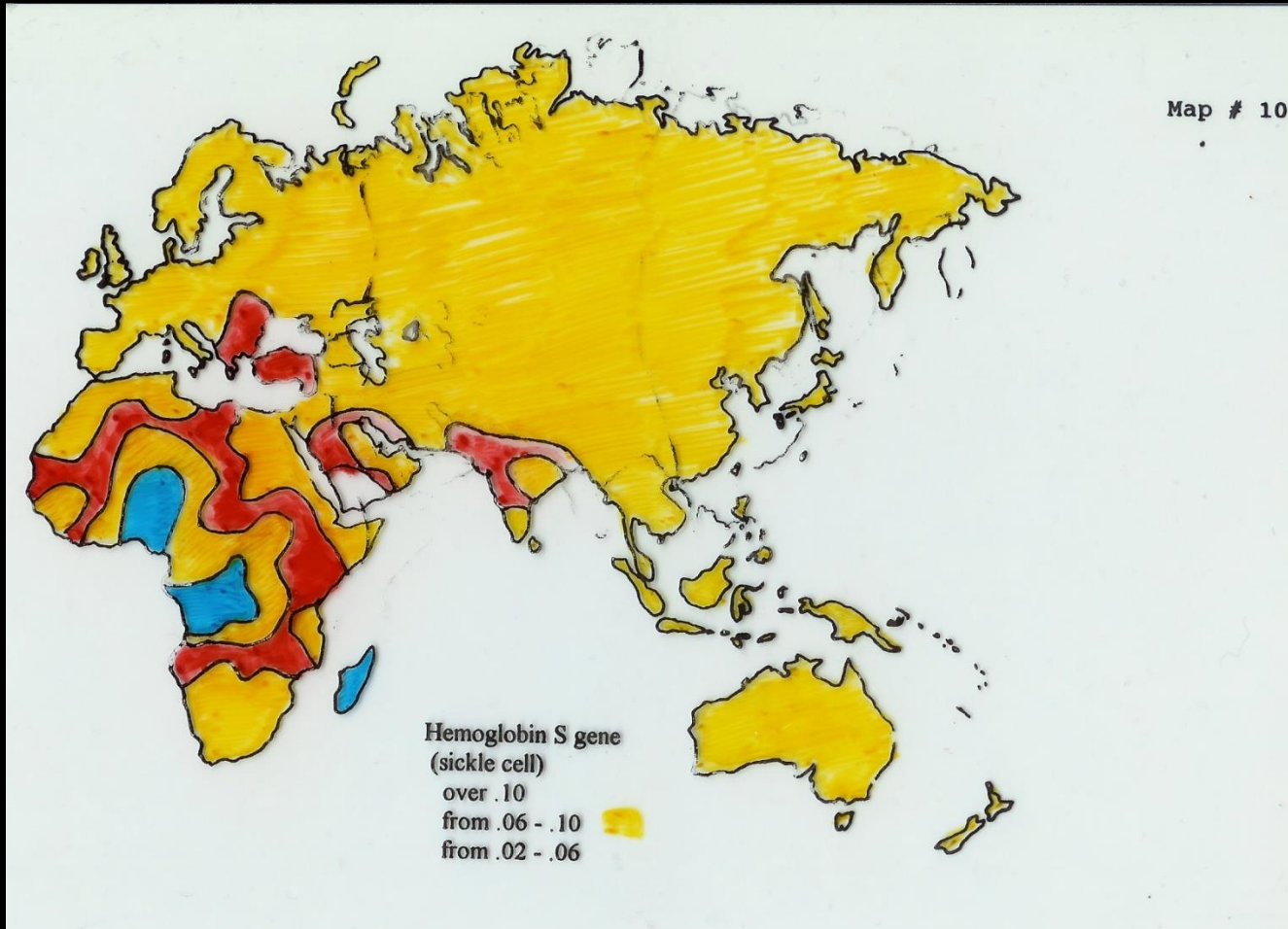




Stature

Skin
color



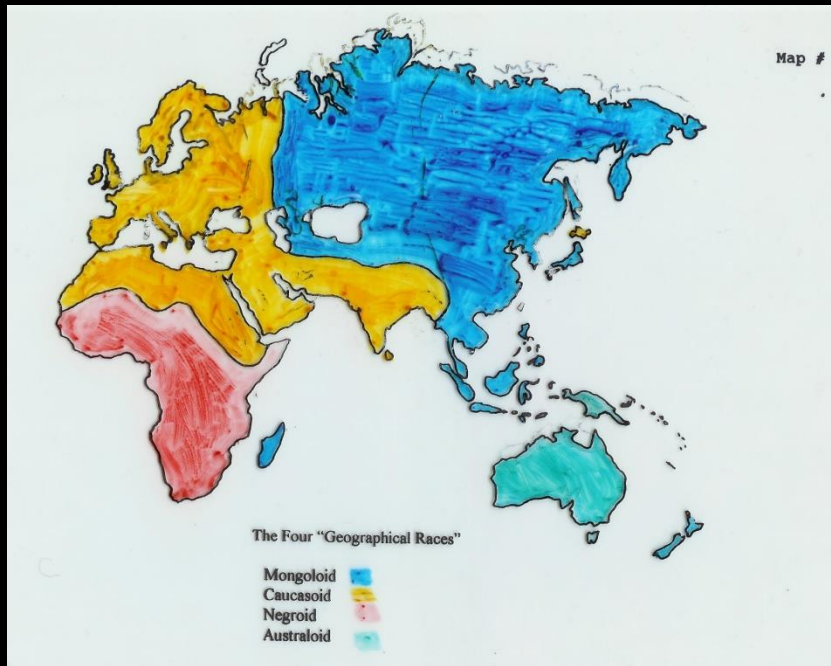


Hemoglobin
S – sickle
cell

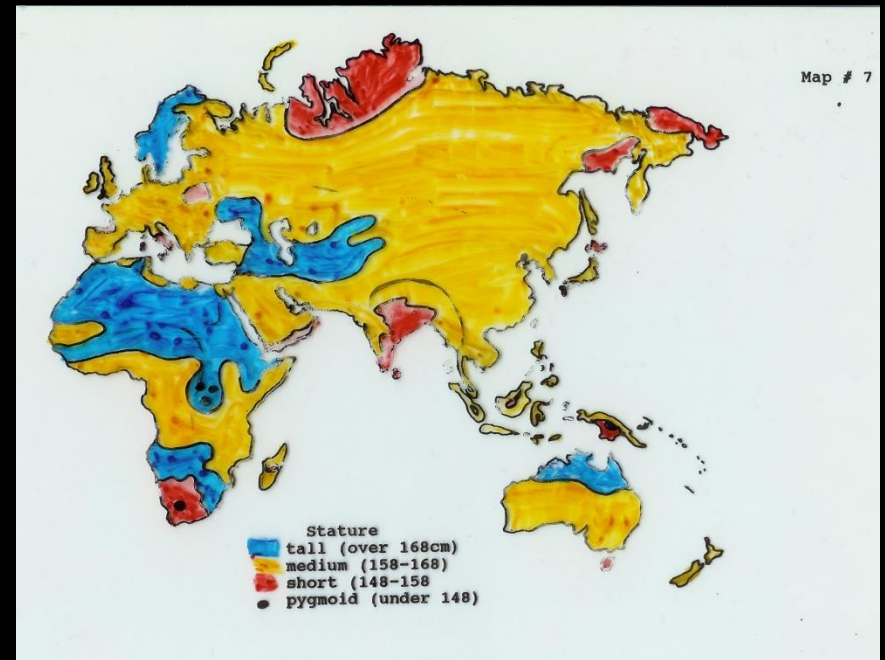
What's Wrong With Racism?

Now let's see if there is any correlation between the four traditional races and any of the supposed racial characteristics...

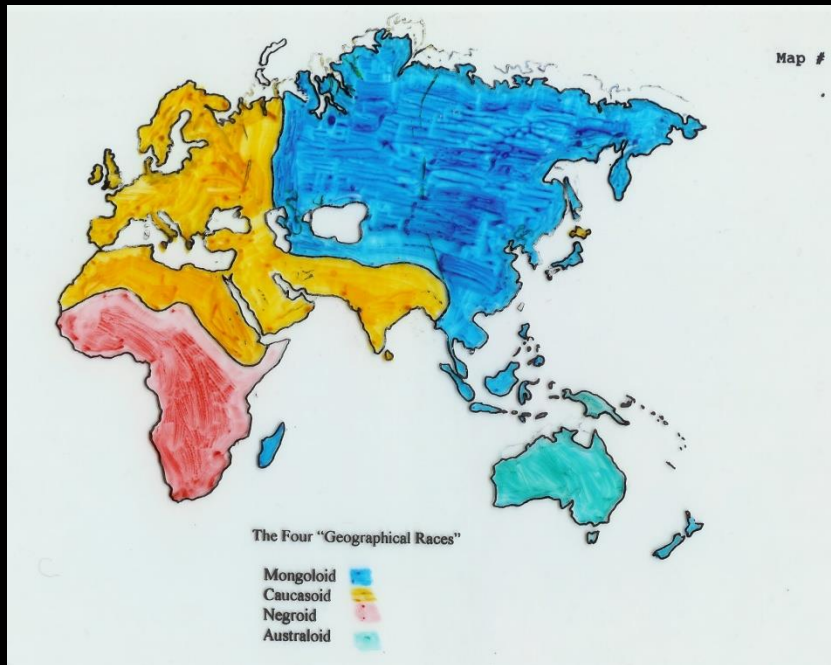
Race



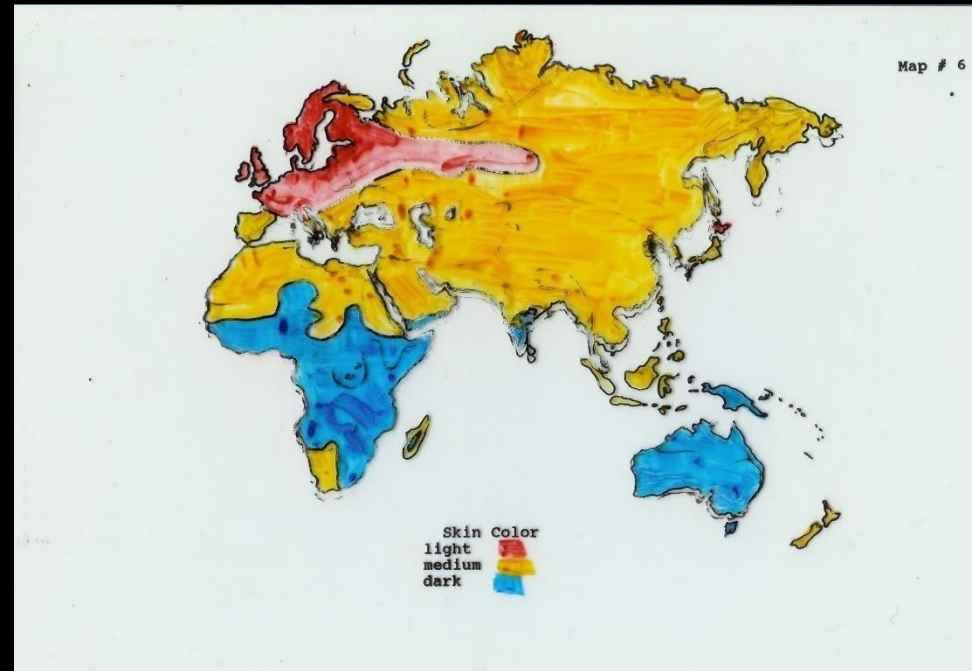
Stature



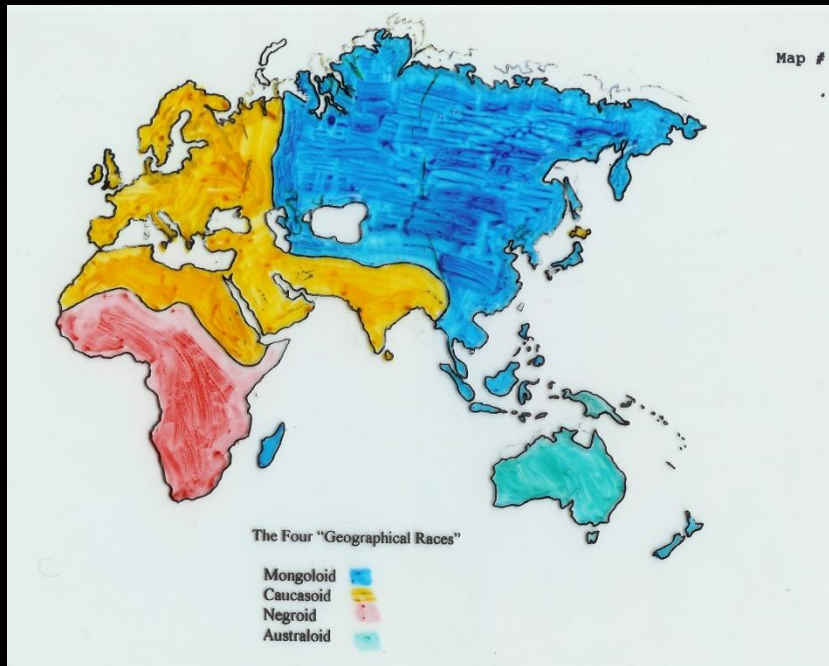
Race



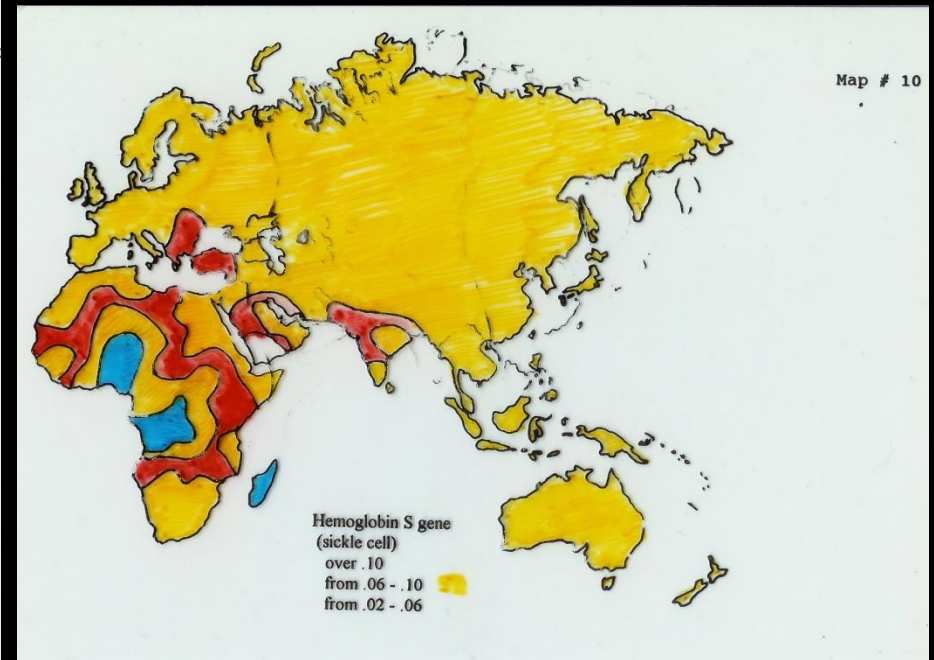
Skin Color



Race



Sickle Cell



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What's Wrong With Racism?

What do you see?

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What's Wrong With Racism?

What about genetics and race?

What's Wrong With Racism?

Recent genetic evidence strongly suggests that all humans evolved from an ancient African population:

– we all have Black ancestors.

What's Wrong With Racism?

Race is more of a social classification system than a biologically sound means of distinguishing individuals or groups from one another.

For details, go to any of the source readings listed on the beginning slides of this lecture.

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What's Wrong With Racism?

Racism has led to degrading and insulting stereotypes of individuals and groups that bear no relation to reality.

What's Wrong With Racism?

Beliefs about racial inferiority or superiority have helped justify oppression, exploitation, slavery, discrimination and genocide; wherever it still exists, racism continues to interfere with efforts to build a just and peaceful world.

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Want To Know More?

<https://www.understandingrace.org/>

The above link is to the race pages of the American Anthropological Association, the U. S. scholarly association with the longest history of research and knowledge of race and its meaning.

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**End of Slides on Racism as a Belief
for the Ithaca Community Read-In
of Martin Luther King**