



The Race Myth: Why We Pretend Race Exists in America

By Joseph Graves

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"An enlightening and provocative work."—*Booklist*

Preeminent evolutionary biologist Joseph Graves proves once and for all that it doesn't. Through accessible and compelling language, he makes the provocative argument that science cannot account for the radical categories used to classify people, and debunks ancient race-related fallacies that are still held as fact, from damaging medical profiles to misconceptions about sports. He explains why defining race according to skin tone or eye shape is woefully inaccurate, and how making assumptions based on these false categories regarding IQ, behavior, or predisposition to disease has devastating effects.

Demonstrating that racial distinctions are in fact social inventions, not biological truths, *The Race Myth* brings much-needed, sound science to one of America's most emotionally charged debates.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

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..

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From [Booklist](#)

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 Ford*

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Review

"Graves' integration of science and objective analysis with popular biological assumptions of race makes this an enlightening and provocative work."—*Booklist*

"Sharply argued."—*San Jose Mercury News*

"[A] provocative new analysis."—*Philadelphia Tribune*

"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.”—*Publishers Weekly*

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Joe Vizcarra:

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