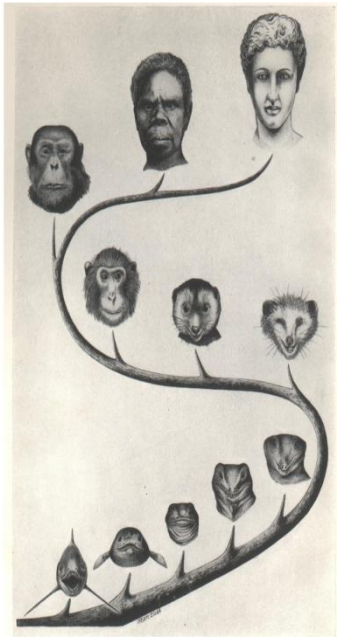


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# RACE AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

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OUR FACE FROM FISH TO MAN.

1. Devonian shark; 2. Upper Devonian air-breathing, lobe-finned fish;  
3. Lower Carboniferous amphibian; 4. Permo-Carboniferous reptile; 5. Triassic  
mammal-like reptile; 6. Cretaceous mammal; 7. Lemnoid primate; 8. Recent  
Old World monkey; 9. Chimpanzee; 10. Tasmanian; 11. Roman athlete.

For details see p. xiii.

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## RESISTING THE "PSEUDO- SCIENCE" OF RACE

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- Pamela R. Fletcher Professor of English and Co-Director of Critical Studies of Race and Ethnicity
  - Nancy A Heitzeg, Professor of Sociology and Co-Director of Critical Studies of Race and Ethnicity
  - Debbie D. Wygal Professor of Biology
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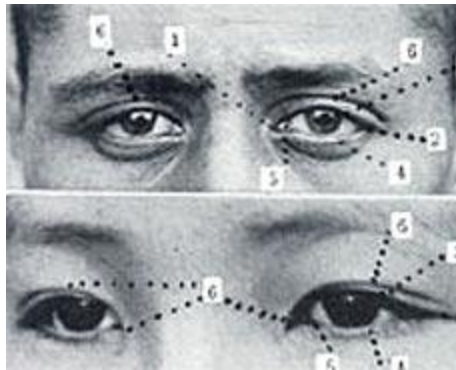
# OVERVIEW

- RACE AND RACISM AS SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS, SOCIAL REALITIES
  - BRIEF HISTORY OF THE “SCIENCE” OF RACE
  - THE PERSISTENCE OF RACIAL REIFICATION IN SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
  - STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE
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# “RACE” AND RACISM

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# RACE

- *“Race is an exceedingly slippery concept. Although it appears in social life as ubiquitous, omnipresent and real, it is hard to pin down the concept in any objective sense, this is because the idea of race is riddled with apparent contradictions. While it is a dynamic phenomena rooted in political struggle, it is commonly observed as a fixed characteristic of human populations; while it does not exist in terms of human biology, people routinely look to the human body for evidence about racial identity; while it is a biological fiction, it is nonetheless a social fact.” James 2008*
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- Race is not biologically real - it is socially and politically constructed via law, public policy and social practices.
  - *“What we call ‘race’ is an invention not of nature but of our social institutions and practices”* Graves 2002
  - *“Race, as other social categories such as class and gender, is socially constructed...but it has a social reality. This means after race- or class or gender- is created, it produces real effects on the actors racialized as ‘black’ or ‘white’.”* Bonilla-Silva 2006
-

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- There are no subspecies or “races” in the human population.
  - The biological reality of race is a myth.
  - *“All of America’s racist thinkers have relied on three unchallenged assumptions: that races exist; that each race has its own genetically determined characteristics; and crucially, that social hierarchy results from these differences.” Graves 2005*
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# RACISM

- Racism is structured and systemic.
  - *“There is a tendency on the part of many Americans, especially white Americans, to see racism as an individual matter, as something only outspoken white bigots engage in. Yet racism is much more than an individual matter. It is both individual and systemic. Indeed, systemic racism is perpetuated by a recurring patterns of discrimination within institutions and by individuals but also an alienating racist relationship – on the one hand, the racially oppressed, and on the other, the racial oppressors.”* Feagin 2000
-



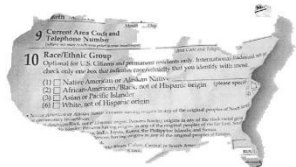
- 
- The history of racial classification, of individual and systemic racial stratification, is the history of white supremacy.
  - *‘When race emerged in human history, it formed a social structure (a racial social system) that awarded systemic privileges to Europeans (‘whites’) over non-Europeans (‘non-whites’). Racialized social systems , or white supremacy for short, became global and affected all societies where Europeans extended their reach. ...a society’s racial structure is the totality of the social relations and practices that reinforce white privilege...the task is to uncover the particular social, economic, political, social control and ideological mechanisms for the reproduction of racial privilege in a society.’* Bonilla-Silva 2006
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# THE “SCIENCE” OF RACE

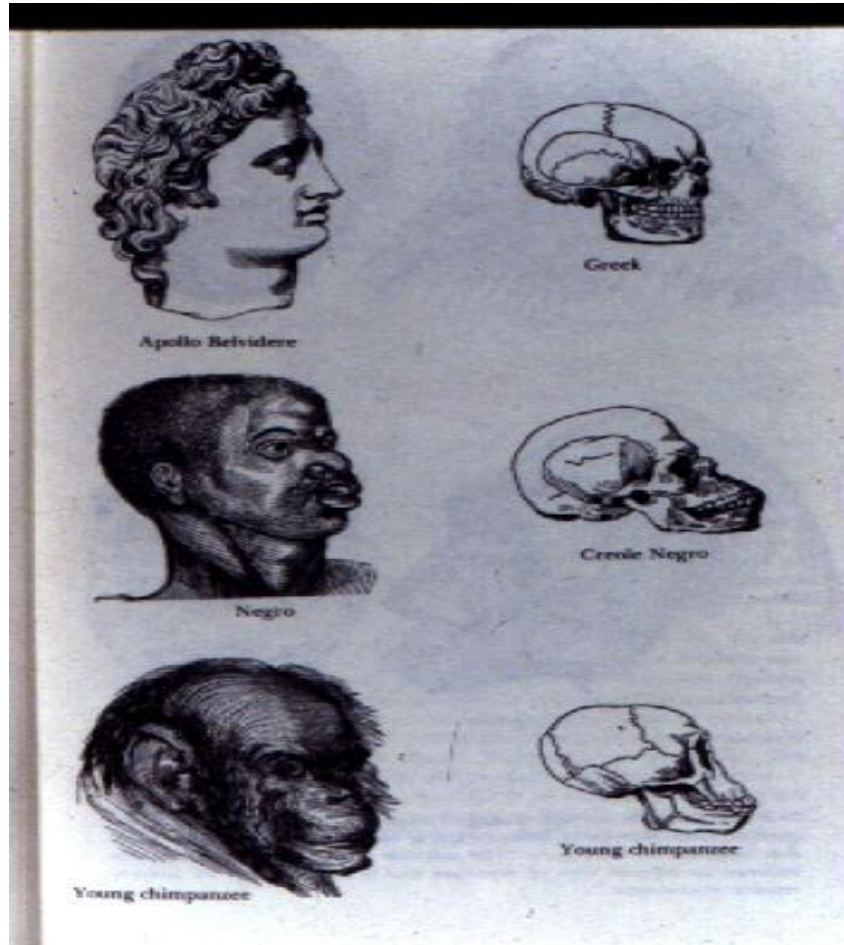
## THE RACE MYTH

Why We Pretend  
Race Exists  
in America



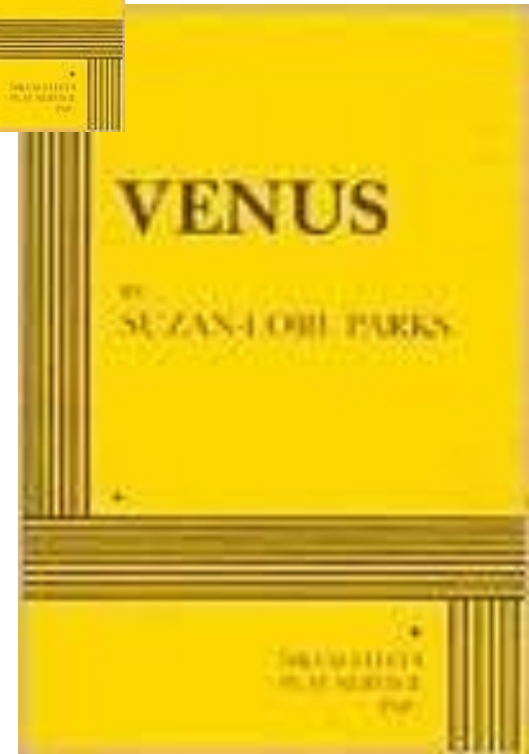
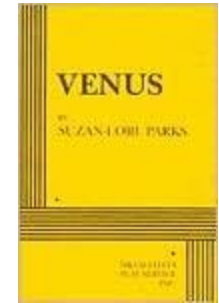
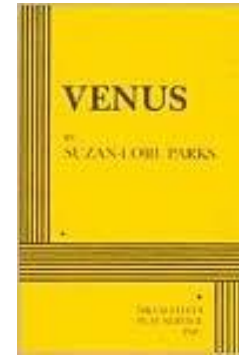
Joseph L. Graves, Jr.

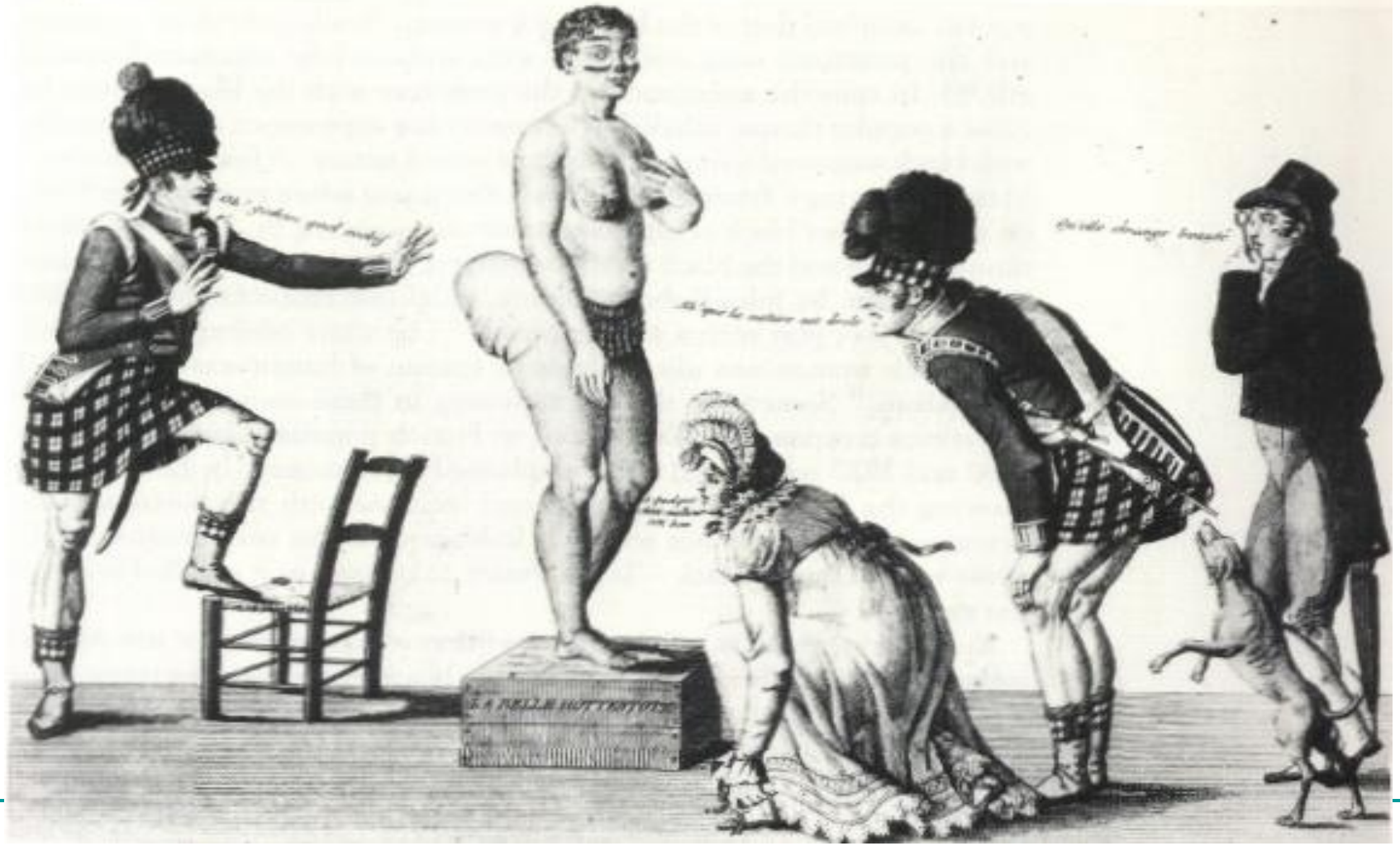
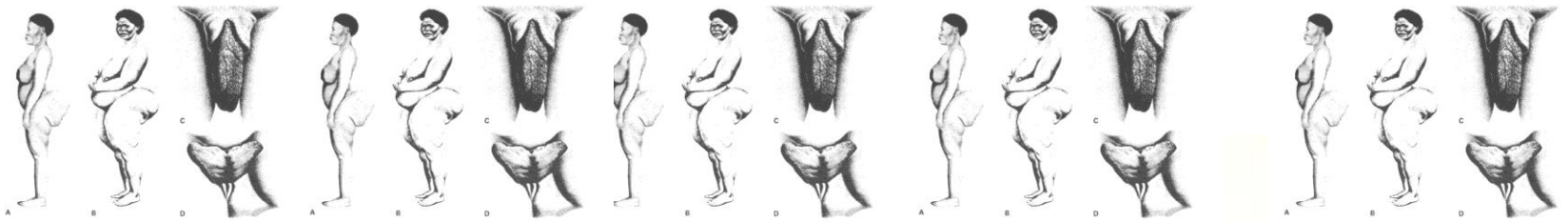
# AGE OF EXPLORATION



- The rise of colonialism, capitalism and science
- The naturalists, polygenists and early racial classification schemes
- Exploitation and exoticization of non-Europeans

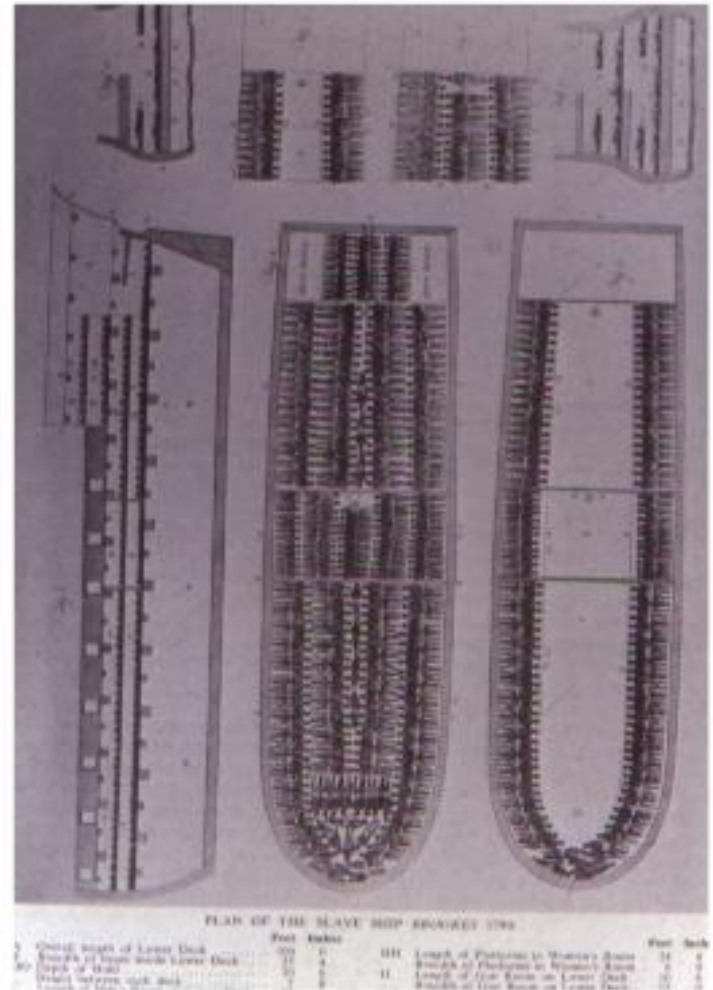
# Suzan-Lori Parks, *VENUS*





# U.S. - RACE-BASED SLAVERY

- Slavery and the race questions as foundational to U.S. Constitution
- White as free persons and black as slave property
- Slaves as subject to “scientific” study, research, and “breeding” programs

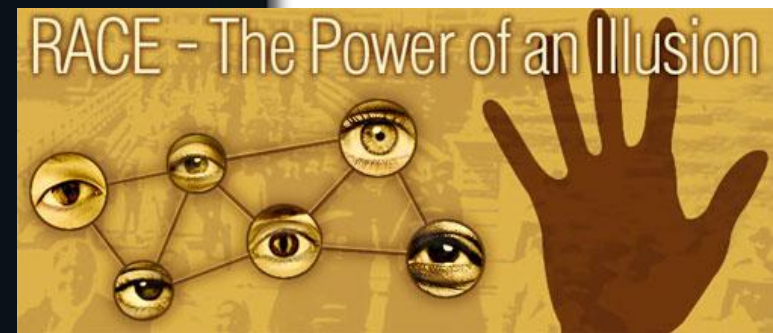
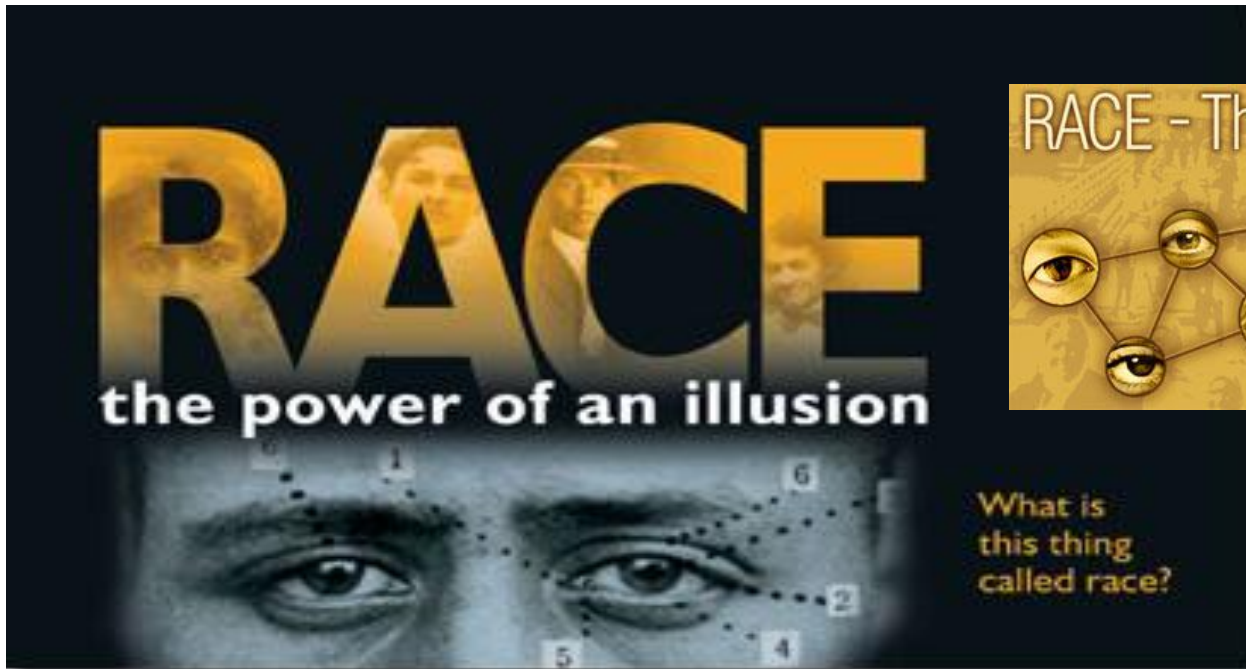


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# RACE: THE POWER OF AN ILLUSION

## Episode 2

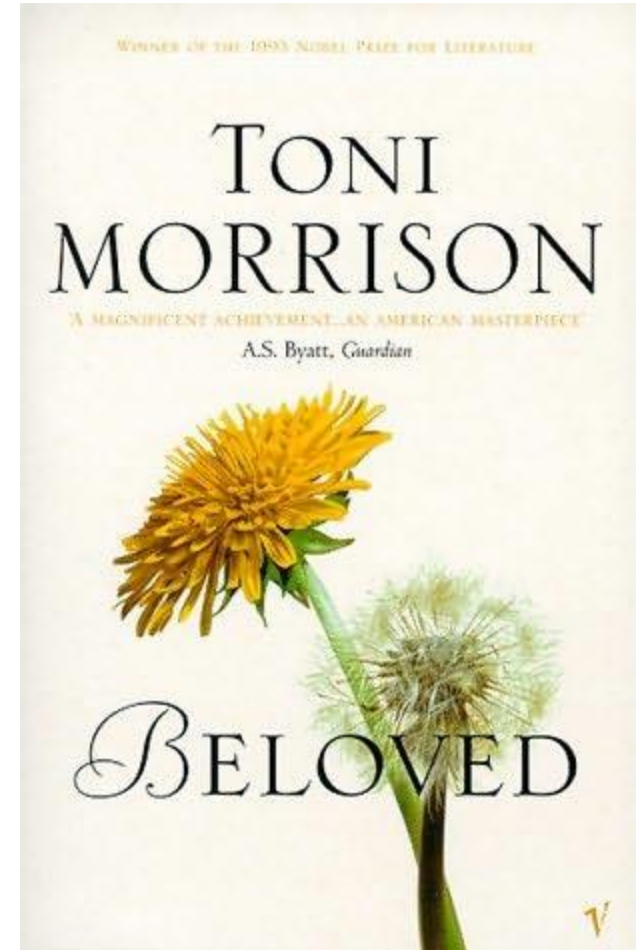
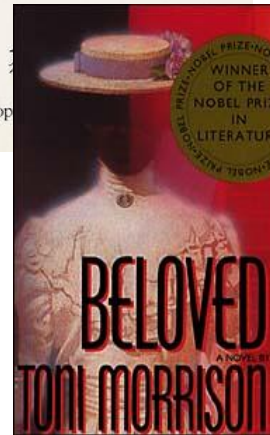
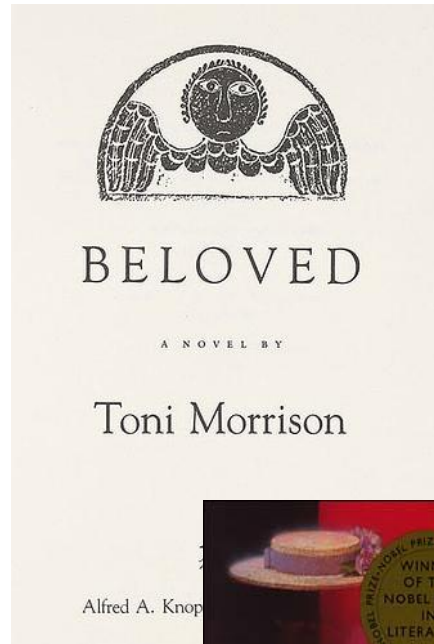
### The Story We Tell



# Toni Morrison *BELOVED*

**BELOVED**  
A NOVEL

**TONI  
MORRISON**



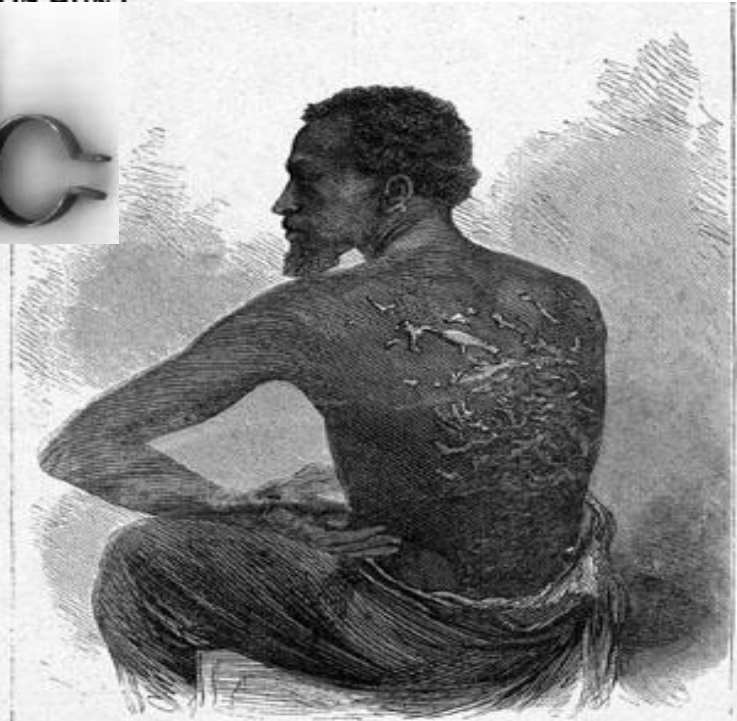
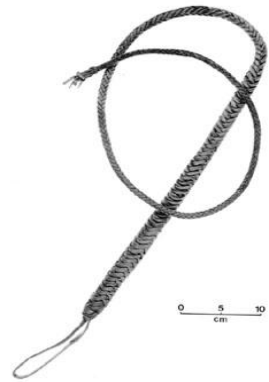




## THIRTY DOLLARS REWARD:

**RUN-A-WAY** from the Subscriber, the 16th of September last, a Negro Man named BOOD, about 38 Years old, 5 Feet 10 Inches high, yellow Complexion, thin Visage, has had the Small Pox; his great Toes have been froze, and have only little Pieces of Nails on them: He is much addicted to strong Liquor, and when drunk very noisy and troublesome. Whoever takes up said Slave, and brings him home, or secures him in Gaol, so that his Master may get him again, shall be intitled to the above Reward of **THIRTY DOLLARS**, paid by

Any Person who takes up s  
be particularly careful that he  
as he is a remarkable stout cur



GORDON UNDER MEDICAL INSPECTION.

# U.S. - EUGENICS



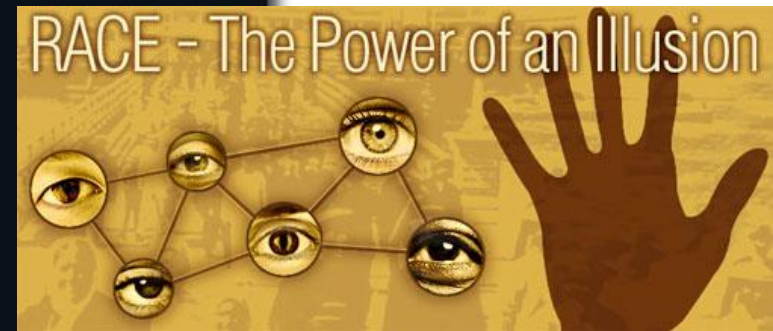
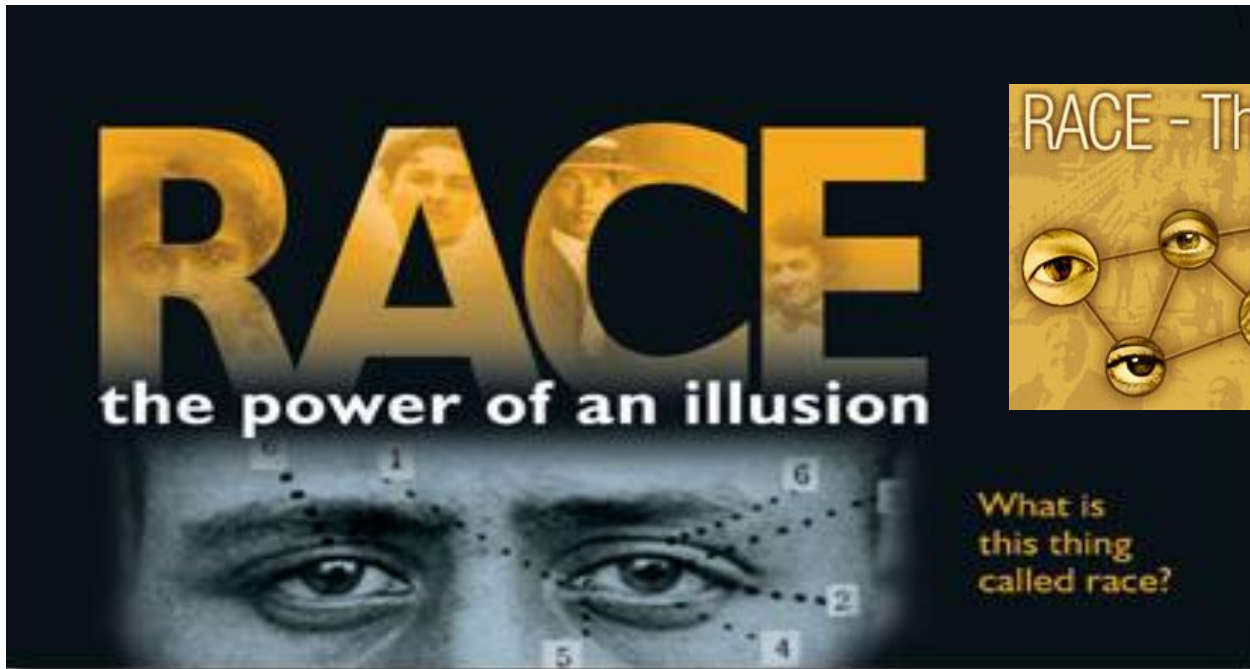
- “Good birth”
- “Better breeding” – positive and negative social engineering
- Widespread impact on U.S. social policy and law – immigration, birth control, sterilization, institutionalization, and research such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Study

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# RACE: THE POWER OF AN ILLUSION

## Episode 1

### The Difference Between Us



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# *White Things*

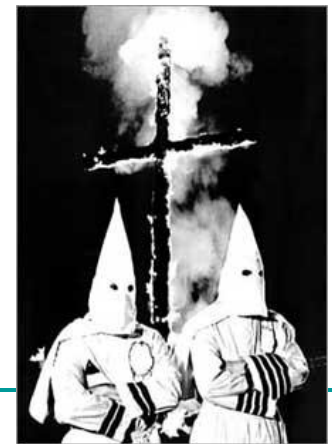
Anne Spencer (1920)

Most things are colorful things--the sky, earth, and sea.  
Black men are most men; but the white are free!  
White things are rare things; so rare, so rare  
They stole from out a silvered world--somewhere.  
Finding earth-plains fair plains, save greenly grassed,  
They strewed white feathers of cowardice, as they passed;  
The golden stars with lances fine  
The hills all red and darkened pine,  
They blanched with their wand of power;  
And turned the blood in a ruby rose  
To a poor white poppy-flower.

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They pyrrred a race of black, black men,  
And burned them to ashes white; then,  
Laughing, a young one claimed a skull,  
For the skull of a black is white, not dull,  
But a glistening awful thing;  
Made, it seems, for this ghoul to swing  
In the face of God with all his might,  
And swear by the hell that sired him:  
"Man-maker, make white!"





Photograph from Bettmann/Corbis

Lynching 1930 Marion Indiana  
LIFE MAGAZINE

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# THE PERSISTENCE OF RACIAL REIFICATION

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# RACIAL FALLACIES

- *“Despite what we have been taught, despite what we seem to see, race isn’t gravity. It is a social construct, a myth in the service of social dominance.” Graves 2005*
  - Race, Health, Mortality, and Disease
  - Racial Medicine and Pharmacogenomics
  - Race and Mental Illness
  - Race and IQ
  - Race, Sexuality, Reproduction, and Athletic Ability
  - Race and Participation in Crime
-



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# STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE



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# DERACIALIZING RESEARCH

- Critical Race Consciousness v. Color-blindness
- Recognition that “race” is not fixed but fluid
- Critical analysis of oppressive systems of social stratification
- Awareness of the intersection of race with class, gender, sexual orientation , age and ability in the production of life chances
- *“WE REJECT THE VIEW OF THOSE WHO WISH TO ERASE DIFFERENCE WITHOUT FIRST ERASING THE STRUCTURE THAT PRODUCES DIFFERENCES IN LIFE CHANCES AND IDENTITY”*

Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva 2008

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