

SACRED GROUND
SESSION 2

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WHAT IS RACE?

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Powerful social categories forged historically through oppression, slavery, and conquest.

Major strut holding up our stratified society

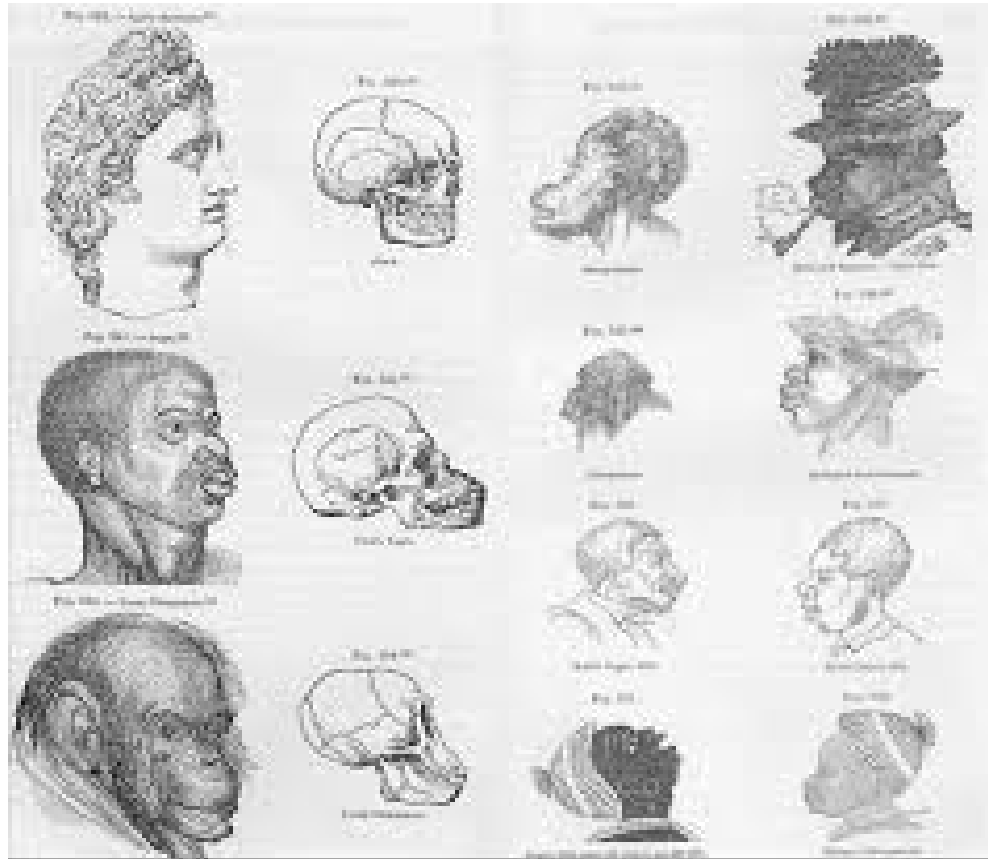
Symbolic categories based on phenotype (visible physical characteristics), ancestry, and/or geography and constructed according to specific social and historical contexts that are misrecognized as natural categories.

RACE: A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION

- Characteristics like skin color, eye shape, skeletal structure, and hair color/texture have all been used to categorize those of certain “racial” groups.
- In reality, however, there are no biological races.
- There is as much variation *within* so-called racial groups as *between* them, which tells us that human groups exist on a continuum, not in a few distinct racial categories.
- **Race, then, is socially constructed. But that doesn't mean it isn't REAL!**

BIOLOGICAL THEORIES: DEBUNKED

The **biological concept of race**, whereby human populations were divided into sub-species mainly on the basis of visible physical characteristics, was dominant from the early 19th century to its decline with the defeat of the Nazis at the end of the World War II.



U.S CENSUS 2010

White alone, percent	76.5%
Black or African American alone, percent	13.4%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent	1.3%
Asian alone, percent	5.9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent	0.2%
Two or More Races, percent	2.7%
Hispanic or Latino, percent	18.3%

Racialization: → Stratification

The actual imposition of a racial schema on society and people. Shapes the lives of **ALL** people, not just POC

Racialization is the process by which understandings of race are used to classify individuals or groups of people:
Stratification.

Involves both formal and informal inequities, including segregating schools and businesses, along with differentiated rights.

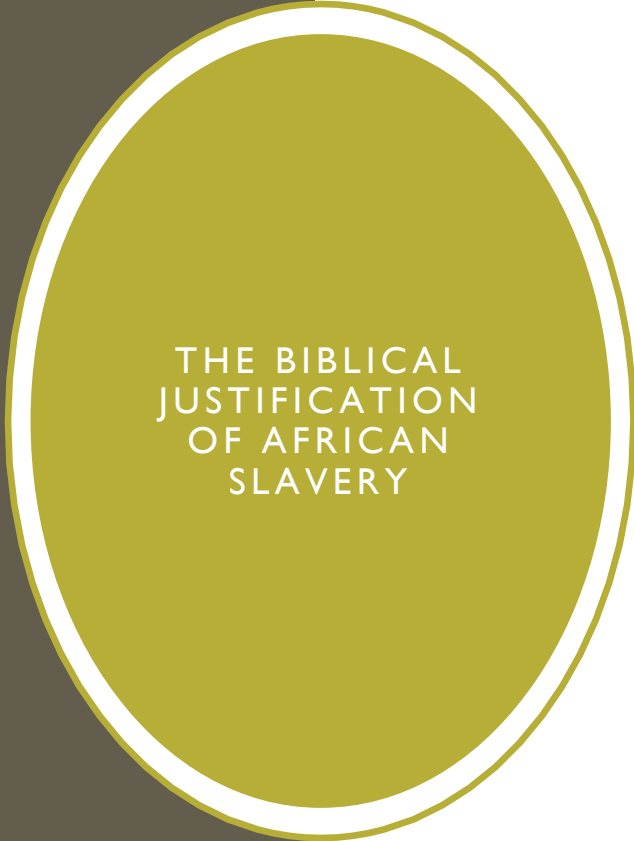
**How Does It Work?
The Consequences?**

THE RELIGIOUS JUSTIFICATION OF RACE



THE EARLY RELIGIOUS (ANGLICAN) SETTLERS

- Jamestown, first settlement (Anglican) settlement in the new world
 - Utilized the first African slaves
- 1701 Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts Mission to spread the Gospel to non-Christian people globally
- Bishop John Henry Hopkins, *Scriptural, ecclesiastical, and Historical View of Slavery from the Days of the Patriarch Abraham to the Nineteenth Century* (New York: 1864)
- “Unlike many denominations, Episcopalians didn’t agonize doctrinally over slavery. It was never seriously questioned by Episcopal church leaders in the South — or the North. They were more concerned with how to grow their small congregations and get their members to fill the collection plates.” (Arisa Arend: 2014)



THE BIBLICAL
JUSTIFICATION
OF AFRICAN
SLAVERY

- Justification for slavery in a Judeo-Christian society based on the Christian and moral dogma that “all men are created equal in the eyes of God...”
- “The Mark of Cain”
- “The Curse of Ham”
 - Noah and his family are not described in racial terms in the Bible
 - Ham “becomes Black and in servitude” for “looking at the naked body of his drunk father, Noah in a cave” (Post-flood celebration?)
 - "It appealed to racial slavery because Ham acted like you expected a black man to act,"
- Jesus did not condemn the widespread slavery in the Roman world. If slavery was wrong, why does the Bible not condemn it?

THE BIBLICAL
JUSTIFICATION
OF AFRICAN
SLAVERY

**...There is neither Jew nor
Greek ..for you are all one
in Christ Jesus.**

Galatians 3:28

Slavery and the inhumane treatment of African slaves was the antithesis of Christian dogma.

If all men are created equal in the eyes of God, and created in God's image, how then can I treat another human being as "less than" ?

How do we reconcile slavery?

Reconciliation could only be effectively achieved by assigning "sub-human" status to the African slave.

WHEN COLOR AND RACE BECOMES “*LESS
THAN...*”

The Line of Humanity

Color = Race



WHEN COLOR BECOMES “*LESS THAN...*”

The Line of Humanity


White = Human



Black = subhuman

FROM RELIGION TO THE BIOLOGY OF RACE

- Blacks, it was conceded, were spiritual equals of whites but their worldly circumstances required them to fill the role of slaves. Evil as slavery might be, it was unavoidable in a sinful world, the reasoning went. Moreover, anything that disturbed the social order was unreasonable, and therefore against the will of God. (Rt. Rev. Leonidas Polk: 1836)
- Polk declared that ministering to slaves was a matter of teaching them “to do their duty in that state in which it has pleased God to call them.” Many whites were appalled by the notion that there might be blacks in Heaven.
- Dogmatic separation of religion and science was merged



THE RACE CONSTRUCTION SITE

- "In 18th- and 19th-century Euro-America, Genesis 9:18-27 became the curse of Ham, a foundation myth for collective degradation, conventionally trotted out as God's reason for condemning generations of dark-skinned peoples from Africa to slavery,"
- "This society is obsessed with race and color... There is, in fact, in the academy a commitment to understanding the social construction of race, but we don't look at the construction site."

Benjamin Braude:2003