

Dissin' Blacks in the Name of Science

By Norm R. Allen Jr.

Part I

I must first point out that, due to the nature and importance of this subject, this article will probably take up a great deal of space. I hope that the readers' will be patient and understand the in-depth coverage that such a topic demands and deserves.

It seems that no matter how much progress we make in the areas of "race" relations, the idea that Blacks belong to an un-intelligent race never completely disappears. This notion has been fed by religion, popular culture, literature, the media, etc. However, it has also been advanced in the name of science.

In the 1990s, *The Bell Curve* received widespread media and scholarly attention, due mostly to the authors' contention that Blacks are less intelligent than Whites and Asians. In 2004, Vincent Sarich and Frank Miele, in the name of skepticism and science, came out with *Race: The Reality of Human Differences*. The authors claimed that not only do races exist, but that the differences among them are significant. They claimed that not only are Blacks, on average, less intelligent than Whites, but that IQ is pretty much immutable, and that, in essence, Blacks are hopelessly stuck on stupid.

In opposition to so-called political correctness - the buzzwords of racists and other bigots - such race scholars challenge the prevailing view among anthropologists and geneticists that race is a bogus concept. These race-obsessed intellectuals ignore, distort and misunderstand history, promote half-truths, use data from tainted sources, disregard important information that conflicts with their preconceived notions, etc.

Let us first examine what other scholars have to say about race. Writing in *The Globe and Mail* of Toronto, Canada, June 25, 2005, p. F7, Lisa Pamela Cooper, a writer based in Vancouver with a degree in anthropology, relates:

Prof. [George] Lakoff [a professor of cognitive sciences at the University of California, Berkeley] doesn't discuss race specifically, but he points out that different cultures can have very different criteria governing who belongs to them. This is relevant to race because our categories - black, Caucasian, Asian, Oriental, aboriginal, East Indian - can carry so many meanings. Asian could refer to East Asians such as the Japanese and Koreans in one context, and include Southeast populations, such as Thai people, in another...anthropologists prefer use of the term "populations." It refers to the unique...bloodlines of different groups of people, regardless of social race categories. The result? Asia could encompass hundreds of populations, and Africa could have many different "races," once we redefine what the term means genetically....We cannot understand race by appearance, because an individual can inherit some racial markers (skin colour, hair type and so on) but not inherit other traits such as specific medical conditions. Human categorization, to be meaningful biologically, is much more complicated. (From the article, "To avoid committing old sins, modern science needs a new language.")

Sarich and Miele in *Race* point out the supposed genetic athletic advantage of certain African long distance runners over everyone else, as one example of great racial differences. (Incidentally, there was a time when, due to the dominance of African Americans in sprints, many argued that Blacks were inferior athletes in long distance running events.) However, on the same page of the aforementioned issue of *The Globe and Mail*, Abdallah S. Daar, director of ethics and policy at the McLaughlin Centre for Molecular Medicine, and Peter A. Singer, director of the University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics, say not so fast:

“Why does Africa produce the world’s fastest runners? Why have Jews of European descent won so many Nobel Prizes? Why do the Chinese seem to boast the trimmest waistlines?” Historical, behavioural, cultural, climactic, nutritional and other reasons for these attributes may well be more important than genes. About 2,500 years ago, the Greeks made enormous intellectual leaps that inform our societies today; 1,000 years ago, intellectual and scientific achievements were concentrated in the Muslim world. Today, Europeans and North Americans publish more scientific papers than others, but the Chinese and Indians are catching up quickly. The key ingredients seem to be a culture of innovation, good policies, farsightedness and investment in knowledge. Who knows who’ll be leading in 1,000 years? (From “Race: a risk genetics must run.”)

Those scholars obsessed with supposed racial differences also struggle with the very concept of race. Murray and Herrnstein allowed people to claim the race to which they supposedly belonged. On page 209 of *Race*, Sarich and Miele write that the question “How many races are there?” is “in fact a classic example of a wrong question - that is, one that implies a counterproductive answer.” (It might come as quite a shock to skeptics, humanists and other critical thinkers that there is such a thing as a wrong question, let alone a classic one.) Still, they attempt to answer the question on page 210. “It depends on the sorting accuracy, with respect to individual humans, required.” They continue:

If it’s close to 100 percent, then the areas involved could become smaller and more distant from one another, with at least 20 races easily recognized; or larger and less separated, in which case there would be the few “major” races that everyone has tended to see. If, however, the criterion were nearer the 75 percent that has often been sufficed for the recognition of races in other species, then obviously the number would be very large.

I do not believe that there are any wrong questions. However, some are more important than others. Perhaps the most important question is, “What are the real social, political and economic implications and consequences of the idea that some races are less intelligent than others?” This is a question that Sarich and Miele generally respond to with a remarkable degree of gullibility and moral cowardice. Other more intellectually honest race scholars advocate eugenics and similar social schemes. In any event, it is this question that I will primarily address in this series.