

IDEOLOGY CONTRA-SCIENCE

The Emperor's New Clothes:

Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium

By Joseph L. Graves Jr.

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Reviewed by Glayde Whitney

PART I: GENETICS OF RACE IN HOMO SAPIENS

According to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (on line) an ideology is:

1: visionary theorizing. 2 a: a systematic body of concepts especially about human life or culture b: a manner or the content of thinking characteristic of an individual, group, or culture c: the integrated assertions, theories and aims that constitute a sociopolitical program.

Visionary theorizing along with assertions, theories and aims that constitute a sociopolitical program has been of profound importance throughout written history. But it is not science.

Science is a method of gaining information, in which claims of fact are based on observable evidence. In science observations are made, observed facts are organized, and theories are constructed to account for the observations. Then predicting the results of further observations tests the theories. The hallmark of honest science is to follow the data [observations] wherever they may lead. Science is not about whether or not you like the results, or whether finding some particular result would facilitate or impede a preferred sociopolitical program. Science is about *what is*.

Science is the only approach to knowledge yet discovered that is inherently self-correcting. Mistakes may be made, theories may error, but when conducted honestly science is self-correcting. It is instructive

to recall the motto of the world's first scientific organization, the British Royal Society: *Nullius in Verba*, "On no man's word, show me the evidence."

Karl Marx concocted an ideology, which he called a science ("scientific socialism"), probably because science was widely respected in 19th century Europe. But it was and is not a science; rather it was and is an ideology. In Marx's visionary theorizing all of the social ills and inequities among mankind are due entirely to human exploitation. Central planning along with the elimination of private property would lead to a better and more equitable world for all (today often referred to as "social justice" or "true justice").

In Marx's writing Charles Darwin is held in high esteem, largely for having developed a purely materialistic theory of the origin of man (no need for "the opiate of the masses"), and for the notion of evolutionary progress. In Marx's theorizing the natural outcome of man's progressive evolution will be socialism/communism. By a strange quirk of fate Marx knew nothing of Mendel's work and what would become the science of genetics.

Thus, when the Bolsheviks implemented Marxist/Leninism under communism in the Soviet Union, Darwin was revered while Mendel was excoriated. Evolution yes but inherited individual and group differences *no*. If individual and group differences were to some extent caused by inherited genetic differences instead of being the sole result of previous oppression, then socialist sociopolitical programs might not be capable of creating a utopian egalitarian society.

The resulting ideological travesty in the Soviet Union that came to substitute for honest biological science is called "Lysenkoism," after one of its main proponents. But it is important to realize that Trofim Lysenko did not subvert science by himself: the vast majority of biologists and previous-geneticists were willing to play the game. The alternative option was first social opprobrium, later exile, Gulag, and sometimes death.

The Lysenkoist "science" held that genetics, called "Morganism-Mendelism" was a western bourgeoisie fiction invented to justify slavery and oppression. The ideological position was that actually genes caused none of the differences among people or animals or plants. Instead all differences were due to the environmental conditions under which critters grew up. Proper "vernalization" (*i.e.* Head Starts) could turn one type into another, as required by Marxist/Leninist ideology.¹

The fellow most credited with introducing this bilge into American science is Franz Boas, a late-nineteenth century German-Jewish immigrant. Franz Boas is justly famous as the founder of "cultural"

anthropology and was one of the most active propagandists of the communist ideology that race differences are caused not by genes, but by accidents of history and differences in environmental opportunities. As early as 1894 Boas was arguing that biological race was not a factor in intelligence or ability.²

Boas himself proffered that the source of his ideas “was a German home in which the ideals of the Revolution of 1848 were a living force.”³ (Notably the failed communist revolution that took place shortly after publication of *The Communist Manifesto*.) More a social activist than scientist, Boas was a member of over 40 organizations deemed communist or communist fronts. His work was funded in part by the same Jacob Schiff⁴ who financially assisted in undermining the Czarist regime, which eventually led to the Russian revolution. Boas’ prime solution for “racism” was to deny inherited differences while encouraging miscegenation.^{2,3}

This is exactly the genre into which Professor Graves’ little book *The Emperor’s New Clothes* fits. We are told on the first page that

The story of the emperor’s new clothes has become the time-proven metaphor for patently false theories. ... However, Anderson’s fairy tale does not communicate the dire need to eliminate racist ideology. In his tale, the emperor is simply vain and foolish. Vanity and foolishness, though indeed problems, are not as grave as racism. Racism is more than foolish; it is evil and destructive. I have written this book because I believe that our society cannot progress toward true justice and equality until we exorcise racism from our collective consciousness.

The introductory chapter proceeds to set the scene:

Demolishing the idea of biological race lays bare the fallacies of racism. If biological races do not exist, then what we call ‘race’ is the invention not of nature but of our social institutions and practices. The social nature of racial categories is significant because social practice can be altered far more readily than can genetic constitution.

It continues:

My personal experiences with racism as an African American intellectual have certainly given me perspective on the harm caused by racist thinking and practice. ... racial exploitation gave the United States license to exist. ... Thomas Jefferson and some other signatories of the Declaration of Independence were slaveholders. ... Throughout our history, Anglo-Saxons and other northwestern European populations have often enjoyed prosperity at the expense of other groups. ... the American concept of race is a social construction, resulting from the unique political and cultural history of the United States. ... Only political orthodoxy in a racially stratified society has maintained the race concept for this long. If race does not exist at the biological level, then its use in social and political policy is profoundly flawed. Indeed, it is a falsehood in the service of social oppression. ... Finally, racist myths encourage support for the existing order.

Whew! If this sounds like an old-fashioned revolutionary communist

tirade, well, it is. Yes, yes, I know it has become *faux pas* to mention “communism” in this politically correct era, but, well, it is. Of course one could accuse me of selectively quoting out of context. If you suspect that, then read it for yourself. But please do not support this tripe by purchasing it, wait until it is available from some library. The biggest surprise after reading the whole thing is that a supposedly reputable university press accepted this pseudo-scientific volume for publication. But before getting ahead of myself, here is the substance of the case. The main empirical claims, both at the beginning and the end, are

The simple fact ... that science identifies no races in the human species, not because we wish there to be no races but because the peculiar evolutionary history of our species has not led to their formation. There is more genetic variability in one tribe of East African chimpanzees than in the entire human species! ... (p. 9).

The level of genetic variation that exists in the human species is not close to being high enough to allow the definition of subspecies (or races). ... Population genetics allows us to apprehend the fact that there are no biological or geographical races within the modern human species (pp. 70-71).

To investigate the veracity of the “no biological races” assertion, we need to consider at minimum two empirical claims. First, how much genetic variation is there among humans? Professor Graves claims very little, largely because of the recent emergence of modern man. Second, whatever genetic variation there is, how is it apportioned among various historical geographical populations? Graves admits selection for different genes under different environmental conditions, but argues that there has always been so much gene flow [miscegenation] among all geographical groups that none have differentiated genetically from others. The claim is that what small amount of genetic variation exists is overwhelmingly distributed among individuals within local populations, and essentially none differentiates one population [race] from another.

So, first, how much genetic variation is there among humans? The new methods of molecular genetics, developed only in the last few decades, allow genetic claims to be tested with a precision never before possible. And in a strange way the politically correct rhetoric is getting further and further away from the scientific facts. For example, gaining attention for politically correct race denial is J. Craig Venter, chief scientist at Celera Genomics. At every opportunity, from White House press conference to formal interview, Venter assures us that sequencing the human genome has proven that races do not exist; “Race has no genetic or scientific basis.” We are all too similar genetically for race to have a genetic basis. Venter was already making such proclamations when Celera had almost completed sequencing the DNA from exactly one

individual—probably Venter himself. However, since then Celera has begun selling access to its SNP database. SNP, Single Nucleotide Polymorphism [called ‘snip’], is what used to be called a “spot mutation.” Change one nucleotide in a gene and the resulting protein can sometimes have a very different function (Sickle Cell Anemia, an example used repeatedly by Professor Graves, is the result of one nucleotide substitution in the gene that codes for hemoglobin). Different SNPs of the same gene are alternative alleles, or forms, of that gene.

Celera’s ad in the April 6, 2001 issue of *Science* offers access to “2.8 Million Unique SNPs Mapped to the Human Genome.” Wow, at present it appears that the human genome has around 30,000 coding genes (some think more like 80,000), and here already is a treasure trove of almost 3 million alternative forms. Where did Celera find all these variants? Almost all are from sequencing the genomes of only five individuals. As J. Craig Venter explained on a recent PBS NOVA program—two Caucasians, one Oriental, one African, and one Hispanic.

Meanwhile at Celera’s competitor Genaissance Pharmaceuticals, “We’ve looked at the largest number of individuals and diverse populations that’s ever been done,” said Gerald Vovis, Genaissance chief technology officer. They analyzed 313 genes from 82 Americans of four racial backgrounds; 21 whites, 20 blacks, 20 Asians, 18 Latinos, and three Native Americans. Researchers at Genaissance analyzed SNPs by looking at closely bunched sets that are inherited together, called haplotypes. Scientists estimate that there are about 30 million SNPs among humans, but Genaissance’s team thinks analysis based on haplotypes is likely to be more helpful in medicine than analyses with individual SNPs. The number of different haplotypes for each of the 313 genes varied from two to 53, with an average of 14. Thus while a single human has only two sets (one from mom, one from pop), each of 30,000 genes, among all of mankind there could be 30 million variants arranged as 400,000 to 500,000 haplotype sets. The company says it hopes to catalogue the haplotypes of every human gene by analyzing DNA of 90 people from Africa, Asia and Europe.⁵

Well then, with regard to the first empirical question: how much genetic variation is there among humans? Quite a lot. When emphasizing genetic similarity among all humans, it is often repeated that we are all the same for 99.9 percent of our genetic code. We differ one from another, on average, for only 0.1 percent of our nucleotides. However, one-out-of-a-thousand of the 3.2 billion nucleotides that make up the human genome leaves room for a lot of genetic variation. Throughout the species we have on the order of tens of millions of SNP variations and maybe over 400,000 variant haplotypes. Recall that Professor Graves wrote, “*There is more genetic variability in one tribe of East*

African chimpanzees than in the entire human species!"(p. 9). That must be some tribe of chimps—for chumps.

For the first question, there is plenty of genetic variation so that, if distributed as patterned differences among geographic populations, humanity could be composed of a number of genetically differentiated subspecies (races).

The second question then, how is the genetic variation apportioned among people and groups around the globe? Prof. Graves is unequivocal:

Despite the unambiguous character of the recent studies of human genetic diversity, the significance of these results for our understanding of socially constructed races has not been fully appreciated. The fact that no races exist in our species has not been adequately communicated to the lay public. (p.156)... The fallacy of the biological race concept must be incorporated into our collective thinking on an everyday basis. (p.195)... The United States still suffers from the huge political and economic disparities between those derived from northern European ancestry and those who are not. (p.196)... How can we design programs that progressively eliminate the detriments caused by the history of racist injustice... A cornerstone in this struggle will be the wide dissemination of the fact of the non-existence of biological races. (p.197).

This clearly smacks of ideology more than science. But what of the science behind "the fact of the non-existence of biological races?" One recent article from *Science*, the premiere American science journal, contained the statement, "Ethnicity can be inferred from the frequencies of alternative forms, or alleles, of genes; allele patterns differ by racial origin." The article also pointed out the ease of identifying the race of a suspect from DNA in criminal cases.⁶

There are now known to be many genes (alleles), which are present in certain races but entirely absent among others. Even more common are genes that are present in various races, but at different frequencies. In recent years almost every issue of scientific journals, such as the *American Journal of Human Genetics*, contain articles dealing with genetic differences among "ethnic groups." Representative is a 1997 *AJHG* paper entitled "Ethnic-affiliation estimation by use of population-specific DNA markers."⁷ "Ethnic-affiliation" (AKA race) of an individual can in most instances be ascertained with near-certainty from analysis of DNA contained in a drop of blood or saliva.

A sampling of research reported within the last decade includes Cavalli-Sforza and colleagues' genetic comparisons of different "populations." Professor emeritus Cavalli-Sforza, the most prominent living geneticist to spend his career investigating human genetic variation, loudly proclaims at every opportunity that races do not exist; he says he studies the genetics of "populations," not races. For the monumental work *The History and Geography of Human Genes*⁸, Cavalli-

Sforza and colleagues collected data for about 100,000 gene frequencies from approximately 2,000 populations distributed around the world. That work used gene products, protein polymorphisms [blood antigens, enzymes, structural proteins, etc.]. They are adamant that they are not studying races, but rather populations of humans. Yet their nine main clusters, based on genetic similarity and differences have a familiar ring: "Africans (sub-Saharan), Caucasoids (European)... Northern Mongoloids..." (p. 79). In their words, from their genetic data, "the greatest difference within the human species is between Africans and non-Africans.... The cluster formed by Caucasoids, northern Mongoloids, and Amerinds is reasonably compact in all analyses" (p.83).

Another gene frequency survey was reported by the noted geneticists Nei and Roychoudhury⁹, who looked at the distribution of 121 alleles of 29 genes among 26 sample populations. Their study also analyzed 15 populations with data for 33 variable genes. They report that the first major split of the phylogenetic tree separates Africans from non-Africans and that this split occurs with a 100 percent bootstrap probability. The second split separates Caucasian populations from all other non-African populations, and this split is also supported by bootstrap tests. The third major split occurs between Native American populations and the Greater Asians that include East Asians (mongoloids), Pacific Islanders, and Australopapuans (native Australians and Papua New Guineans), but Australopapuans are genetically quite different from the rest of the Greater Asians.

As mentioned by Prof. Graves, it so happens that there are three different patterns of gene inheritance that provide different information about relationships. First there are genes on chromosomes called autosomes that are inherited equally from both parents. Second, there are genes in mitochondria, called mtDNA, that are usually inherited only from the mother. Third, there are genes on the Y-chromosome that are transmitted only from father to son. The two studies mentioned above involved mostly genes on the autosomes. Another study compared Y-chromosome gene markers among a diversity of European, Mid-Eastern, North African and sub-Saharan (black) "populations." They found that "sub-Saharan African populations were characterized by an almost completely different set of [markers]", while the other (mostly Caucasian derived) groups shared many of the same markers, but at different frequencies.¹⁰ Another study that looked at mtDNA found a complete separation between sub-Saharan Africans and other humans.¹¹

The above genetic data from Nei and Roychoudhury were later subjected to a statistical procedure called factor analysis with varimax rotation. This is a strictly numerical procedure that reveals which

components, if any, cluster together. By these standard statistical procedures the genetic data from the 26 populations clearly yielded six distinct clusters. The six clusters are easily identified as the following “population” groups: [1] Mongoloids, [2] Caucasoids, [3] South Asians and Pacific Islanders, [4] Negroids, [5] North and South Amerinds plus Eskimos, [6] aboriginal Australians and Papuan New Guineans.¹²

These examples illustrate the scientific [data based] fact that modern studies of genetic diversity are converging on a human population genetic structure that is very similar to the racial classifications provided from the work of classical physical anthropologists. *These genetic data are a virtually irrefutable demonstration of the biological reality of race:* purely statistical analyses of allele frequencies gives results that are essentially identical to the racial groupings established by traditional physical anthropology.

Along with Lysenko and Professor Graves, as much as we might wish that biological (genetic) races do not exist, it simply isn't so. Biological race and “socially constructed” racial categories do not always map well onto one another, but simply denying the reality of biological races is not a useful route to “social justice.”

Scattered amongst the deniers of the genetic reality of biological race, some thinkers continually grapple with reality. For example, African American Troy Duster (Sociology Professor, UC Berkeley) addressed a conference on “DNA and the Criminal Justice System” sponsored by the National Commission on the Future of DNA Evidence.¹³ Among Professor Duster's comments we find:

I want to address some of the inadvertent, sometimes hidden subterranean consequences of the DNA revolution in forensics. The CODIS database has hovering around it, it seems to me, a 400-pound gorilla, the social, political, cultural phenomena called – we use to call it race. Now we call it population-specific allele frequencies.

And I say ‘use to’ because molecular biology has informed us at that level, race is non-existent. There are no discrete taxonomies which make any sense. Instead to be scientifically correct, we say population-specific frequencies. Indeed the UNESCO statement on race in 1995 signed on to by about eight disciplines said that race as a concept has no utility in science (p. 194).

Now if race has no utility what are we to make of a series of articles that appeared in the last decade looking for gene markers of population groups that coincide with common sense versions of phenotypes by racial designation (p. 195).

...[there is] “what I'll call the obfuscation of race at the level of molecular biology, while at the same time it's being deployed on the streets, and I think even in scientific laboratories where it's got a new nomenclature.

I was simply trying to point out that microbiology and indeed genetics has caught itself in a massive contradiction on the question of race, and that while we may successfully fool ourselves into believing that – we’ve now changed the language and therefore the phenomena – Upon closer inspection, we’re going to find a lot more empirical investigations into the population frequencies that are going to coincide with race,... (p.204).

It is fitting that Professor Graves chose to title his little book “*The Emperor’s New Clothes*,” since he tells us that the story of the emperor’s new clothes has become the time-proven metaphor for patently false theories.

PART II: BIOBABBLE AND SIMPLE RUBBISH

The first portion of this book review/essay concentrated on establishing the genre (Marxist agitprop) and scientific validity (non-existent) of the main arguments of Grave’s *The Emperor’s New Clothes*. This second installment will present and comment on some of the specific claims and assertions, most of which strike the reviewer as simply silly at best and useless bio-babble at worst. Still in all fairness, a few insightful passages were found.

The book starts right out with an introduction titled “Racial Thinking.” Graves puts the non-scientific, ideological agenda right up front:

Racist ideologues have been accustomed to the luxury of hiding behind so-called reasoned objective argument while characterizing their critics as emotional or ‘politically correct.’ By demonstrating that racist science is critically flawed, we lay bare their hidden agenda (p. 2).

Racism is more than foolish, it is evil and destructive. I have written this book because I believe that our society cannot progress toward true justice and equality until we exorcize racism from our collective consciousness (p. 1).

Graves continues;

[R]acial exploitation gave the United States license to exist (p. 3)...
If race does not exist at the biological level, then its use in social and political policy is profoundly flawed. Indeed, it is falsehood in the service of social oppression (p. 9).

Whatever these socially-concerned views may be, science they are not.

Chapter one deals with early theories of race, from biblical accounts through early Greek classifications, the Roman Emperor Julian the Apostate’s racial theory, and Medieval Europe. The presentation of

historical views is in the main interesting, although flawed by shaky scholarship. Aristotle's famous chain of being, his *scalae naturae* is mentioned as central to later racial hierarchies, as is "his" (sic) book *Systema Naturae*. Of course the basis of modern taxonomic classification, presented in *Systema Naturae* was not provided by Aristotle (384–322 BC). Rather, this famous work first published in 1735 AD was the magnum opus of the great Swedish naturalist Carolus Linnaeus (1707- 1778)¹.

It is maintained that the position of Jews in Medieval Europe "cannot be distinguished from modern racial prejudice" (p. 20). Furthermore;

Jewish persecution clearly illustrates that the idea of race can be socially constructed. The Jews were a cultural group rather than a biologically distinct population (to say nothing of a race) (p. 20).

Rubbish. Don't attempt to sell this to Israeli geneticists, and their co-authors, who have recently published papers emphasizing the genetic unity of diaspora Jewery, and the genetic separateness of Jews from the host populations among whom they live.¹⁵ Graves is correct in his summary that:

It seems clear that human beings have always noticed and recorded phenotypic differences. Throughout the ancient world humans also speculated about the source of these differences (p.22).

Chapter two deals with the development of race concepts in light of the Age of Discovery with the co-existence of three very different races in the Americas: The European Cacasoid, the sub-Saharan African Negroid, and the American Indian. Graves points out that the Age of Discovery for the first time brought Europeans into extensive contact with different non-European peoples: "Under these new conditions, there are two possible explanations for the origin of ideas of European racial supremacy, one nonracist and the other racist" (p.23).

Graves favors the "racist" explanation which is essentially a rehash of the Marxist-inspired tripe that we are familiar with through the writings of Boas, Diamond, Gould and those of similar ilk. However, his "nonracist" alternative explanation rings true as most consistent with the best of modern science:

[R]acist ideology developed out of an objective examination of human diversity. If, for example, European scholars had fairly compared the biological and cultural characteristics of Europeans and non-Europeans and found the former superior, racist ideology would have been validated. In other words, if Europeans really did have larger heads and larger brains, and if these features did determine intellectual ability, we could not label a scientist reporting these facts as racist (p. 23).

Yes. Exactly.

The next few chapters (3, 4, & 5) continue the historical development of race concepts before and after the appearance of Darwin's theory of natural selection. Once again shaky scholarship mars the presentation. For example, S. J. Gould's long-ago debunked and thoroughly discredited attack on the honesty of Morton's measures of cranial capacity is presented as though it remains important:

Stephan Jay Gould's classic 1977 reexamination of Morton's conclusions stands as one of the most important revelations of the fallacy of objectivity in science (p. 46).

The finding from Morton's 1849 measurements, that races differ in cranial volumes with Europeans substantially larger than Africans, is consistent with the best of recent studies.¹⁶ Darwin is presented, through numerous quotes from *The Descent of Man* (1871) as opposing the distinctiveness of geographical races among humans:

Today, we know that Darwin's intuition about racial variation in humans was essentially correct. ... Population genetics allows us to apprehend the fact that there are no biological or geographical races within the modern human species (pp. 70-71).

Conveniently omitted is Darwin's actual summary about the comparison of Europeans and Africans:

[H]e has diverged into distinct races, or as they may be more fitly called, sub-species. Some of these, such as the Negro and European, are so distinct that, if specimens had been brought to a naturalist without any further information, they would undoubtedly have been considered by him as good and true species (Darwin, 1871/1874, p. 929).¹⁷

Bio-babble and rubbish finish out these chapters:

the core error of all social Darwinian thinking results from the inability to separate genetic from environmental sources of variation on the phenotype (p. 81).

Were that the case it would negate all genetic epidemiology, genetic health studies, and the behavior genetics that has revolutionized psychology across the last few decades.

Capitalism was an advance over feudalism, but it was a stage on the way to socialism and communism, the stages of society that would allow the true expression of the human potential (p. 84).

Eugenics and the early development of human genetics are handled in a similarly cavalier manner. Sir Francis Galton, the great 19th century polymath who founded much of modern statistics and quantitative genetics, as well as psychometrics, is dismissed:

Galton's scientific accomplishments are sufficient for some to still consider him an intellectual hero. Whereas for others (this author included) he was an intellectual mediocrity, a sham, and a villain (p. 100).

Chapter 8 (Eugenics, Race, and Fascism—The Road to Auschwitz Went through Cold Spring Harbor) regurgitates the favorite lefty canard of smearing eugenics through *argumentum reducto ad Hitlerium*. Since World War Two there has been an intense and unrelenting propaganda campaign against eugenics that invokes the Nazi smear. However, as Marian van Court has pointed out, in the first half of the 20th century at least 29 countries passed eugenic laws. Included were such paragons of social democracy as Canada, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden. One instance—Nazi Germany—out of 29 countries does not make a trend and does not document a slippery slope. Never in history have peoples felt it necessary to justify their holocausts and genocides by invoking eugenical science. The examples are unfortunately many, including the Bolshevik's elimination of 20 million Christian kulaks and the Hutus' handling of their Tutsi neighbors.¹⁸

Chapter 10 (The Race and IQ Fallacy) is such off-the-wall rubbish, so out of contact with reality, as to constitute a good example of wall-to-wall bio-babble:

In the end, the data that the psychometricians rely on to demonstrate racial differences in intelligence are simply the racial differences we already observe (p. 168); even the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) was originally invented to control Jewish entry into higher education (p.158).

Graves points out that to be valid, tests of genetic hypotheses of race differences in intelligence must take environmental differences into account. Of course this is central to all genetic investigation and has been the focus of innovative statistical and experimental designs for more than a century. Even Sir Francis Galton in his earliest works on human variation was concerned about separating the effects of nature from those of nurture¹⁹. But Graves goes on to claim that experiments which attempt to equalize environments between whites and blacks are not only impossible “under the existing political circumstances but also that the proponents of the link between race and IQ do not argue that the experiment should be performed to test their hypotheses” (p. 172). Statements of this sort are such monumental rubbish as to suggest either a stunning lack of scholarship or intentional deceitfulness. In fact it was for vociferously calling for such experiments that William Shockley got into trouble with the National Academy of Sciences. And furthermore, one variation of the experiment has been done and widely reported:

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When black babies are adopted and raised in educated middle class white homes (the ultimate Head Start), they grow up to perform *not* like their white family members, but rather they still perform intellectually and emotionally like blacks raised in typical black environments.²⁰

The concluding two chapters are bizarre. In “The Race and Disease Fallacy”, it is argued that the medical community confuses ethnic groups with races: “Ethnicity is defined culturally, whereas the concept of race relies on presumed biological variation” (p.173). And after all, the central message of the book is that biological races simply do not exist. The other main problem is that “all humans have some risk” for various disease conditions, so therefore it is proper to give the same advice and conduct the same tests on everyone.

The problem is that many biomedical researchers and clinicians are still working under the yoke of the biological race concept. Hence, they see all biological differences between and within populations as potentially due to racial genetic composition. (p.174).

Indeed, this is because biomedical researchers tend to be well-trained rational investigators.

Graves makes the valid point that medical diagnosis and treatment should be aimed at the individual and not at groupings such as races within which there is much variation. Of course this is a valid point and in some more advanced utopian future truly individualized medicine may be a reality. But at the present time we have neither the ability nor the resources to avoid utilizing group probabilities in making medical decisions. Recently, researchers at Johns Hopkins discovered and then developed a test to detect a gene associated with risk of colorectal cancer. The test is laborious and expensive, hence Johns Hopkins announced that the test was available, but only for persons of Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry. Racial prejudice? No, rational decision making; the gene had been found only in the one “ethnic” group. When treating real people in the real world, it would be absurd to test for phenylketonuria among black natives of sub-Saharan Africa, as it is predominately a condition of northern Europeans. Similarly, when confronted with a blood/anemia problem among native Icelanders, any physician that places a high priority on testing for sickle cell anemia should be fired for incompetence. There is a real world and in the real world, so far every one of the genes discovered that predispose to various diseases has not been uniformly distributed among races.²¹

The concluding chapter is a call to action, titled “What Can or Will We Do without Race?” Graves tells us that,

Race as most people understand it now was socially constructed ... finally, in the early 1990s, [through accumulated biological data] the biological race concept was thoroughly dismantled.”... A crucial part of the battle against the legacies of the social construction of race is to get across the messages that biological races do not exist... dictionaries and encyclopedias need to be revised... The United States still suffers from the huge political and economic disparities between those derived from northern European ancestry and those who are not... the fact that there are no biological races in the United States is not a reason to end programs designed to remedy past discrimination... We have lived in the nightmare of racism too long... We can change these institutions; we need only to have the political and moral will to do so (Pp. 193-200).

Sound familiar? It should because an almost identical “political and moral” program has been proposed and implemented before. The prior travesty is well described by Valery Soyfer in his book *Lysenko and the Tragedy of Soviet Science*.²²

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ENDNOTES

1. Soyfer, V.N. *Lysenko and the Tragedy of Soviet Science* 1994, New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press.
2. Hyatt, M. *Franz Boas Social Activist: The Dynamics of Ethnicity*. 1990, New York: Greenwood. P.86.
3. Degler, C.N. *In Search of Human Nature: The decline and revival of Darwinism in American Social Thought* 1991, New York: Oxford Univ. Press. P.73.
4. Lindemann, Albert S. *Esau's Tears: Modern Anti-Semitism and the Rise of the Jews* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 302-303. See also Kevin MacDonald *Separation And Its Discontents: Toward an Evolutionary Theory of Anti-Semitism* Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998, p. 36. Lindemann points out, “A parallel concern to Nicholas and his high officials was their belief that a number of powerful Jewish financiers outside of Russia were working ever more openly and effectively to deny the country the financial aid it sought. There was some foundation to that belief: A most tenacious enemy of tsarist Russia was Jacob H. Schiff, the American financier. Schiff played a crucial role not only in denying the Russians the bonds they sought in the international market to finance the [Russo-Japanese] war but also even more decisively in providing financial support for Japan...” For a general biography of Schiff, see Naomi W. Cohen's *Jacob H.*

Schiff: A Study in American Jewish Leadership Brandeis University Press, 1999, 320pp. Interestingly, Karenna Gore Schiff, ex-vice president Al Gore Jr.'s daughter is married to Andrew Schiff, the great-grandson of Jacob Schiff.

5. *New Scientist*, "Surprise variation found in human genes," 13 July 2001, <http://uk.news.yahoo.com/010713/12/by4g6.html>

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