



THE CONSERVATIVE CAUCUS, INC.
3057 Nutley Street, Suite 502 • Fairfax, Virginia 22031
540-219-4536 • TheConservativeCaucus.org • Info@ConservativeUSA.org

TCC POLICY BRIEFING

THE NONSENSE OF RACE

BY DR. STEVEN J. ALLEN

The concept of race—the idea that humans can be divided into a few discrete subgroups such as “white,” “black,” “brown,” and “yellow”—may be the most powerful weapon in politics.

Race is used by judges to justify gerrymandering, by colleges to exclude people they don’t like, by hucksters to extort money from businesses, by activists to weaken law enforcement, and by bureaucrats to force banks to make loans to people who can’t afford to pay them back.

It stifles debate. Nothing shuts people up more effectively than the fear of being called a racist or a traitor to one’s race.

Race is the bedrock upon which one of America’s two great political parties is built.

Yet it’s not real. Race has no basis in physical anthropology, cultural anthropology, genetics, or any other branch of science. There are physical and cultural differences among humans, of course, but any classification system based on these differences would have thousands of categories—or a single category, the subspecies *Homo sapiens sapiens*, the only race of humans on earth for at least 30,000 years.

The race categories used by governments, academic institutions, and corporations are arbitrary and capricious, like dividing people based on left- and right-handedness or by astrological sign. They’re like the blood-type categories that are the basis for discrimination in Japan, like the caste system in India, like the prejudice against red-haired “gingers” in Britain, and like the system on that “Star Trek” planet where people whose faces were white on one side and black on the other dominated the people whose tones were reversed.

Take the classification “Hispanic,” which is treated as a race. The Census Bureau, when it invented the category for the 1970 Census, included people whose ancestors presumably spoke Spanish, along with all people with origins in South America. In fact, most South Americans aren’t Hispanic. (The No. 1 language in South America is Portuguese.) In creating the “Hispanic” designation, bureaucrats treated Hispanics as a group separate from people of European descent. Someone should have told them that Spain is in Europe.

No one in past times considered “Hispanic” a race. In 1877, a U.S. senator from Alabama married a Latina actress praised as a “Spanish beauty.” “I Love Lucy,” a sitcom about a Scottish-American married to a Cuban immigrant, premiered in 1951 and was the top TV show of the decade. In an era in which most Americans opposed interracial marriage, no one objected to either marriage because no one considered either marriage interracial.

Today, according to pollsters, only about a quarter of Hispanics/Latinos in the U.S. say they want to be counted as Hispanics/Latinos. A quarter would prefer to be called Colombian-American, Cuban-American, or another term related to their specific nationality. About half would prefer to be classified as simply “American.” Lumping “Hispanics” into a single category makes as much sense as having an “Anglo” category made up of people whose ancestors came from English-speaking countries such as Australia, Ireland, India, and Botswana.

The more you examine racial categories, the less sense they make.

People from India have been put at times in the Asian category, the white one, and the black one. Ethiopians have been classified as black and as dark-skinned Caucasians. People as utterly different as Pakistanis and Japanese have been dumped into the Asian category. Filipinos, Malaysians, aboriginal Australians, and Mexicans have all been “brown.” Irish have been “black.”

We would laugh at a scientist who put mosquitoes, bats, blue jays, and jetliners in one category because they all have wings and fly, yet we accept racial categories that are almost as nonsensical.

This nonsense affects how people see their country. After the Census Bureau in 2008 projected that the United States would be a “majority-minority” country by 2042, leftists reacted with glee to the approaching “death of white America.”

The projection is correct—but is largely rooted in the various adjustments that the U.S. Census has made over the years.

Yes, they rigged the Census. It was done in the name of accuracy (and some of it reflected changes in public attitudes toward various categories), but the effect was to rig it. People from India and certain other places were shifted into the “Asian” category; a mixed-race category was added; former “whites” were shifted to “other race;” and, as noted, the “Hispanic” category was pulled out of thin air. Recently, bureaucrats attempted to add a new category, Middle Eastern/North African (MENA), to further split the “white” category and add to “people of color.”

It is true, by current demographic standards, America by mid-century will be a majority-minority country. But it won’t be the first time.

By the standards of 1800, when Germans, French, Russians, and Swedes were among those considered non-white, America was majority-minority by the middle of the 19th century. By the standards of 1900, when Italians, Irish, and European Jews were among those considered non-white, America was majority-minority by the middle of the 20th century. Today, only about nine percent of Americans’ collective ancestry comes from the English, the one group that has always been considered “white.” That’s roughly the same percentage that comes from Africa.

America’s future doesn’t depend on the “race” of its inhabitants, but on whether they share the values that made this country great. It’s not the color of people’s skin that counts, but what’s in their hearts and minds.

Dr. Steven J. Allen (JD, PhD) is vice chairman of The Conservative Caucus and National Field Director. Originally published on American Greatness on May 12, 2018

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