

RACE: ARE WE SO DIFFERENT?

GRADES 6–12

RACE: Are We So Different?

The goal of the *RACE* project is to **help individuals of all ages better understand the origins and manifestations of race and racism in everyday life** by investigating race and human variation through the framework of science.

The idea that we can group people into “races” is only a few hundred years old. It was, and is, tied to power and hierarchy. Today, scientists have disproved the idea of race and its notions of biological superiority. But the idea of race continues to shape our lives.

How did we get here? And how can we do better?

In *RACE: Are We So Different?*, you can examine our shared history and current reality. Understanding the past, acknowledging harm, and joining the conversation are the first steps toward a fairer future.

EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

This exhibition explores three broad themes:

- **The science of human variation** and where current scientific understanding is inconsistent with popular notions of race.
- **The history of the idea of race**, with an emphasis on the role of science in shaping the concept of race.
- **The experience of race and racism in the United States** and the often invisible ways race and racism have infiltrated laws, customs, and institutions.
- Exhibit components provide opportunities to look at each theme in more depth.

Exhibit components are not sequential. You can start anywhere in the exhibition.



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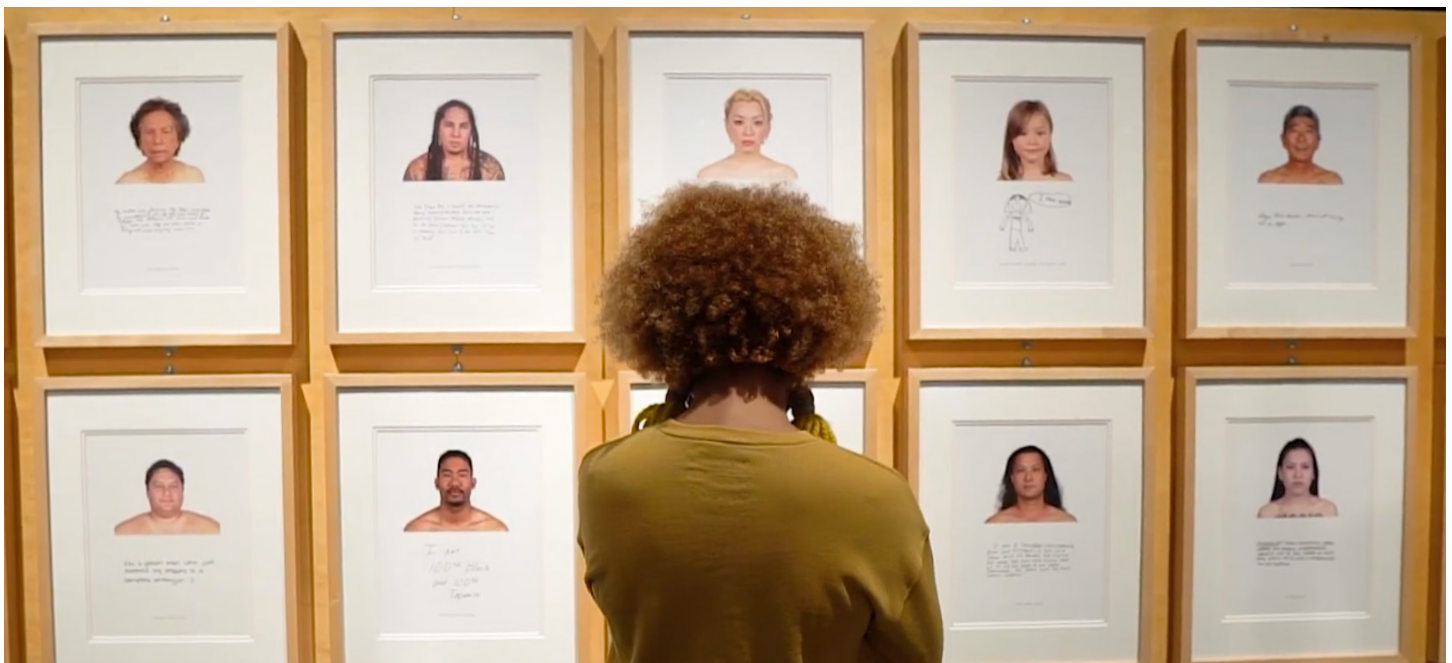
The Science of Human Variation/Challenging Misconceptions about Race

What does current science and scholarship tell us about human variation and its connection to ideas about race?.

- Sunlight and vitamins determine our skin color—not race.
- Nearly all of the world’s human genetic variation exists in Africa.
- Isolation leads to variation.
- Geographic barriers and cultural practices can isolate human populations.
- **Human Variation Video** Scientists discuss what their research reveals about human variation and how it differs from common conceptions of race.
- **African Origins** Interactive animation that uses colored dots to represent geographic distribution of human genetic diversity over time and illustrates how humans emerged from Africa and spread to populate the world.
- **The Colors We Are** A computer-based interactive inspired by the work of artist Byron Kim. Scan your skin and watch the shade appear as a color “chip” on the screen next to color chips from dozens of other visitors. Think about what skin shade reveals about you and others. Where does one “draw the line” to create categories of people?

Challenging perceived connections between race and biology:

- **Sickle Cell** Learn that this commonly perceived “Black” disease is actually related to malaria resistance.
- **Science of Skin** Use a microscope to view your skin up close and explore the evolutionary story of skin color variation.
- **Independence of Traits Game** Use photos to sort people according to two of the traits that scientists historically tried to use to demarcate races: blood types and fingerprints. Discover how traits vary independently from each other, contrary to our common conceptions about racial types.
- **Who’s Talking?** Try to match a voice to one of the photos of people talking. Discover how cultural markers may define what we consider race.



The History of the Idea of Race

No story of race and human variation in this country is complete without an understanding of how race evolved in the United States.

- **Creating Race** Discover that race emerged as a human creation in the 17th and 18th centuries. As historians have suggested, democracy and race grew up together, side by side.
- **Human (Mis)measure** Track the efforts in the 19th and 20th centuries to pursue “race science” to legitimize racial and ethnic inequalities.
- **Separate and Unequal** Trace the history of inequality and privilege during the second half of the 19th century, when segregation and ideas of distinct racial categories were set firmly in place. Includes examples of laws and social practices that disenfranchised American Indians, immigrants, and people of African descent.
- **The Invention of Whiteness** Consider “white” as a racial category normalized and sustained over many years.

The Contemporary Experience of Race and Racism in the United States

Housing, Land, and Wealth

- **Newspaper Box** “News” arrives in the form of video clips highlighting the post-World War II era, when federal, state, and local governments fostered middle-class home ownership, but systematically excluded or “redlined” qualified African Americans.
- **Stealing of Native American Lands** Forced acculturation and land confiscation, includes stories of the experiences of other ethnic groups: Japanese Americans, Mexican Americans, and Hmong Americans.
- **Wealth Disparities** Explores the history of inequities between whites and other ethnoracial groups.



Health and Medicine

- **BiDiI** Debate about the first “ethnic drug” approved by the FDA.
- **Blood Pressure Machine** Test your blood pressure while reading about high blood pressure, a disease disproportionately affecting African Americans, peeling back layers of assumptions, raising questions about data collection and institutional racism to both complicate and potentially explain this statistical “fact.”

Education, Schools, and Young People

- **Youth on Race Video** A multi-racial high school theater troupe from Central High School in St. Paul describes their experiences with race and identity.
- **Student Lockers** Students from Community of Peace Academy in St. Paul filled school lockers with personal objects to express their relationship to race, identity, ethnicity, each other, and the world in which they live.
- **School Desks** School and race stories, such as tracking students, standardized testing biases, and affirmative action.

Prison System Disparities

While Americans are only about 4% of the world's population, the US is home to about ~1/4 of the world's prisoners—who are often people of color. Racism helped create this disparity.

Minnesota Nice?

Deeply entrenched patterns of segregation and discrimination disadvantage people of color when it comes to health, wealth, education, or contact with the criminal justice system. Learn more from individuals in your own neighborhoods and communities.

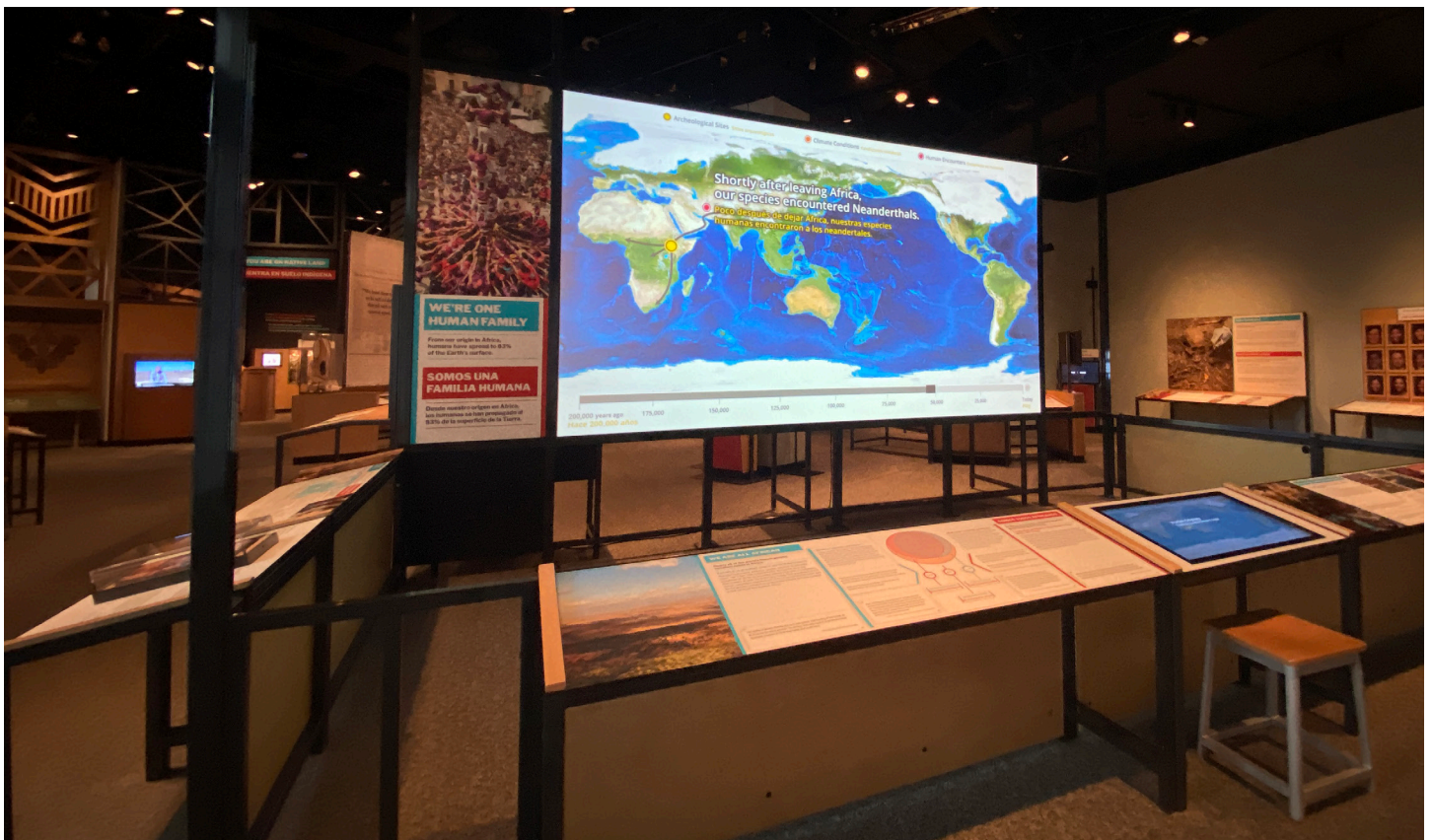
A Memorial

No matter what filter you apply to the data, Black Americans are more likely to experience police violence than other groups. (The content may be triggering or traumatic for some viewers.)

The U.S. Census

Since 1790, the US Government has collected racial data in a census taken every ten years. Racial categories, rules, and regulations resulting from the census have huge effects on law, policy, medicine, employment, and many other critical realms of American life.

- **Why We Have Race on the Census, Anyway.** Overview of how the census has both reflected and created race and race-based policies over time.
- **Shifting Categories** A large photo of a multiracial group wearing curious t-shirts is the starting point for stories about how population groups have been treated in the US census throughout our history.
- **The Future Census** A computer asks you to consider and then vote on how future censuses should (or shouldn't) gather data on race.



Please contact us at (651) 221-9444 if you have any questions.