

**WHY US?**  
**LEFT BEHIND AND DYING**



**Video Curriculum Modules**

kids having sex with monk...

Received Question

Show

Did AIDS really start with blacks having sex with monkeys or is it just a vicious rumour?

1 year ago

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## **Lesson 14: HIV – Distrust and Conspiracy**

Best Answer - Chosen by Asker

**LEARNING WAS NEVER LIKE THIS**

## Lesson 14: Distrust and Conspiracy

### Standards:

#### Health:

- 1.12.6
- 2.12.5
- 2.12.7
- 2.12.8
- 2.12.10
- 8.12.1
- 8.12.3

#### Science:

- 1.2
- 2.2
- 2.4
- 7.5
- 7.5
- 7.6
- 8.1
- 8.2
- 8.3

#### Skills Practiced and Gained:

- 1.1—1.7
- 2.1—2.5

### Overview

“There is a long and nasty history of research in the black community that would never be tolerated in an all white community . . .” for example, the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, where essentially 399 black men were allowed to be ravaged by the disease and die while medical researchers watched. This ignoble history has left the Black community to this day with little trust or faith in the medical and scientific establishment. Unfortunately, this distrust of western medicine is problematic especially at a time when the Black community is being devastated by an HIV/AIDS epidemic. Add to this situation, healthcare providers who serve the Black community but have no connection to or understanding of the Black community. This distrust then becomes validated and exacerbated to the point where conspiracy theories about HIV become a viable belief in the Black community. The video module, “*Distrust and Conspiracy*,” examines the history and current state of affairs between the Black community, in the US and Africa, and the western medical and scientific establishment.



### Key Concepts

- H**istory of research in African American communities
- P**rotection of human subjects
- S**ocial determinants of health

**I**mpact of the attitudes towards medicine and science on the spread of HIV/AIDS in African and African American communities



## **Materials for Activities and Educator Background Knowledge**

There are a number of resources for this lesson module. All resources can be found at the end of this module.

### **Video Clip (Video Transcript 14.1)**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQvusY16D00&feature=related>

Short clip from Race: The Power of an Illusion on the obsession of 19<sup>th</sup> Century science with racial differences, and how these “findings” were used to justify slavery

### **Audio Clip (Audio Transcript 14.1)**

<http://www.npr.org/programs/morning/features/2002/jul/tuskegee/>

Retrospective on the Tuskegee Syphilis Study

### **Handout (Handout 14.1)**

Excerpts from an interview with Evelyn Hammonds, a science historian, on the obsession of 19<sup>th</sup> century science on describing differences between Whites and People of Color. Full text available on [http://www.pbs.org/race/000\\_About/002\\_04-background-01-05.htm](http://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-background-01-05.htm)

### **Additional Resources and Materials (Handout 14.2)**

<http://www.ahrp.org/history/chronology.php>

Chronology of human research

### **Video Clips (Video Transcripts 14.2 and 14.3)**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyuKJAG11Cw&feature=related>

Short clip from Race: The Power of an Illusion on the biological non-reality of race

[http://www.pbs.org/race/000\\_About/002\\_04-background-02-06.htm](http://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-background-02-06.htm)

An interview with Audrey Smedley, anthropologist, on the use of race as justification for the enslavement of Africans, and the role of science in justifying that enslavement.

### **Reading (PDF at the end of the module)**

<http://www.nwabr.org/sites/default/files/learn/bioethics/SocSem.pdf>

From Northwest Association for Biomedical Research Ethics Primer



## Procedure

### Part I

View “*Distrust and Conspiracy*” video module. After viewing the module use the following questions to facilitate group discussion or give the questions as prompts for journal entries.

### Discussion/Journal Questions

- 1) **W**hat new information did you gather from the video module?
- 2) **H**ow do attitudes toward health and science contribute to the high rates of HIV/AIDS in African and African American communities?
- 3) **W**hat other questions or comments do you have?

### Part II

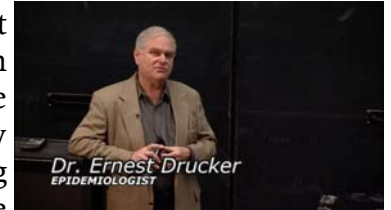
People’s attitudes toward health care and science can affect their beliefs and behaviors surrounding health. Let’s examine the history that lead to the Black community’s distrust in healthcare and science.

- 1) Have students read Evelynn Hammonds’ interview excerpt on the history of race science. Also, watch the clip of scientific racism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and listen to the NPR piece on the Tuskegee Syphilis Study. To make the discussion more engaging, you may want to do a Socratic Seminar on one or more of the written sources. (see resource on Socratic Seminars)
- 2) Discuss the following questions:
  - How has science been used to support or perpetuate ideas of racial differences and racial inferiority?
  - How has medical science contributed to the marginalization of people color?
  - What would be the resulting attitudes of Black communities toward science and medicine?
  - What are the positive and negative consequences of these attitudes and beliefs?
  - What would it take from the healthcare and scientific communities to increase the level of trust in Black communities?



## Closure

Sometimes, attitudes and beliefs about institutions get passed down from generation to generation without full understanding of the origins of these attitudes and beliefs. By gaining historical perspective and analyzing the pros and cons of acting from these attitudes and beliefs, we can truly make informed choices and take actions toward our best interests and those of our communities.



Use the following questions to facilitate group discussion or give the questions as prompts for journal entries.

- 1) What are some of your community's attitudes or beliefs about certain institutions and people (education/teachers, science/scientists, medicine/doctors, government/government leaders, law enforcement/police officers, religion/religious leaders, etc.)?
- 2) How did you come to learn about these attitudes and beliefs (parents, churches, etc.)? What, if anything, do you know about the history behind these attitudes and beliefs?
- 3) How do these attitudes and beliefs affect your action? What are the positive and negative consequences of these actions?
- 4) Does this examination of history, culture, beliefs, and actions make you think differently about your actions? Why or why not?







## Video Transcript 14.1

### Transcript from Race: The Power of An Illusion, Episode 1 “Race is Not Biological”

(Video Clip <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyuKJAG11Cw&feature=related>)  
(Text excerpted from <http://newsreel.org/transcripts/race1.htm>)

LEWONTIN: The problem for evolutionists and population geneticists was always to try to actually characterize how much genetic variation there was between individuals and groups. And I spent a lot of time worrying about that, like other people in my profession.

NARRATOR: In the 1960s, Richard Lewontin decided to find out just how much genetic variation fell within, and how much between, the groups we regard as races. A new technology enabled him to do pioneering work.

LEWONTIN: And that method, which is called gel electrophoresis, a very fancy name, uh, we were able to use on any organism at all. If you could grind it up, you could do it. Uh, that included people, I mean, you don't have to grind the whole person, but you could take a little tissue, or blood.

Over the years, a lot of data were gathered by anthropologists and geneticists looking at blood group genes, and protein genes, and other kinds of genes from all over the world. I mean, anthropologists just went around taking blood out of everybody. Uh, uh, I, I must say, if I were a South American Indian, I wouldn't have let them take my blood. But uh, but they did, and so, I thought, 'well, we've got enough of these data, let's see what it tells us about the differences between human groups.'

NARRATOR: Lewontin's findings were a milestone in the study of race and biology.

LEWONTIN: If you put it all together, and we've now got that for proteins, for blood groups, and now with DNA sequencing, we have it for DNA sequence differences, it always comes out the same. 85% of all the variation among human beings is between any two individuals within any local population. Between individuals within Sweden, or within the Chinese, or the Kikuyus, or the Icelanders.

NARRATOR: To put it another way, of the small amount of variation in our genes, there is apt to be as much difference between Gorgeous (Black female) and her teammate Christine (Black female), as there is between Gorgeous and her opponent Kaylin (White female). Any two individuals within any so-called race may be as different from each other as they are from any individual in another so-called race.

OSSORIO: Are the people who we call Black more like each other than they are like people who we call white, genetically speaking? Um, the answer is no. There's as much or more diversity and genetic difference within any racial group as there is between people of different racial groups.

NARRATOR: Still we know that some genes are found with greater frequency in some populations.



## Video Transcript 14.1

GOODMAN: And geography is the better way to explain that more than race or anything else. There can be accumulations of genes in one place in the globe and not another.

NARRATOR: Race does not account for patterns of genetic variation. Our recency as a species and the way we have moved and mated throughout our history, does. Our human lineage originated in Africa. About two million years ago, small groups of early hominids - not modern humans -- began a first migration out of Africa to the far reaches of the globe, breeding isolated lineages. It was long thought, and is still believed by some, that those first lineages led to genetically distinct races that are with us today.

GOULD: It turns out that's not true. I think there's almost genetic proof now - I wouldn't say the issue is totally resolved -- that those lineages just died out. That Neanderthals in Europe died. That homo erectus in Asia died. That there was a second migration of our modern species homo sapiens, and that all modern humans are products of the second migration, which is probably less than a hundred thousand years old, by the best current evidence.

GOODMAN: Some of those movements may follow major migrations as agricultural people came into Europe, as people crossed the Bering Strait and came into the Americas.

But, other movements are much more subtle. They're smaller groups of individuals that moved, or their genes moved from place to place, and time to time.

We've had maybe a hundred thousand years of having genes move out and mix and re-sort in countless different ways.

NARRATOR: A hundred thousand years may seem like a long time, but in evolutionary terms, it is a blink of the eye. Human populations have not been isolated from each other long enough to evolve into separate subspecies.

GOULD: There just hasn't been time for the development of much genetic variation, except that which regulates some very superficial features like skin color and hair form. For once, the old cliché is true. Under the skin, we really are effectively the same. And we get fooled, because some of the visual differences are quite noticeable.



## Video Transcript 14.2

### Transcript from *Race: The Power of An Illusion*, Episode 1 “Scientific Racism of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century”

(Video Clip <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XQvusYl6D00&feature=related>)  
(Text excerpted from <http://newsreel.org/transcripts/race1.htm>)

**NARRATOR:** In 1846, five thousand people gathered in Boston to hear, "The Plan of Creation in the Animal Kingdom," the first American lecture by renowned Swiss naturalist Louis Agassiz.

His scientific methods valued observation over speculation. Agassiz was quickly pulled into the scientific question of the day: "Are all people, no matter their physical features, members of the same or different species?"

**FINKELMAN:** It's a debate between people who look at the book of Genesis and see what they call a single creation, God created Adam and Eve, and scientists who say, "Well, actually these races couldn't possibly come from the same place. There must be different and separate creations.

**NARRATOR:** Agassiz arrived in America supporting the theory that all humans were united in a single creation. But he soon began to rethink his position, after meeting one of America's most distinguished scientists, Samuel Morton. A Philadelphia physician, Morton owned the world's largest collection of human skulls and had written two influential books documenting what he claimed were innate differences among humans. One focused on American Indians.

**HORSMAN:** The foundation work was a work called *Crania Americana* in which he argued that he was using purely scientific methods to investigate the question of skull size, skull capacity, which had implications for brain size which he thought was vital in how races progressed.

**FINKELMAN:** Lo and behold, he discovers that white American males are the smartest people on earth, followed in gradation by the English, the French, and then other Europeans, and then other races, with blacks always on the bottom. Ah, curiously, some English scholars do the same thing. They discover Englishmen are actually smarter than Americans, followed by French and other Europeans. And guess what the French discover? That the French are really smarter than both.

**BAY:** Somehow he managed to make sort of systematic errors in favor of what was the, you know, the sort of understood hierarchy of the races of the day.

**LEE BAKER, ANTHROPOLOGIST:** Samuel Morton drew wild conclusions based on very careful studying and ranking of these skulls. I don't care how many times you measure a skull, or even anything physical about an individual, or a group of people, you cannot predict their morality, their behavior, their achievements, potential for achievement, but that was what was important about this idea of race at the time.





## Video Transcript 14.2

HORSMAN: Southerners were actually delighted at what the scientists were doing. They were hearing from, if you like, "non-special interests," that there were huge differences between the races. Now this meant that the South began to argue quite vigorously that the best scientific opinion is saying that slaves cannot exist within a free, white society and that they are inferior.

FINKELMAN: The ultimate defense of slavery is a racial defense, that blacks are inferior, and therefore they are ready-made slaves. God created them as slaves.



## Video Transcript 14.3

### INTERVIEW WITH AUDREY SMEDLEY

#### “Use of Science as Justification for Slavery”

(excerpted from [http://www.pbs.org/race/000\\_About/002\\_04-background-02-06.htm](http://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-background-02-06.htm))

Audrey Smedley is a professor of anthropology at Virginia Commonwealth University. She is author of *Race in North America: Origins of a Worldview*.

#### **How did life in early colonial Virginia set the conditions for race?**

What's important to remember is that when the English established the colonies, they were motivated by greed. We don't talk about that very much in our history, that people are motivated by greed. But the earliest colonists came and took over whatever land they could get from the Indians. And by the 1620s or so, it was very clear they needed laborers to work that land. And that's when they established indentured servitude. Most of the indentured servants were Europeans, often Irish, Scots, English. Sometimes they were people who were captured in wars with the Irish - a phenomenon again that we also don't talk about very much. But the very first slaves that the English made in the Caribbean were Irish. And there were more Irish slaves in the middle of the 17th century than any others.

But there was really no such thing as race then. The idea of race had not been invented. Although "race" was used as a categorizing term in the English language, like "type" or "sort" or "kind," it did not refer to human beings as groups.

And what's important to understand is that the laborers and the poor fraternized together. They socialized together. They worked together, they played together, they drank together, they slept together, they lived together. The first mulatto child was born in 1620 [one year after the arrival of the first Africans]. When you read descriptions of the period you get the picture that color doesn't make much difference, physical features don't make much difference to these people, because they were all in the same boat. They saw themselves as having in common how they were related to the planters, the big owners. Servants were subjected to all sorts of cruel forms of punishment. They ran away together when they were unhappy about their situation.

Some Africans who got their freedom were able to buy land. They were able to establish themselves in a homestead, engage in trade and other activities with white farmers. They lent money to their white neighbors, for example, and they were involved in court cases. And this is where you see the equality clearly. Those Africans don't seem to be treated different from the white planters and other landowners. Once a person has land, then you have status.

But at first, there weren't many opportunities for anyone to move up the ladder. The first indentured servants who came into the Americas, half of them died. They died before they served their 4 to 7 years' period of indenture. Others didn't get much land when they became free, or they didn't get tools with which to make a living. It was a devastating situation for a lot of people.



## Video Transcript 14.3

The poor remained poor, essentially. And that's why you see these rebellions occurring. By the time you get into the 1660s people are showing a great deal of dissatisfaction with their circumstances. Bacon's Rebellion would never have occurred had it not been for the fact that the poor were treated so badly.

It was not until late in the 17th century that you see the colonial leaders start separating out the Africans from the other servants. Mind you, the masses of people in those colonies were all poor. In fact, this may be at the base of some of the changes that took place in the late 17th century. The colony leaders, the big planters who owned most of the land, were often afraid that the poor would get together - poor blacks and whites and mulattos by this time. And there were several rebellions before Bacon. But the most important one was Bacon's Rebellion. That was 1676. Bacon's Rebellion was one catalyst that caused the leaders of the colonies to try to separate the poor and keep them from being united.

### **Why were Africans the slaves of choice?**

By 1680, you see the beginning of the changes. What had happened - and this is a complicated story - was that colonial leaders had to deal with Bacon and that rebellion. The British sent a fleet of three ships and by the time they got to Virginia, there were 8,000 poor men rebelling who had burned down Jamestown - blacks, whites, mulattos. And it was quite clear that this kind of unity and solidarity among the poor was dangerous.

After that, they began to pass laws, very gradually. They passed laws that gave Europeans privileges while they increasingly enslaved Africans. They passed a number of laws that prevented blacks, Indians, and mulattos from owning firearms, for example. Everybody had firearms. Everybody in Virginia still has firearms!

Then there was another change: There was a decline in the number of European servants coming to the New World. At the same time, there was an increase in the ships bringing Africans to the New World. By the 1690s or so, the English themselves had outfitted their ships to bring Africans back from the continent, and this is the first time that they had had direct connections.

But the Africans also had something else. They had skills which neither the Indians nor the Irish had. The Africans brought here were farmers. They knew how to farm semi-tropical crops. They knew how to build houses. They were brick makers, for example. They were carpenters and calabash carvers and rope makers and leather workers. They were metal workers. They were people who knew how to smelt ore and get iron out of it. They had so many skills that we don't often recognize. But the colony leaders certainly recognized that. And they certainly gave high value to those slaves who had those skills.

After 1690 things begin to change. All of the Europeans become identified as "white." And Africans take on a different kind of identity. They are not only heathens, but they are people who are perceived as vulnerable to being enslaved. And that's a major point.



## Video Transcript 14.3

Africans were vulnerable because it became part of the consciousness that they had no rights as Englishmen. Even the poorest Englishman knew that he had some rights. But once a planter owns a few Africans, the idea that the Africans had no rights that they had to recognize became very clear. And that's why they were vulnerable to being enslaved, and kept in slavery. The laws that were passed after that all tended to diminish the rights of African people. But between 1690 and 1735, even those Africans who had been free and who had been there for many generations, had their rights taken away from them.

Once you magnify the difference between the slaves and the free, then it was possible to create a society in which the slaves were little better than animals. They were thought of as animals. And the more you think of slaves as animals, the more you justify keeping them as slaves.

After a while, slavery became identified with Africans. Blackness and slavery went together in the popular mind. And this is why we can say that race is a product of the popular mind, because it was this consciousness that blackness and slavery were bound together, that gave people the idea that Africans were a different kind of people.

Think of the early 17th century planter who wrote to the trustees of his company and he said, "Please don't send us any more Irishmen. Send us some Africans, because the Africans are civilized and the Irish are not." But 100 years later, the Africans become increasingly brutalized. They become increasingly homogenized into a category called "savages." And all the attributes of savagery which the English had once given to the Irish, now they are giving to the Africans.

### **How do the revolutionary ideas of liberty and the rights of man also harden ideas of race?**

One of the things we have to recognize is that slavery existed virtually everywhere. It existed throughout the Mediterranean, for example. Slavery was thousands of years old by the time the colonists in America established slavery. There was no need to justify slavery because the Spanish had slaves; the Portuguese had slaves. In other words, slavery was part of the normal state of affairs of the colonizing nations. It was part of their world.

But this was a time when the English themselves were expanding their own sense of freedom. Their ideas about liberty and equality and justice were part of the Enlightenment period that the English went through. That's the period from about 1690 to 1790. And even the poorest Englishman knew he had rights, which is part of that Enlightenment philosophy.

So the problem then became how to justify slavery, especially as the anti-slavery movement got started. At first it was heathenism. You could say, "Well, yeah. We could keep these people enslaved because they were heathens." But then, many slaves began to convert to Christianity. So what do you do with slaves who are now Christians and presumably have souls?



## Video Transcript 14.2

During the Revolutionary period you get the birth of these new ideas of equality, fraternity and the American Revolution and the French Revolution. And opposition to slavery grows. In the light of this opposition to slavery, the pro-slavery people, especially those big planters who owned hundreds of slaves, they really had to find a way of justifying and rationalizing what slavery was all about, to those people who mattered to them.

Jefferson's statement in Notes on the State of Virginia is seen by many historians as not only the major statement about black inferiority, but as the first statement that really propels the colonies into trying to justify slavery. Jefferson actually says he's not sure but hazards the guess that Africans are naturally inferior. But, he says, "We will not be able to know this until science gives us the answers." And so he calls on science to examine human populations and determine that blacks are naturally inferior. And that's exactly what science does. Within a generation after Jefferson writes this, scholars are writing about the natural inferiority of Africans.

### **How does early 19th century science fit into the picture?**

The whole idea of racial science at that time was largely to search for differences between blacks and whites and Indians. But science didn't make race. Race was already part of popular culture because it's the way our society was stratified. Science only came in after Jefferson called upon science to come and confirm the idea of race. It helped to justify the treatment of Africans and Indians.

From the beginning of the 19th century, you find a number of scientists, who begin to look for differences between racial populations. Most important was Dr. Samuel Morton, who in 1839 and 1845, produced a couple of major books that wouldn't have been read by the people at large, but were read by other scholars. And in these books he argues that there are physical differences that can be measured; there are differences in the brains of different populations who are called races.

By the time you get to Morton and then later Louis Agassiz and a number of other people, they are arguing that blacks are not only inferior but they're a separate species altogether; that they were not created by God at the same time as other human beings, but they were a lower form of human - which is a fascinating kind of thing when you think about it. Coming from the 17th century, where Africans were at least considered civilized by some people, and now in the 19th century, Africans are not only considered not civilized, but they're considered a separate species from other human beings? It's a remarkable transformation in thought.

### **What did Samuel Morton do?**

In the 1820s and '30s, a physician by the name of Samuel Morton, who lived in Philadelphia, began to collect skulls. And he collected skulls from populations around the world, and began to measure the internal capacities of these skulls. He devised a mechanism for using mustard seed and other materials





## Video Transcript 14.3

to measure the internal capacity. He discovered that African skulls were smaller on average than European skulls, and that different populations had different average measurements in their skulls. This provided confirmation of the belief that Africans were less intelligent than other people.

It was assumed, both by the population at large and by scientists, that people with larger heads and larger brains presumably were more intelligent than people with smaller ones. We now know that this isn't true. There are many people who have small skulls who are highly intelligent. But the fact is that there was a need to have scientific confirmation of the existence of races. And since races had to be different from one another, one of the ways of measuring these differences was essentially to say that the average skull size of races were different.

Now, it's clear that Morton didn't always use similar skulls for comparative purposes. For example, he had some populations such as Indian populations, that were overrepresented by only female skulls. And female skulls are smaller, on average, than male skulls. That's because females are on average smaller in stature than males. Of course, intelligence has nothing to do with brain size.

### **Who were some of the other ethnologists of the period?**

After Morton, there were many other significant and well known scholars in America. One of these was Josiah Nott, who was a physician from Mobile, Alabama, who had studied with Morton. Josiah Nott had some really strange beliefs. He believed, for example, that blacks and whites should not intermarry, and that their progeny (that is, the children of such intermarriages) were abnormal. He also believed that different races were different species.

Nott was the author, or editor actually, of a book called *Types of Mankind*, that was published, interestingly enough, in 1854, the year the Republican anti-slavery party was formed. You see this constant development of scientific confirmation of races as more and more anti-slavery institutions come into being, as the influence of the anti-slavery forces grows. The argument that the pro-slavery people used was to increasingly demonize and dehumanize the people who were slaves.

*Types of Mankind* went through nine editions before the end of the century. It was widely read. But even people who were not literate knew what the findings were. And the findings demonstrated, or at least supposedly confirmed, that Africans were naturally inferior and they should be kept in slavery. They could not function independently of slavery. That's the whole gist of the *Types of Mankind*.

Louis Agassiz became convinced by Morton that Africans were a separate species. And once he became part of Morton's clique, he became the most active spokesman for separate creations of the races. Agassiz came to the Americas from Switzerland. He came to Harvard. He became part of the upper crust society in Cambridge. He was Harvard's most prominent professor. He founded the Museum of Paleontology. He founded all of the biological sciences at Harvard. He was touted as a great man.



## Video Transcript 14.3

He gave lectures all over the place. But most importantly, he trained the next generation of scientists in America. And these scientists spread out over America teaching the same kinds of attitudes about racial differences to other people.

### **Why should white people care about this history?**

I think all Americans have to recognize that what has happened to African Americans and to Indian Americans and other people is a terrible thing that has to be righted. It has to be transformed. We have to transform our society and allow everybody to have equal rights and equal access to opportunity and equal education.

But the whole history of racism has been, especially after the Civil War, one in which the popular majority has felt that blacks should occupy the lowest rung of the ladder. They were prevented from getting an education. They were prevented from acquiring land and other forms of property. And all of these terrible forms of repression had a major impact on the way African Americans realize their lives today.

After the Civil War, black Americans had hoped that they would achieve some degree of success and become just like other people. And this is expressed in their writings. They expected to have opportunities, to be equal to other people. But that didn't turn out. And so the next generations were people couldn't acquire the education to develop themselves, they weren't allowed to acquire skills. The vast majority of white Americans are descendants of immigrants who came here in the 1890s and afterwards. They're not original Americans in that sense. But they were allowed to have access to skills, to jobs, to opportunities which black Americans were denied.

If you give up racism, you're not giving up privileges. What you're doing is expanding privileges. You're not giving up your rights. You're not losing anything. What you would be doing is gaining something. White Americans don't realize how much has been lost by their failure to integrate blacks into the community. A great deal of talent, a great deal of skills and wonderful creativeness has been lost, simply because we've not allowed black Americans to become part of this total society.



## Audio Transcript 14.1

### Remembering Tuskegee

<http://www.npr.org/programs/morning/features/2002/jul/tuskegee/>



Nurses examine one of the Tuskegee syphilis study participants.  
Photo courtesy National Archives



On behalf of the country, President Clinton apologized in 1997 to Charlie Pollard, pictured here, and other Tuskegee survivors.  
Photo courtesy Joan Echtenkamp Klein

July 25, 2002 --Thirty years ago today, the Washington Evening Star newspaper ran this headline on its front page: "Syphilis Patients Died Untreated." With those words, one of America's most notorious medical studies, the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, became public.

"For 40 years, the U.S. Public Health Service has conducted a study in which human guinea pigs, not given proper treatment, have died of syphilis and its side effects," Associated Press reporter Jean Heller wrote on July 25, 1972. "The study was conducted to determine from autopsies what the disease does to the human body."

The next morning, every major U.S. newspaper was running Heller's story. For Morning Edition, NPR's Alex Chadwick reports on how the Tuskegee experiment was discovered after 40 years of silence.

The Public Health Service, working with the Tuskegee Institute, began the study in 1932. Nearly 400 poor black men with syphilis from Macon County, Ala., were enrolled in the study. They were never told they had syphilis, nor were they ever treated for it. According to the Centers for Disease Control, the men were told they were being treated for "bad blood," a local term used to describe several illnesses, including syphilis, anemia and fatigue.

For participating in the study, the men were given free medical exams, free meals and free burial insurance.

At the start of the study, there was no proven treatment for syphilis. But even after penicillin became a standard cure for the disease in 1947, the medicine was withheld from the men. The Tuskegee scientists wanted to continue to study how the disease spreads and kills. The experiment lasted four decades, until public health workers leaked the story to the media.



## Audio Transcript 14.1

By then, dozens of the men had died, and many wives and children had been infected. In 1973, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) filed a class-action lawsuit. A \$9 million settlement was divided among the study's participants. Free health care was given to the men who were still living, and to infected wives, widows and children.

But it wasn't until 1997 that the government formally apologized for the unethical study. President Clinton delivered the apology, saying what the government had done was deeply, profoundly and morally wrong:

"To the survivors, to the wives and family members, the children and the grandchildren, I say what you know: No power on Earth can give you back the lives lost, the pain suffered, the years of internal torment and anguish.

"What was done cannot be undone. But we can end the silence. We can stop turning our heads away. We can look at you in the eye and finally say, on behalf of the American people: what the United States government did was shameful.

"And I am sorry."



## Handout 14.1

### INTERVIEW WITH EVELYNN HAMMONDS

#### “Race, Science, and Distrust”

(excerpted from [http://www.pbs.org/race/000\\_About/002\\_04-background-01-05.htm](http://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_04-background-01-05.htm))

Evelynn Hammonds is Professor of History of Science and of Afro-American Studies at Harvard University. Her latest book is *The Logic of Difference: A History of Race in Science and Medicine in the United States*.

#### **How widespread was the 19th century attempt to measure "difference"?**

Around the end of the Civil War period, the data that was collected on soldiers, particularly the Northern Army recruits, was analyzed by social scientists of the day. The people who did the measurements of these soldiers to determine whether or not they were fit to fight were largely physicians.

And physicians came to this work with the sense that black people's bodies and white people's bodies were different. They had different responses to various diseases. They were susceptible to different kinds of diseases. They even thought that maybe the dimensions of the bodies were different, or they may have certain kinds of anatomical differences. And they wanted to, for the first time in this period, capture those differences in some kind of systematic way by actually measuring them and not depending simply upon observations. There had been some measurements of skulls, but there had not been so many measurements of entire bodies.

The thing about looking for differences is once you look, you find them. So they find differences in sizes of chests, breadth of chests, length of limbs, capacity of lungs, these kinds of things. And, of course, they read those differences through the lens of race. So they read them to say that all African Americans can be categorized as having lesser lung capacity than all whites or whites of various ethnicities. So that's how they analyzed that data.

It just became clear as I read the texts that the physicians were among the peoples of color's worst enemies in the second half of the 19th century. From Maine to California, physicians were making observations about Black and Native Americans and Chinese bodies and temperaments and vitalities

And by the end of the 19th century, if we just take African Americans as an example, there's not a single body part that hasn't been subjected to this kind of analysis. So you'll find articles in the medical literature about the Negro ear, and the Negro nose, and the Negro leg, and the Negro heart, and the Negro eye, and the Negro foot, and it's every single body part. It is this endless catalogue of differences.

Not only do they catalogue physical differences like the size and shape of organs, they're constantly looking for some organ that might be so fundamentally different in size and character that you can say this is something specific to the Negro versus that of whites and other groups.





## Handout 14.1

They don't find such things, but there are people who claim to have found such things.

### **Why the obsession with difference?**

I wouldn't necessarily characterize all of these people as racist, but I do think that the belief that there is some kind of fundamental differences between human groups that matter in their bodies, that determines their health or their illness is important to them because they are looking away from the kinds of social factors that impact health and illness and ability for people to work at their fullest capacities in the society that we were creating.

Because looking at the societal structures is very difficult. Those that looked wanted to confirm what they saw, which is to say that the proper place of, say, the Negro, is at the bottom of our society. And they naturalized that position through their search for these fundamental physical and biological difference. So I think it's about a way of sort of naturalizing a social structure which everyone understood and clearly saw that the "Negro", or in other regions of the country, the Native American, or the Chinese were at the bottom of the social and political hierarchy. And if you can say that they are fundamentally and biologically different, then they should be. Then it's natural for them to be at the bottom of our social hierarchy. And it's only fitting because they're not naturally fit for a higher place.

### **Do we need to worry about scientists racializing their data and conclusions today?**

Scientists are part of their social context – their social ideas, their ideas about what race is, are not simply scientific ones, are not simply driven by the data that they're working with. They're also informed by the societies in which they live. It's not a separation between science and society. It's the ways in which science is in society. And therefore our cultural and political and social beliefs about race do inform scientists' interpretation of their data about race. And I think it's important that we remember that.

I'm not particularly worried that we'll have a repeat of the excesses of the 19th century. I believe that what we have to worry about is how questions of human difference will be framed and what meanings we'll give to the issues of difference that will be brought to the fore by this new genetic research. And it will be very easy for us to look around and say, "Ah, since the largest group of people in American prisons right now are African Americans, that's the population we should look at to study whether or not there is a gene for criminality." That's the thing I think we have to be worried about.

There will be an interpretation that scientists will give to [research] and there will be interpretations that people reading the newspaper will give to it. And there will be an interpretation that policymakers give to it. Because we are still a society that's organized in very important ways around notions of race, that's going to have a social consequence of enormous proportions.



## Handout 14.2

### **Human Experiments: A Chronology of Human Research 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. through 2001**

by Vera Hassner Sharav

Excerpted from <http://www.ahrp.org/history/chronology.php>

6th century B.C.: Meat and vegetable experiment on young Jewish prisoners in Book of Daniel.

1st century B.C. Cleopatra devised an experiment to test the accuracy of the theory that it takes 40 days to fashion a male fetus fully and 80 days to fashion a female fetus. When her handmaids were sentenced to death under government order, Cleopatra had them impregnated and subjected them to subsequent operations to open their wombs at specific times of gestation. [<http://www.jlaw.com/Articles/NaziMedExNotes.html#1>]

1796 Edward Jenner injects healthy eight-year-old James Phillips first with cowpox then three months later with smallpox and is hailed as discoverer of smallpox vaccine.

1845-1849: J. Marion Sims, "the father of gynecology" performed multiple experimental surgeries on enslaved African women without the benefit of anesthesia. After suffering unimaginable pain, many lost their lives to infection. One woman was made to endure 34 experimental operations for a prolapsed uterus. [http://www.coax.net/people/lwf/jm\\_sims.htm](http://www.coax.net/people/lwf/jm_sims.htm)

1900: Walter Reed injects 22 Spanish immigrant workers in Cuba with the agent for yellow fever paying them \$100 if they survive and \$200 if they contract the disease.

1906: Dr. Richard Strong, a professor of tropical medicine at Harvard, experiments with cholera on prisoners in the Philippines killing thirteen.

1927: Carrie Buck of Charlottesville is legally sterilized against her will at the Virginia Colony Home for the Mentally Infirm. Carrie Buck was the mentally normal daughter of a mentally retarded mother, but under the Virginia law, she was declared potentially capable of having a "less than normal child." By the 1930s, seventeen states in the U.S. have laws permitting forced sterilization

1931: Dr. Cornelius Rhoads, a pathologist, conducted a cancer experiment in Puerto Rico under the auspices of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Investigations. Dr. Rhoads has been accused of purposely infecting his Puerto Rican subjects with cancer cells. Thirteen of the subjects died.

1932-1972: U.S. Public Health Service study in Tuskegee, Alabama of more than 400 black sharecroppers observed for the natural course of untreated syphilis.



## Handout 14.2

1939: Twenty-two children living at the Iowa Soldiers' Orphans' Home in Davenport were the subjects of the "monster" experiment that used psychological pressure to induce children who spoke normally to stutter. It was designed by one of the nation's most prominent speech pathologists, Dr. Wendell Johnson, to test his theory on the cause of stuttering.

1940's: In a crash program to develop new drugs to fight Malaria during World War II, doctors in the Chicago area infected nearly 400 prisoners with the disease. Although the Chicago inmates were given general information that they were helping with the war effort, they were not informed about the nature of the experiment.

1942: Harvard biochemist Edward Cohn injects sixty-four Massachusetts prisoners with beef blood in U.S. Navy-sponsored experiment.

1943 Refrigeration experiment conducted on sixteen mentally disabled patients who were placed in refrigerated cabinets at 30 degree Farenheit, for 120 hours, at University of Cincinnati Hospital., "to study the effect of frigid temperature on mental disorders."

1944-1946: University of Chicago Medical School professor Dr. Alf Alving conducts malaria experiments on more than 400 Illinois prisoners.

1946: Patients in VA hospitals are used as guinea pigs for medical experiments. In order to allay suspicions, the order is given to change the word "experiments" to "investigations" or "observations" whenever reporting a medical study performed in one of the nation's veteran's hospitals.

1949-1953: Atomic Energy Commission studies of mentally disabled school children fed radioactive isotopes at Fernald and Wrentham schools.

1950: Dr. Joseph Stokes of the University of Pennsylvania infects 200 women prisoners with viral hepatitis.

1950s –1972: Mentally disabled children at Willowbrook School (NY) were deliberately infected with hepatitis in an attempt to find a vaccine. Participation in the study was a condition for admission to institution.

1958-1962: Spread of radioactive materials over Inupiat land in Point Hope, Alaska in Atomic Energy Commission field study code named "Project Chariot."

1962: Injection of live cancer cells into 22 elderly patients at Jewish Chronic Disease Hospital in Brooklyn. Administration covered up, NYS licensing board placed the principal investigator on probation for one year. Two years later, American Cancer Society elected him Vice President.

1963-1973: Dr. Carl Heller, a leading endocrinologist, conducts testicular irradiation experiments on prisoners in Oregon and Washington giving them \$5 a month and \$100 when they receive a vasectomy at the end of the trial.

# Socratic Seminar

## Summary

The National Paideia Center, which has developed extensive materials on using seminars in classrooms, defines a Socratic seminar as a ‘**collaborative, intellectual dialogue facilitated with open-ended questions about a text.**’

**Student Handouts:** Open-Ended Questions and/or Critical Reasoning Analysis Sheet, Discussion Partner Evaluation

## Purpose

The purpose of a Socratic Seminar is to achieve a deeper understanding about the ideas and values in a text. In the Seminar, participants systematically question and examine issues and principles related to a particular content, and articulate different points-of-view. The group conversation assists participants in constructing meaning through disciplined analysis, interpretation, listening, and participation.

## Background

In a Socratic Seminar, the participants carry the burden of responsibility for the quality of the discussion. Good discussions occur when participants study the text closely in advance, listen actively, share their ideas and questions in response to the ideas and questions of others, and search for evidence in the text to support their ideas. The discussion is not about right answers; it is not a debate. Students are encouraged to think out loud and to exchange ideas openly while examining ideas in a rigorous, thoughtful, manner.

## Key Elements

There are several basic elements of a Seminar:

- Text
- Classroom Environment
- Questions

### Text

All participants read the text in advance. The text (or article, film clip, or other artifact) should contain important and powerful ideas and values. It should be at the appropriate level for the students in terms of complexity, and should relate directly to core concepts of the content being studied. A certain degree of ambiguity or potential for different interpretations also makes for richer discussion. *It is extremely helpful to number the paragraphs in a text so that participants can easily refer to passages.*

### Classroom Environment

The classroom should be arranged so that students can look at each other directly. A circle or square works well. Some teachers like to use desks and have students use name card tents; others prefer simply to use chairs without desks.

The discussion norms should be prominently posted. Some teachers like to also post the initial key question.

## Socratic Seminar continued

### Questions

Prepare several questions in advance, in addition to questions that students may bring to class. Questions should lead participants into the core ideas and values and to the use of the text in their answers. Questions must be open-ended, reflect genuine curiosity, and have no 'one right answer'! Choose one question as the key interpretive question of the seminar to focus on and begin discussion.

During the seminar, use particular questions to move the discussion along. Towards the end of the seminar, some teachers like to use closing questions that encourage participants to apply the ideas to their personal experiences and opinions. Answering these closing questions does not require use of the text but provides students with the chance to share their own perspectives. Lastly, debriefing questions help students reflect on the process of the seminar.

- **Sample questions to serve as the key question or interpret the text:**
  - What is the main idea or underlying value in the text?
  - What is the author's purpose or perspective?
  - What does (a particular phrase) mean?
  - What might be a good title for the text?
  - What is the most important word/sentence/paragraph?
- **Sample questions to move the discussion along:**
  - Who has a different perspective?
  - Who has not yet had a chance to speak?
  - Where do you find evidence for that in the text?
  - Can you clarify what you mean by that?
  - How does that relate to what (someone else) said?
  - Is there something in the text that is unclear to you?
  - Has anyone changed their mind?
- **Sample questions to bring the discussion back to students in closing:**
  - How do the ideas in the text relate to our lives? What do they mean for us personally?
  - Why is this material important?
  - Is it right that....? Do you agree with the author?
- **Sample debriefing questions:**
  - Do you feel like you understand the text at a deeper level?
  - How was the process for us? Did we adhere to our norms?
  - Did you achieve your goals to participate?
  - What was one thing you noticed about the seminar?



## Socratic Seminar continued

### Seminar Structure

The Seminar can be divided into three time periods:

#### Before the Seminar

- Introduce the seminar and its purpose (to facilitate a deeper understanding of the ideas and values in the text through shared discussion).
- Have students read the text. They may use one of several formats to process the information. The Open-Ended Questions and/or the Critical Reasoning Analysis Sheet can be used to help students understand the content. These can be used as the 'ticket' to participate in the seminar. Share any expectations related to assessment.
- Review the Discussion Norms
- In addition to the classroom discussion norms you may have already set, it is important to include the following norms, or ones that are similar:
  - Don't raise hands
  - Listen carefully
  - Address one another respectfully
  - Base any opinions on the text

Additional norms might include

- Address comments to the group (no side conversations)
- Use sensitivity to take turns and not interrupt others
- Monitor 'air time'
- Be courageous in presenting your own thoughts and reasoning, but be flexible and willing to change your mind in the face of new and compelling evidence

#### During the Seminar

- Be seated at the level of the students and remind them to address each other and not you!
- Pose the key question.
- Ask participants to relate their statements to particular passages, to clarify, and to elaborate.
- If the conversation gets off track, refocus students on the opening question by restating it.
- Use additional questions to move the discussion along.
- Invite those who have not spoken into the conversation. Some teachers use talking chips (each student is allotted a number of chips that they use when they make a contribution) or a talking chain (asking each person to comment or pass in a circle). The chips may be especially useful when working with very young children but should be used only until students 'get the idea'.
- You may wish to record for your own purposes the main ideas discussed and the contributions people make (using a shorthand or diagram) to refer to as you facilitate.
- It can be helpful to summarize the main points made in the discussion, either at a quiet point or towards the end of the discussion.

#### After the Seminar

- Ask debriefing questions of the students.
- Share your own experience with the seminar as a facilitator.

## Using Interpretive, Literal, and Evaluative Questions

### Interpretive Questions

*A Socratic discussion is a text-based discussion in which an individual sets their own interpretations of the text alongside those of other participants. The aim is a mutual search for a clearer, wider and deeper ('enlarged') understanding of the ideas, issues, and values in the text at hand. It is shared inquiry, not debate; there is no opponent save the perplexity all persons face when they try to understand something that is both difficult and important.*

— Walter Parker, PhD,  
University of Washington

The core of the Socratic Seminar is devoted to considering interpretive questions. These are questions that ask students to interpret the text. They should be genuine questions - ones that you are also interested in. No single right answer exists, but arguments can be made to support different positions. Students need to make their points using passages from the text to answer these questions. Sample interpretive questions might ask for the values evidenced by the author within the text, or might ask students to choose the most important word/sentence/paragraph and describe why it is the most important.

### Literal Questions

Literal questions are used by some teachers at the very beginning of a seminar, to ensure comprehension of the text. These are questions that can be answered directly from the text. The answers are contained within the text and are stated clearly. Sample literal questions might ask for an important text detail, fact, or quote.

### Evaluative Questions

Evaluative questions are sometimes used at the very end of a seminar, to allow students to share their own positions and opinions. Answers to evaluative questions rely on student's own experiences, not on the text itself. Students will not need to cite particular passages to answer these questions. Sample evaluative questions might ask for student opinions about the author's position, or how the ideas in the text relate to their own lives.

### Variation: Fishbowl

If you have a large class, it may be helpful to divide the students into two groups and use a fishbowl format.

One half of the class is in the 'center' facing each other and discussing the text, while the remainder is on the 'outside' observing and listening. Members of the outer circle can take notes or use an evaluation form to track the overall conversation or to focus on specific participants. The Rubric for Evaluating Classroom Discussions, as well as the Socratic Seminar Fishbowl Discussion Partner Evaluation could be used for this purpose.

During the seminar, some teachers reserve an empty 'hotseat' for those in the outer circle who really want to jump in to make a contribution and then leave.

At the end of the conversation, the outer circle can share their observations. The groups then switch to allow the outside group a chance to discuss.

### Assessment

A rubric for evaluating a Socratic Seminar discussion is provided in the assessment section. This rubric may also prove useful to students who are evaluating other students or reflecting on their own participation.

*Based on materials shared by Walter Parker, PhD, University of Washington, Paula Fraser, Bellevue PRISM program, Bellevue, WA, Jodie Mathwig and Dianne Massey, Kent Meridian High School, Kent, WA. We also gratefully acknowledge the influence of the Coalition of Essential Schools and the National Paideia Center.*

### Socratic Seminar Discussion Partner Evaluation

Name of person you are observing \_\_\_\_\_

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Seminar Topic \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1) Record a check for each time your partner contributed in a meaningful way: \_\_\_\_\_

2) On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest, how well did your partner do at the following?

\_\_\_\_\_ Analysis and Reasoning

Did your partner...

Cite reasons and evidence for his/her statements with support from the text?

Demonstrate that they had given thoughtful consideration to the topic?

Provide relevant and insightful comments?

Demonstrate organized thinking?

Move the discussion to a deeper level?

Notes/Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_ Discussion Skills

Did your partner...

Speak loudly and clearly?

Stay on topic?

Talk directly to other students rather than the teacher?

Stay focused on the discussion?

Invite other people into the discussion?

Share air time equally with others (didn't talk more than was fair to others)?

Notes/Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_ Civility

Did your partner...

Listen to others respectfully?

Enter the discussion in a polite manner?

Avoid inappropriate language (slang, swearing)?

Avoid hostile exchanges?

Question others in a civil manner?

Notes/Comments:

## Open-Ended Questions for a Socratic Seminar

When preparing for a Socratic Seminar, write questions using these sentence frames to stimulate your thinking about the article(s) you read. Choose and complete 5 of the following:

- What puzzles me is...
- I'd like to talk with people about...
- I'm confused about...
- Don't you think this is similar to...
- Do you agree that the big ideas seem to be...

## Student Handout

- I have questions about...
- Another point of view is...
- I think it means...
- Do you think...
- What does it mean when the author says...
- Do you agree that...