

*race*

# against time

a look at how  
history constructs and  
time construes the  
concept of “race”

## DARWIN, NOT SOCIAL DARWINISM

### EUROPE WAS NEVER ALL WHITE

Studying world history across time refutes the idea that there was some ~glorious~ period in European history when the entire population was white, uninhabited by peoples of other skin tones or ethnic ancestry. If we look back to Medieval Europe, the population was made up of Africans, Jews, Arabs, Turks, and Mongols. This unveils the idea of a homogenous white Europe as a *fantasy of contemporary politics*, manufactured by years of constructing the European identity; whiteness is not something inherent to the continent<sup>2</sup>.

### MODERN DISCOURSE REINFORCES BROKEN CONCEPTS

Although “race” has been deemed scientifically non-existent and essentially undefinable as a term, it still gets employed in contemporary discourse. It’s ubiquitous, particularly in discussion with factual scientific matter, leads to internalization of the notion that it is essential to defining the concept of human difference. Even when in argument to discredit the idea, the use of “race” as opposed to other terminology reinforces the mistaken notion that it is inevitable and indispensable<sup>1</sup>.

Darwin used classification as a means to aid in the explanation of similarities and differences among humans, *not* to purport classification itself as the end goal<sup>1</sup>. Eugenicists and white supremacists over the years misinterpreted Darwin’s research in order to affirm their theories about foundational inequality among “races”<sup>3</sup>. They used the social power of science to justify acts of oppression<sup>4</sup>, by claiming that biological differences (such as skull shape) proved natural superiority over some groups over others. Their vision of “pure races” leading the future by way of social selection (aka Social Darwinism) is not one that Darwin himself advanced. And it has since been proven that

### MOST VARIATION HAPPENS WITHIN CLOSE POPULATIONS

80-85% of variation among humans is found within local geographic populations<sup>1</sup>.

Regardless of ethnic origin, humans are genetically 99.9% the same<sup>1</sup>. Penguins and fruit flies both have more variation within given species than we do as *Homo sapiens*<sup>4</sup>. And the small amount of variance we do see between peoples of different ethnic origin have almost no social significance<sup>1</sup>.

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