

THE MYTH

OF

"RACE"

understanding racism for an antiracist future

WHAT IS THE MYTH?

so-called "race" is:

- a modern invention with medieval roots (Heng 2015, 361)
- an illusion of difference between people that influences the way we think about ourselves and others (Brah 1996, 95)
- a flexible tool of oppression

WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?



Religion:

Christian oppression of Jews and Muslims in the West dates all the way back to the Middle Ages (Heng 2015, 362)

Pseudoscience:



in the 18-19th century, European and American scientists created the modern meaning of race by inventing experiments that would support their prejudices (Jahoda 2009, 53 and Banton 2015, 14)

WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?



Power



Vulnerability

- categories of so-called "race" change over time and across different contexts (Brah 2005, 104)
- the emphasis on "race" as being about identity conceals the structures that create and maintain vulnerability for some people and power for others (Crenshaw 2016, 7:00)
- A few examples of these structures are governance, policy, and law



HOW CAN YOU RESIST?

- take a page from black intersectional feminists like Kimberlé Crenshaw to ensure that in challenging racism you do not reinforce other forms of oppression (Crenshaw 2016, 8:02)
- seek to understand White Supremacy, not just those who are made vulnerable by it (Brah 2005, 109).
- understand that those who are minoritized are not victims who need saving. Resistance to racism is as old as racism itself



- align your activism with the future you want to create as much as the conditions you are opposed to (Collins 2019, 89)
- take action, acknowledging that perfection is impossible
- create spaces in your community for mutual care and compassionate accountability

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