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# Ethnocentrism and Racism Historical Views



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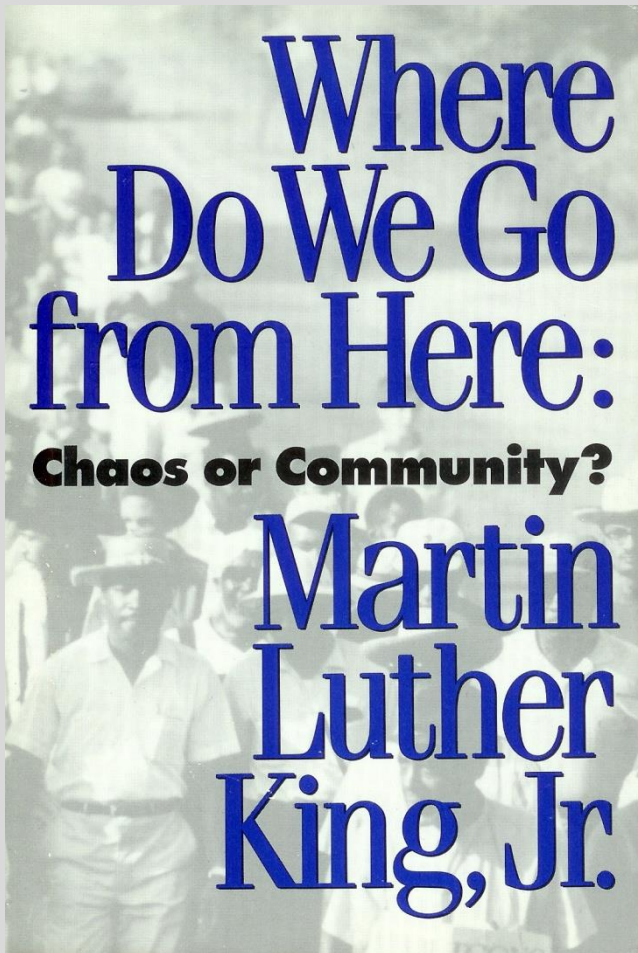
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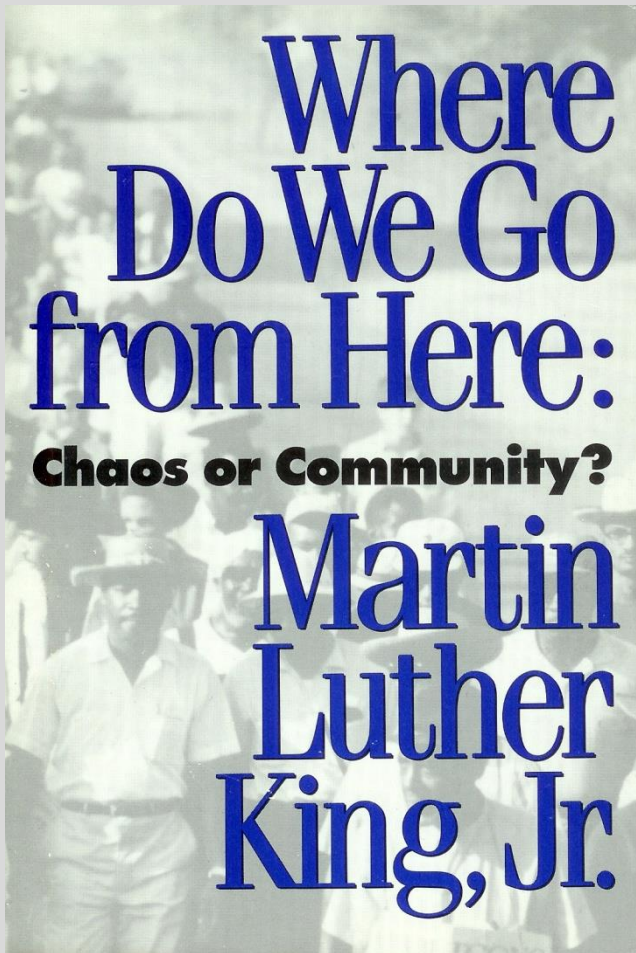
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This presentation was developed for use in the Martin Luther King Community Read in Ithaca, New York, 2010-2011...

...and...

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...for Conference Day in  
the Ithaca City School  
District...March 19,  
2010...

Your comments,  
criticisms and  
suggestions are  
welcome...

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# Ethnocentrism and Racism

The learning objectives for this presentation are:

- to understand the similarities and differences between ethnocentrism and racism, and;
- to know a few of the most important examples of such beliefs in ancient and recent times

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## Ethnocentrism and Racism

Terms you should know at the end of this  
slideshow are:

- ethnocentrism
- racism
- barbarian
- savage

# Ethnocentrism and Racism

## Sources:

### 1. Ethnocentrism—What It Is and Why Anthropologists Reject It.

Patterson, Thomas C. 1997. *Inventing Western Civilization*. New York: Monthly Review Press. An archaeologist summarizes the history of racism and ethnocentrism along with comments on Europeans who rejected both.

### 2. Racism—the Genetic Version of Ethnocentrism and Why Anthropologists Reject It

Benedict, Ruth. 1940. *Race, Science, and Politics*. New York: The Viking Press. The classic US anthropological refutation.

Feldstein, Stanley. 1972. *The Poisoned Tongue: A Documentary History of American Racism and Prejudice*. New York: William Morrow & Company.

Gossett, Thomas F. 1997. *Race: The History of an Idea in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Montagu, Ashley. 1997. *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: the Fallacy of Race*. Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press. 6th edition. The definitive encyclopedia of theories of racial superiority/inferiority and the biological and genetic refutations of them.

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# Ethnocentrism and Racism

## Sources:

3. Psychological Component of Ethnocentrism and Racism -- Prejudice

Allport, Gordon. 1954. *The Nature of Prejudice*. New York: Doubleday Anchor.



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## Ethnocentrism

1. The belief that one's own culture is good, beautiful, or important and that  
  
– to the extent they are different –

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2. Other cultures are inhuman, disgusting,  
irrational, ugly, savage...

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# Ethnocentrism

...can be present in any culture, but it is probably most important to identify and question it in one's own –

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## European Ethnocentrism: 1400 AD

By CE (AD) 1400 the European upper classes had developed a complex and sophisticated system of ethnocentrism —including the categories of

– 1. Barbarians: (Greek: “strangers”)

Treacherous, cruel, illiterate, uncultured foreigners with different languages and customs.

Source: Patterson, Thomas C. 1997. *Inventing Western Civilization*. New York: Monthly Review Press. Page 95.

## European Ethnocentrism: 1400 AD

### 2. Pagans (Latin: “civilian”)

- Rural people who remained non Christian even after Christianity had been adopted in the major cities

### 3. Heathens (Anglo-Saxon from “heath,” a wasteland)

- Polytheists: not Christian, Muslim, or Jew.

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## European Ethnocentrism: 1400 AD

### 4. Infidels (Latin: “unfaithful”)

- People following religions thought to be opposed to Christianity; usually a reference to Muslims

...and...

## European Ethnocentrism: 1400 AD

### 5. Savages (also called “wild men”) (Latin: “silva,” forest)

- Wild, fierce, cruel, ungovernable, people without good behavior, hairy, lacking the ability to speak and lacking the ability to conceive of a God
- Savages were thought to have fallen from an original human status to live in the wilderness like other animals and to survive only by strength and aggressiveness

# Racism

...is the biological version of ethnocentrism. In place of cultures, physical types are used...



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## **Racism Is...**

**...the belief in superior or inferior races**

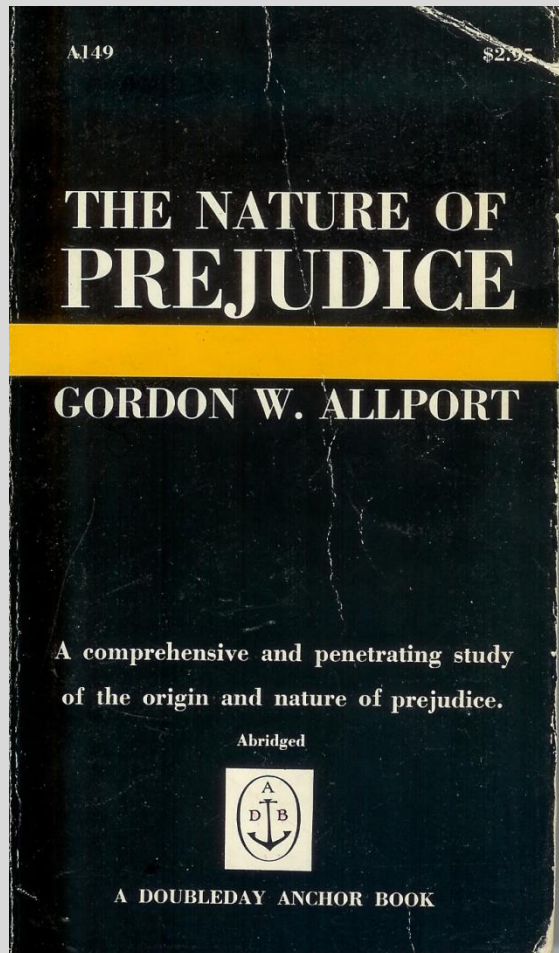
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# **Racism As a Set of Beliefs**

**Main psychological component is:**

**stereotyping**

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In 1954 Harvard psychologist Gordon Allport wrote the classic work on prejudice. He defined a stereotype as...

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**“...an exaggerated belief associated with a category [of people].”**

**Allport, Gordon. 1954. *The Nature of Prejudice*. New York: Doubleday-Anchor. page 187.**

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Stereotypes are usually the basis of  
“prejudice,” which Allport defined (p.8) as:

“An avertive or hostile attitude toward a  
person who belongs to a group, simply  
because he belongs to that group”

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Stereotypes and prejudice can occur in many ways and among any groups but in the history of the United States probably the strongest prejudices have been based on racial stereotypes.

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## **What's Wrong With Racism?**

**Racism is based on degrading and insulting stereotypes of individuals and groups.**

## **What's Wrong With Racism?**

**Beliefs about racial inferiority or superiority have helped justify oppression, exploitation, slavery, discrimination and genocide; wherever it still exists, racism continues to interfere with efforts to build a just and peaceful world.**



## Racism: Some Historical Views

“Do not obtain your slaves from Britain because they are so stupid and so utterly incapable of being taught that they are not fit to form a part of the household of Athens.”

Cicero to Atticus, 1st Century BC

Source: Benedict, Ruth. 1940. *Race, Science, and Politics*. New York: The Viking Press. Pages 6 and 7.

## Racism: Some Historical Views

“The White [here meaning “Nordic”] race originally possessed the monopoly of beauty, intelligence and strength. By its union with other varieties [here referring to Alpines or Mediterraneans], hybrids were created, which were beautiful without strength, strong without intelligence, or if intelligent, both weak and ugly.”

Source: Arthur de Gobineau. 1856. *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races*.

## Racism: Some Historical Views

“Judgment, truthfulness and energy always distinguish the Nordic man. He feels a strong urge toward truth and justice....Passion in the usual meaning of the rousing of the senses or the heightening of the sexual life has little meaning for him....He is never without a certain knightliness.”

Hans F. K. Gunther. 1927. *The Racial Elements of European History*.

## **Racism: Some Historical Views**

### **The Negroes Character**

**Cowardly and cruel are those Blacks Innate,  
Prone to Revenge, Imp of inveterate hate.  
He that exasperates them, soon espies  
Mischief and Murder in their very eyes.  
Libidinous, Deceitful, False and Rude,  
The Spume Issue of Ingratitude**

John Saffin. 1701. *A Brief and Candid Answer to a Late Printed Sheet, Entitled The Selling of Joseph* [the first New England antislavery pamphlet].

## **Racism: Some Historical Views**

“Comparing them [blacks] by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me, that in memory they are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior, as I think one could scarcely be found capable of tracing and comprehending the investigations of Euclid; and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous.”

Thomas Jefferson. 1787. *Notes on the State of Virginia.*

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## Racism: Some Historical Views

“The innate love to act as body servant or lacquey is too strongly developed in the negro race to be concealed...the primordial cell germ of the Nigritians has no more potency than what is sufficient to form a being with physical power...with the mental organization too imperfect to enable him to extricate himself from barbarism.”

Samuel Cartwright. 1860. *On the Caucasians and the Africans*.

Source: Feldstein, Stanley. 1972. *The Poisoned Tongue: A Documentary History of American Racism and Prejudice*. New York. William Morrow & Company. Pages 37, 48–49, and 103.

## Racism: Stereotyping an “Enemy”

“There is no difference between Jew and Jew. Every Jew is a sworn enemy of the German people. If he fails to display his hostility against us, it is merely out of cowardice and slyness but not because his heart is free of it.”

Joseph Goebbels, Nazi Propaganda Minister, 1941

Source: Remax, Joachim, editor. *The Nazi Years: A Documentary History*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969, page 156.

## Racism: Identifying an “Enemy”

“The Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second-and third generation Japanese, born on United States soil, possessed of United States citizenship have become “Americanized,” the racial strains are undiluted.... It, therefore, follows, that along the vital Pacific Coast over 112,000 potential enemies, of Japanese extraction, are at large today.”

Lieutenant-General John L. DeWitt, Commanding General,  
Western Defense Command, February, 1942

Source: Jacobus ten Broek, Edward N. Barnhart, and Floyd W. Matson. *Prejudice, War, and the Constitution*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, page 263.



## Racism: Identifying an “Enemy”

“I suppose I should be ashamed to say that I take the Western view of the Indian. I don’t go so far as to think that the only good Indians are the dead Indians, but I believe nine out of every ten are, and I shouldn’t inquire too closely into the case of the tenth. The most vicious cowboy has more moral principle than the average Indian.”

Theodore Roosevelt, from his book, *The Winning of the West*, a 4 volume work published 1889–1896.

Source: Gossett, Thomas F. *Race: The History of an Idea in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, page 238.

## **Racism and/or Ethnocentrism: Identifying an “Enemy”**

“Ellison’s [...taking the oath on a Koran] will embolden Islamic extremists and make new ones, as Islamists, rightly or wrongly, see the first sign of the realization of their greatest goal – the Islamicization of America.”

Dennis Prager, conservative radio host

December 2006

# Racism: Some Historical Views

## Ethnocentrism?

“If you’re incapable of taking the oath on [the Bible], don’t serve in Congress.”

Dennis Prager, conservative radio host, after the first Muslim was elected to the US Congress, Keith Ellison of Minnesota

## Racism: Some Historical Views

“Keith Ellison...does not have to answer to you, to me or anyone else in regards to questions about his faith.”

Bill Pascrell, Democratic representative from the 8<sup>th</sup> District in New Jersey that includes MSU’s campus.

## **Racism: Identifying an “Enemy”**

In a private ceremony (after being sworn in publicly without any religious paraphernalia) as an elected member of the US House of Representatives in Jan 2007, Keith Ellison of Minnesota used Thomas Jefferson’s Koran...

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# End of Slides on Ethnocentrism and Racism