# 2. Race, Democracy, and Citizenship

**We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men[1] are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.**

Declaration of Independence

Chapter 1 explored the physical characteristics, social ties, and other factors that shape our identity. The chapter also considered the consequences of the ways we view the differences between ourselves and others. The readings in Chapter 2 place those ideas in historical perspective by examining how Europeans and Americans regarded differences in the 1700s and early 1800s. Many of the beliefs that Americans hold today about race and democracy developed during those years. It was a time when hundreds of thousands of Africans were brought to the Americas in chains. Their enslavement had a profound effect on American attitudes and values then and now. The 1700s and early 1800s were also a time when some Europeans and Americans participated in an intellectual movement known as the "Enlightenment." In 1784, Immanuel Kant described the "enlightened" as those who "dare to know, to reject the authority of tradition, and to think and inquire for oneself." Modern science grew out of the ideals of the Enlightenment. So did many democratic institutions.

Among those attracted to the Enlightenment were the leaders of the American Revolution. Indeed, the movement inspired many of the ideas central to citizenship in the United States, including the belief "that all men are created equal." Yet it was also the Enlightenment that encouraged the notion that humankind is divided into distinct and unequal races. It was an idea supported by scientists who exaggerated the differences between *us* and *them* to justify prejudice, discrimination, and slavery.

Many of the readings in this chapter consider not only the tension between these two contradictory notions about human worth—racism and equality—but also the consequences of that tension and its effects on the lives of real people long ago and today. In analyzing their stories, it is important to remember that the thinkers of the Enlightenment lived at a particular time and in a particular place. The great events, prejudices, and values of that time and place shaped thinking, much as they shape thought today. Anne Fausto-Sterling, a professor of biology and medicine, says of the relationship between science and society:

> Scientists peer through the prism of everyday culture, using the colors so separated to highlight their questions, design their experiments, and interpret their results. More often than not their hidden agendas, non-conscious and thus unarticulated, bear strong

> resemblances to broader social agendas. Historians of science have become increasingly aware that in even the most "objective" of fields—chemistry and physics—a scientist may fail to see something that is right under his or her nose because currently accepted theory cannot account for the observation.[2]

Aware that their work reflects the values of their society, many scientists today have come to believe that scientific research is more than a method of inquiry. It also requires a willingness to challenge dogma and a willingness to see the universe as it really is. Accordingly, science sometimes requires courage—at the very least, the courage to question the conventional wisdom. British scientist P. B. Medawar once wrote of his own research:

> I have been engaged in scientific research for about fifty years and I rate it highly scientific even though very many of my hypotheses have turned out mistaken or incomplete. This is our common lot. It is a layman's illusion that in science we caper from pinnacle to pinnacle of achievement and that we exercise a Method which preserves us from error. Indeed we do not; our way of going about things takes it for granted that we guess less often right than wrong, but at the same time ensures that we need not persist in error if we earnestly and honestly endeavor not to do so.[3]

Chapter 2 considers what happens to a society when some leading scientists are unwilling or unable to accept the idea that their hypotheses could possibly be "mistaken or incomplete." It also explores how the "twisted science" that results from such research becomes the "conventional wisdom"—the things we are so convinced are true that they are rarely if ever challenged.

1. The words *men* and *mankind* were commonly used in earlier centuries to refer to humans and humankind. Their use reflects a particular time period.
2. *Myths of Gender* by Anne Fausto-Sterling. Revised edition. Basic Books, 1992, pp. 9-10.
3. *The Limits of Science* by P. B. Medawar. Harper & Row, 1984, p. 101.

## Reading 1

In the mid-1700s, a few European thinkers tried to apply the ideas and methods of science to humans and human societies. These thinkers were part of a movement known as the "Enlightenment." Although they disagreed on a number of points, most came to believe that all humans everywhere have the ability to reason and form societies. In time, those theories shaped the way ordinary people viewed the world. If societies are human inventions, some argued, people may alter or even replace an oppressive government with one more to their liking. In 1776, thirteen colonies along the eastern coast of North America broke their ties to Britain. Thomas Jefferson of Virginia wrote their Declaration of Independence. It states:

> We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.

The French Revolution was also inspired by the ideals of the Enlightenment. In 1789, in their Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, the French boldly stated that "Men are born, and always continue, free and equal in respect of their rights." As a French leader explained, "Since men are all made of the same clay, there should be no distinction or superiority among them." He and other thinkers of the Enlightenment regarded human differences as differences in degree rather than in kind.

Although the great thinkers of the Enlightenment stressed the equality of humankind, the notion that humanity is divided into separate but unequal races developed during those same years. Historian Londa Schiebinger offers one explanation:

> The expansive mood of the Enlightenment—the feeling that all men are by nature equal—gave middle- and lower-class men, women, Jews, Africans, and West Indians living in Europe reason to believe that they, too, might begin to share the privileges heretofore reserved

for elite European men. Optimism rested in part on the ambiguities inherent in the word "man" as used in revolutionary documents of the period. The 1789 [French] Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen said nothing about race or sex, leading many to assume that the liberties it proclaimed would hold universally. The future president of the French National Assembly, Honoré-Gabriel Riqueti, comte de Mirabeau, declared that no one could claim that "white men are born and remain free, black men are born and remain slaves." Nor did the universal and celebrated "man" seem to exclude women. Addressing the Convention in 1793, an anonymous woman declared: "Citizen legislators, you have given men a constitution . . . as the constitution is based on the rights of man, we now demand the full exercise of those rights for ourselves."

Within this revolutionary republican framework, an appeal to natural rights could be countered only by proof of natural inequalities. The marquis de Condorcet wrote, for instance, that if women were to be excluded . . . one must demonstrate a "natural difference" between men and women to legitimate that exclusion. In other words, if social inequalities were to be justified within the framework of Enlightenment thought, scientific evidence would have to show that human nature is not uniform, but differs according to age, race, and sex.

Scientific communities responded to this challenge with intense scrutiny of human bodies, generating countless examples of radical misreadings of the human body that scholars have described as scientific racism and scientific sexism. These two movements shared many key features. Both regarded women and non-European men as deviations from the European male norm. Both deployed new methods to measure and discuss difference. Both sought natural foundations to justify social inequalities between the sexes and races.[1]

## CONNECTIONS

What does the idea of equality mean to you? Does the idea that "all men are created equal" imply that there are no differences? To what extent have Americans achieved equality? To what extent does it remain a dream? What is the power of that dream? How does that dream relate to citizenship?

Londa Schiebinger regards the development of scientific racism and sexism at a time when the great thinkers of the Enlightenment were stressing the equality of

humankind as a paradox. How does she account for contradictions? How do you account for them?

According to Schiebinger, the thinkers of the Enlightenment encouraged a search for "evidence . . . that human nature is not uniform, but differs according to age, race, and sex." What does she suggest inspired that search? What consequences might such a search have? Suppose the Enlightenment had sought evidence of the similarities among humankind. What might have been the consequences of that search for society? For individuals within that society?

1. *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Science* by Londa Schiebinger. Copyright ©1993 by Londa Schiebinger. Reprinted by permission of Beacon Press, Boston, pp. 143-145.

## Reading 2

The previous reading focused on how the great thinkers of the Enlightenment viewed equality and difference. Their ideas helped shape the way ordinary people viewed the world. Ideas are also shaped by the experiences of everyday life. Jack Foley traces the development of the notion that Europeans are white to the growth of slavery in the British colonies:

> According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the first appearance in print of the word white meaning "a white man, a person of a race distinguished by a light complexion" was in 1671. The second was in 1726: "There may be about 20,000 Whites (or I should say Portuguese, for they are none of the whitest) and about treble that number of Slaves." The term Caucasian is even later: "Of or belonging to the region of the Caucasus; a name given by [Johann] Blumenbach (ca. 1800) to the 'white' race of mankind, which he derived from this region."
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> "Through the centuries of the slave trade," writes Earl Conrad, in his interesting book, The Invention of the Negro[1], "the word race was rarely if ever used. . . . [William] Shakespeare's Shylock uses the word tribe, nation, but not race. The Moor in Othello calls himself black and the word slave is several times used, but not race. The word does not appear in the King James Version of the Bible in any context other than as running a race. The Bible refers to nations and says: 'God made the world and all things therein; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.' The Bible, with all its violence and its incessant warfare between peoples, does not have racist references to tribes, groups, provinces, nations, or men."
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> And again, on the subject of slavery: "The traffic grew with the profits—the shuttle service importing human chattel to America in overcrowded ships. It was on these ships that we find the beginnings—the first crystallizations—of the curious doctrine which was to be called 'white supremacy.' Among the first white men to develop attitudes of supremacy were the slave ship crews."[2]

Colonial charters and other official documents written in the 1600s and early 1700s rarely refer to British colonists as white. By the late 1700s, however, the word was widely used in public documents and private papers. According to

scholar Leon Higginbotham, Jr., it was also becoming entwined with the idea of citizenship. Increasingly, states viewed a citizen as a man who could help his neighbors put down slave rebellions or fight a war against the Indians. That notion of citizenship was reflected in the Naturalization Act of 1790. It states:

> All free white persons who, have, or shall, migrate into the United States, and shall give satisfactory proof, before a magistrate, by oath, that they intend to reside therein, and shall take an oath of allegiance, and shall have resided in the United States for one whole year, shall be entitled to the rights of citizenship.

Before the law was passed, members of Congress argued over the one-year requirement, wondered whether Jews and Catholics should be eligible for citizenship, and considered restrictions on the right of immigrants to hold political office. But no member publicly questioned the idea of limiting citizenship to only "free white persons."

Three years before the bill became law, Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, observed in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, "It will probably be asked, Why not retain and incorporate the blacks into the state?" In response to that question, he advanced "as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances are inferior to whites in the endowments both of body and mind." He called for "scientific investigations" but urged that researchers use caution "where our conclusion would degrade a whole race of men from the rank in the scale of beings which their Creator may perhaps have given them."[3]

Jefferson voiced his suspicions at a time when a growing number of Americans were urging that slavery be abolished. Their opposition was based in part on the ideas that Jefferson himself expressed in the Declaration of Independence. In response to his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, these abolitionists charged, "You have degraded the blacks from the rank which God hath given them in the scale of being! You have advanced the strongest argument for their state of slavery! You have insulted human nature!"

Some abolitionists offered Jefferson proof that people of African descent are equal to whites by citing the achievements of individuals like Benjamin Banneker, a free black from Maryland. The Georgetown (VA) *Weekly Ledger* described him in 1791 as "an Ethiopian whose abilities as surveyor and astronomer already prove that Mr. Jefferson's concluding that that race of men were void of mental endowment was without foundation."

Between 1791 and 1796, Banneker produced a series of almanacs—calendars containing weather forecasts, astronomical information, and other useful facts.

In the introduction to Banneker's first almanac, James McHenry, a prominent soldier and statesman, offered readers his personal assurance that Banneker had performed without assistance all of the mathematical calculations in the book. "I consider this Negro as fresh proof that the powers of the mind are disconnected with the color of the skin, or in other words, a striking contradiction to [the] doctrine that 'the Negroes are naturally inferior to the whites and unsusceptible of attainments in arts and sciences.'"

Shortly before publication, Banneker sent a hand-written copy of his almanac to Jefferson with a letter offering the book as evidence of what an individual of African descent could accomplish. In reply, Jefferson wrote, "Nobody wishes more than I do to see proofs as you exhibit, that nature has given to our black brethren, talents equal to those of the other colors of men, and that the appearance of a want of them is owing merely to the degraded condition of their existence, both in Africa and America."

Although Jefferson expressed admiration for Banneker's achievements, he continued to believe that blacks were inferior to whites. Nor did Banneker's almanac alter the way a growing number of other white Americans viewed people of African descent. By the early 1800s, even white Americans opposed to slavery increasingly regarded Africans as members of a separate and inferior race.

## CONNECTIONS

How was *race* defined in Chapter 1? How is it defined in this reading? How do dictionaries define the term? What do you think it means to people in the United States today? What does it mean to you? How are these various definitions related to the word *equal*?

By the 1790s, slavery had existed in North America for nearly 200 years. How do you think the existence of slavery shaped the way Americans defined equality? Viewed race?

Jack Foley writes, "The only way for the 'majority' to conceive itself as a majority is to conceive of itself as white: without whiteness, there are only 'minorities.'" How does he seem to define "whiteness"? How do you define the term?

Every community has a "universe of obligation"—the name Helen Fein has given to the circle of individuals and groups "toward whom obligations are owed, to whom rules apply, and whose injuries call for [amends]."[4] Who was part of the nation's "universe of obligation" in the early years of the Republic? Who was excluded? What part did race play in definitions of citizenship?

How do you account for Jefferson's refusal to accept Banneker's accomplishments as proof of the abilities of African Americans? In your experience, what opinions are relatively easy to change? What opinions or impressions are more difficult to alter? What sorts of proof are most persuasive—personal experiences, the lessons of history, scholarly endorsements, philosophical arguments, scientific evidence—in changing an impression? Revising a stereotype? Altering a point of view?

Thomas Jefferson considered slavery immoral. Yet he was a slaveholder who saw Africans as a threat to "white racial purity." In reflecting on efforts to free the slaves, he wrote, "This unfortunate difference in color, and perhaps of faculty, is a powerful obstacle to the emancipation of these people." Despite such beliefs, Jefferson inspired generations of African Americans. In a speech, civil rights activist Julian Bond tried to explain why:

> Martin Luther King didn't care whether the . . . author of the Declaration of Independence thought he was inferior. The man may have thought so, but his words belied the thought. For King and his audiences, the significant Thomas Jefferson was not the Ambassador to France or the Secretary of State, the farmer or the slaveholder; as did Jefferson, they thought his chief virtue was as author of the Declaration of Independence, specifically of those self-evident truths that all are created equal. The promise of the words—for King, for those before him and us—became the true measure of the man.[5]

What is Bond suggesting about the power of ideas to spark the imagination and inspire creativity? Are Jefferson's most famous words the "true measure of the man" or should he be judged by his deeds? Why do you think some historians have called Jefferson's views paradoxical? To what extent did he seem to be aware of contradictions in his thinking? How did he try to resolve them?

1. The word *Negro* was commonly used in earlier centuries to refer to individuals of African descent. Its use reflects a particular time period.
2. "Multiculturism and the Media" by Jack Foley in *MultiAmerica: Essays on Cultural Wars and Cultural Peace*, edited by Ishmael Reed. Viking, 1997, pp. 367–369.
3. *Notes on the State of Virginia* by Thomas Jefferson, edited by William Peden. University of North Carolina Press, 1982, p. 143.
4. *Accounting for Genocide* by Helen Fein. Free Press, 1979, p. 4
5. "Address" by Julian Bond. Jefferson Conference, October 16, 1992, pp. 19-20.

## Ranking Humankind

### Reading 3

Americans were debating the future of slavery and the role of African Americans in the nation at a time when scientists were trying to understand the world by naming, sorting, and categorizing every part of it. In the 1730s, Swedish naturalist Carolus Linnaeus devised a system that showed how living things are related to one another. Writer Jonathan Weiner notes that Linnaeus's system is often drawn as a "tree of life."

> The trunk of the tree divides near its base to form kingdoms, and each great trunk divides again and again into ever-finer branches and twigs; into species, subspecies, races, varieties, and, at last, like leaves on the twigs, individuals. We depict the order of life, in other words, as a family tree, a genealogy, in which the branches trace back to a common trunk. Every living thing is related, whether distantly or nearly, and every animal and plant shares the same ancestors at the root. . . .
>
> But that is not how Linnaeus himself saw his system. To him, and to other pious naturalists of his generation, . . . they represented the plan of God, who created the species in a single week, as described in the first pages of the Hebrew Bible: "And God created great whales . . . and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good."
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> . . . In Linnaeus's vast botanical collections he did notice many examples of local plant varieties, variations on a theme. But in his system these varieties were not half as significant as true species. . . . Local varieties were merely instances in which one of the Lord's created species had come to be adapted to its particular neighborhood.[1]

Linnaeus classified humankind as a species within the animal kingdom. He divided the human species into four varieties: European, American, Asiatic, and African. In his view, the four were more alike than different. By the late 1700s, a number of thinkers were trying to improve on Linnaeus's classification of humans.

In 1795, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach came up with a new classification scheme. In his book, *On the Natural Variety of Mankind*, he divided humanity into five varieties. As Linnaeus did, he associated each with a particular geographic area—Negro (African), Mongolian (Asian), Malay (Southeast Asia), American Indian (American), and Caucasian (European). Blumenbach

introduced the word *Caucasian* "to describe the variety of mankind—the Georgian—that had originated on the southern slopes of Mount Caucasus." This, to Blumenbach, was the most beautiful race, and he said it must be "considered as the primate or intermediate of these five principal races." Other races represented "a degeneration from the original type."[2]

Although Blumenbach regarded Caucasians as the first and most beautiful variety of humans, he was careful to point out in *A Manual of the Elements of Natural History:*

> Although there seems to be so great a difference between widely separate nations, that you might easily take the inhabitants of the Cape of Good Hope, the Greenlanders, and the Circassians for so many different species of man, yet when the matter is thoroughly considered, you see that all do so run into one another, and that one variety of mankind does so sensibly pass into another that you cannot mark out the limits between them.

Like Blumenbach, Petrus Camper was also preoccupied with the idea of beauty and order in the world. Trained as an artist before turning to science, Camper was a professor of anatomy at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. His interest in art and anatomy came together in the illustration on page 45, which originally appeared in a medical textbook printed in 1791, two years after his death.

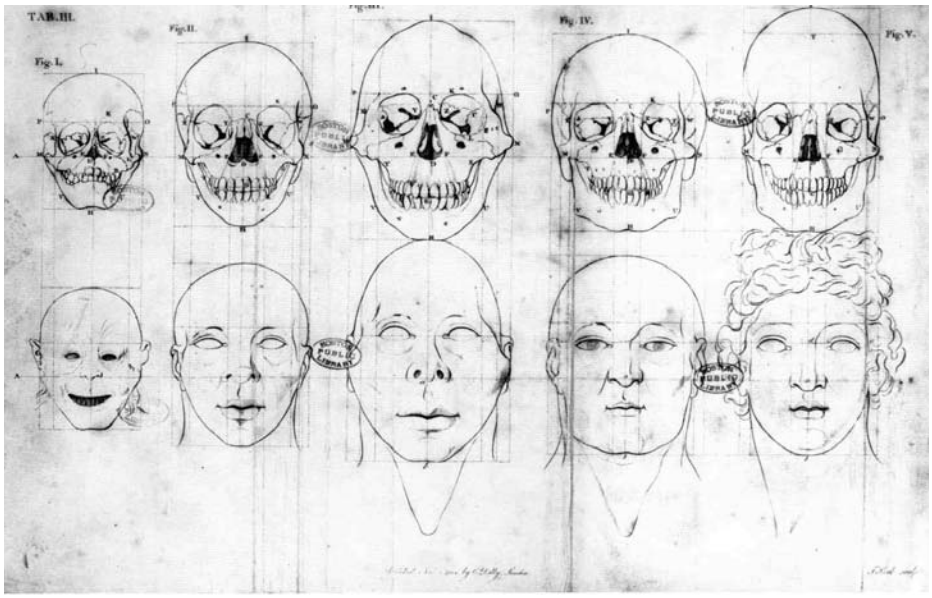
Camper lived at a time when the Dutch were deeply involved in the international slave trade. Although Camper was personally opposed to slavery, he was fascinated by the stories and the artifacts brought home by sailors and merchants involved in the trade. He saw the skeletal remains of animals and humans from distant lands as pieces of a puzzle—each piece was a clue to a better understanding of the order of nature.

As a man of faith, Camper believed in monogenesis, the idea that all people share a common ancestry, even though, he thought that some groups had drifted further from the Biblical ideal than others. As a man of the Enlightenment, Camper believed that the world was ordered according to laws that could be discovered through reason and observation and then visually demonstrated. In such a world, he and others believed that an organism's "outer state"—its appearance—reflected its "inner state," its moral or intellectual worth.

Convinced that ancient Greece and Rome had come closer than other civilizations to perfection, he used Greek statues to establish standards of beauty. He ranked human faces by how closely they resembled this ideal. After measuring dozens of statues, Camper found that their "facial angle" averaged

100 degrees. (The facial angle is the angle formed by two intersecting lines—one drawn horizontally from the ears to the nose and other formed by the shape of the face from the upper lip to the forehead.) With this ideal in mind, Camper began measuring and sorting the skulls of apes and humans. He found that apes had a facial angle of 42 to 50 degrees. The average for the Europeans he measured was about 90 degrees and for Africans 70 degrees. (The intersecting lines on the drawing below indicate "facial angles.")

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a number of scientists ranked humankind along a "chain of being" based on Camper's facial angles. The idea of a "chain of being" dated back to the Middle Ages but gained new popularity in the years after Camper's death. As Kenan Malik explains in *The Meaning of Race*, "The Great Chain of Being linked the cosmos from the most miserable mollusk to the Supreme Being. Near the apex of this chain stood Man, himself graded by social rank. In this great chain, the humblest as well as the greatest played their part in preserving order and carrying out God's bidding."[3]




**Petrus Camper's illustration of "facial angles."**

## CONNECTIONS

Linnaeus tested the idea that all living things are related to one another. What ideas were Blumenbach and Camper testing? To what extent were their methods

good science—in the sense that they rigorously tested their hypotheses? To what extent did their approaches question "conventional wisdom"? To what extent did they reinforce conventional wisdom?

Linnaeus, Blumenbach, and Camper were all men of faith. How did their religious beliefs shape their observations of the natural world? What other aspects of their identity may have influenced the way they viewed differences among humankind? The value they placed on the similarities among humankind?

Why do you think Blumenbach regarded physical beauty as proof of superiority? Would he agree that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder"? How do notions of beauty affect the value we attach to individuals and groups?

Look carefully at Camper's illustration. If possible, project a slide of the image on a large screen and then discuss the illustration in small groups.

—Try not to explain the picture, simply describe what you notice. Have someone in the group record your observations and those of your classmates. You may also want to record your own impressions in your journal.

—Which faces look the most "human"? How does the artist use lines, shading, and shapes to convey a message? What characteristics make the drawings seem scientific? Authoritative?

—Based on your group's interpretation, give the drawing a title.

Camper called his drawing "The progression of skulls and facial expressions—from monkey, through black, to the average European and then thence to the Greek ideal-type." To what extent does his title support your impressions of the drawing? What is the significance of the word *progression*?

What kinds of proofs do you find more powerful—written proofs or visual evidence? Which is more likely to stretch the mind and inspire the imagination? Which is more difficult to forget? How do you think ideas like those of Blumenbach and Camper might have influenced people of the time? To what extent might the mystique of science keep the average person from questioning their ideas?

1. *The Beak of the Finch* by Jonathan Weiner. Random House, 1995, pp. 23–24.
2. Quoted in *Race and Manifest Destiny* by Reginald Horsman. Harvard University Press, 1981, p. 47.
3. *The Meaning of Race: Race, History and Culture in Western Society* by Kenan Malik. New York University Press, 1996, p. 43.

## Science and Prejudice

### Reading 4

Petrus Camper believed in monogenesis, the idea that all people share a common ancestry based on the Biblical account of Adam and Eve. At the same time, he was convinced that some groups or "races" had declined further than others from their Biblical origin. He also suspected that there were intellectual and moral differences among the races as well as physical ones. In the mid-19th century, an American anthropologist, Samuel George Morton, extended Camper's work. But unlike Camper, Morton believed in polygenesis—the idea that each race was created separately. He also maintained that each race is fixed, intrinsically different from all others, and incapable of being changed.

Morton, a professor of medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, held two medical degrees and served as president of the Academy of Natural Sciences. According to the *New York Tribune*, "Probably no scientific man in America enjoyed a higher reputation among scholars throughout the world."[1] Like many scientists of his day, Morton believed that intelligence is linked to brain size. He therefore tried to rank the races according to skull size. After measuring a vast number of skulls from around the world, he concluded that whites have larger skulls than other races and are therefore "superior." He was not sure if blacks were a separate race or a separate species, but he did insist that people of African descent are different from and inferior to whites.

The following quotations are from Morton's *Crania Americana*, published in 1839. They suggest how physical differences can become markers that predict a group's intelligence, personality traits, even morality.

**Europeans**

The Caucasian Race is characterized by a naturally fair skin, susceptible of every tint; hair fine, long and curling, and of various colors. The skull is large and oval, and its anterior portion full and elevated. The face is small in proportion to the head, of an oval form, with well-proportioned features. . . . This race is distinguished for the facility with which it attains the highest intellectual endowments. . . .

The spontaneous fertility of [the Caucasus] has rendered it the hive of many nations, which extending their migrations in every direction, have peopled the finest portions of the earth, and given birth to its fairest inhabitants. . . .

**Asians**

This great division of the human species is characterized by a sallow

or olive colored skin, which appears to be drawn tight over the bones of the face; long black straight hair, and thin beard. The nose is broad, and short; the eyes are small, black, and obliquely placed, and the eye-brows are arched and linear; the lips are turned, the cheek bones broad and flat. . . . In their intellectual character the Mongolians are ingenious, imitative, and highly susceptible of cultivation [i.e. learning].

So versatile are their feelings and actions, that they have been compared to the monkey race, whose attention is perpetually changing from one object to another. . . .

**Native Americans**

The American Race is marked by a brown complexion; long, black, lank hair; and deficient beard. The eyes are black and deep set, the brow low, the cheek-bones high, the nose large and aquiline, the mouth large, and the lips tumid [swollen] and compressed. . . . In their mental character the Americans are averse to cultivation, and slow in acquiring knowledge; restless, revengeful, and fond of war, and wholly destitute of maritime adventure.

They are crafty, sensual, ungrateful, obstinate and unfeeling, and much of their affection for their children may be traced to purely selfish motives. They devour the most disgusting [foods] uncooked and uncleaned, and seem to have no idea beyond providing for the present moment. . . . Their mental faculties, from infancy to old age, present a continued childhood. . . . [Indians] are not only averse to the restraints of education, but for the most part are incapable of a continued process of reasoning on abstract subjects. . . .

**Africans**

Characterized by a black complexion, and black, woolly hair; the eyes are large and prominent, the nose broad and flat, the lips thick, and the mouth wide; the head is long and narrow, the forehead low, the cheek-bones prominent, the jaws protruding, and the chin small. In disposition the Negro is joyous, flexible, and indolent; while the many nations which compose this race present a singular diversity of intellectual character, of which the far extreme is the lowest grade of humanity. . . .

The moral and intellectual character of the Africans is widely different in different nations. . . . The Negroes are proverbially fond of their amusements, in which they engage with great exuberance of spirit; and a day of toil is with them no bar to a night of revelry.

> Like most other barbarous nations their institutions are not infrequently characterized by superstition and cruelty. They appear to be fond of warlike enterprises, and are not deficient in personal courage; but, once overcome, they yield to their destiny, and accommodate themselves with amazing facility to every change of circumstance.
>
> The Negroes have little invention, but strong powers of imitation, so that they readily acquire mechanic arts. They have a great talent for music, and all their external senses are remarkably acute.[2]

Morton's ranking of the "races" had very real consequences. After meeting Morton and viewing his skull collection, Louis Agassiz, a noted biologist who joined the faculty of Harvard University in 1846, taught his students that Africans are a separate species. In evaluating Agassiz's career, anthropologist Lee D. Baker observes: "Agassiz's legacy is not only the statues, schools, streets, and museums in Cambridge [Massachusetts] emblazoned with his name but also the bevy of students who were under his tutelage at Harvard University. He trained virtually all of the prominent U.S. professors of natural history during the second half of the nineteenth century."[3]

Morton's rankings also shaped the way many politicians, journalists, and ministers viewed two of the most pressing social and political issues of the day: the expulsion of Native Americans from their ancestral lands and the expansion of slavery. Between 1816 and 1850, over 100,000 Indians from 28 tribes were forced from their homes east of the Mississippi to western lands that white Americans considered useless. At the same time, about 3.5 million African Americans were held in bondage. Their enslavement prompted a heated debate between slave-owners and an international community of abolitionists, opponents to slavery. Morton's writings played a part in both debates by promoting the idea that the Constitution does not apply to Native Americans or Africans because they are not the sorts of people for whom the document was written.

## CONNECTIONS

Camper believed in monogenesis and Morton in polygenesis. How did those beliefs shape the way each viewed differences?

List the adjectives Morton uses to define each of the four groups. Circle every adjective that has a positive connotation. Is there a correlation between the number of positive adjectives that Morton uses in describing a group and his estimate of its moral or intellectual "worth"?

What do you think Morton meant when he wrote that Africans "yield to their

destiny and accommodate themselves" to new circumstances? What does the word *destiny* imply? How might Morton's writings influence debates over slavery? How might they justify the removal of Native Americans to remote areas?

What power do teachers have to shape the way their students view the world? What power do parents have? A community? Religious leaders? To what extent did teachers like Morton and Agassiz betray their students?

The link Morton and others saw between brain size and intelligence shaped ideas about not only African Americans and Native Americans but also women. In 1879, Gustave Le Bon, a French student of anthropology, wrote:

> In the most intelligent races, as among the Parisians, there are a large number of women whose brains are closer in size to those of gorillas than to the most developed male brains. This inferiority is so obvious that no one can contest it for a moment; only its degree is worth discussion. . . . Without doubt there exist some distinguished women, very superior to the average man, but they are as exceptional as the birth of any monstrosity, as, for example, of a gorilla with two heads, consequently, we may neglect them entirely. . . . A desire to give them the same education, and as a consequence to propose the same goals for them is a dangerous [illusion].[4]

Define the word *scientific*. Are scientific proofs more convincing than other proofs? How difficult are they to counter? For example, how might a woman "prove" that she is the equal of a man? How do you think Le Bon would respond to her proof? How might an African American "prove" that he or she is the equal of any other American? How do you think Morton, Le Bon, and others would respond to that proof?

1. Quoted in *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Towards Race in America, 1815–1859* by W. Stanton. University of Chicago Press, 1960, p. 144.
2. *Crania Americana* by Samuel George Morton. John Pennington, 1839. pp. 5, 6, 50, 54, 81.
3. *From Savage to Negro: Anthropology and the Construction of Race, 1896-1954* by Lee D. Baker. University of California Press, 1998, p.16.
4. Quoted in *The Mismeasure of Man* by Stephen Jay Gould. W.W. Norton, 1981, pp. 104–105.

## Reading 5

Samuel Morton saw himself as an impartial scientist with no interest in partisan politics. He insisted that his conclusions were based solely on the results of his scientific investigations. In 1849, Morton summarized his work in a paper entitled "Observations on the Size of the Brain in Various Races and Families of Man." The table below is taken from that paper.

TABLE,

*Showing the Size of the Brain in cubic inches, as obtained from the internal measurement of 623 Crania of various Races and Families of Man.*

| RACES AND FAMILIES. | No. of Skulls. | Largest I. C. | Smallest I. C. | Mean. | Mean. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MODERN CAUCASIAN GROUP. | | | | | |
| Teutonic Family. | | | | | |
| *Germans,* | 18 | 114 | 70 | 90 | 92 |
| *English,* | 5 | 105 | 91 | 96 | |
| *Anglo-Americans.* | 7 | 97 | 82 | 90 | |
| Pelasgic Family. | | | | | |
| *Persians,* | 10 | 94 | 75 | 84 | |
| *Armenians,* | | | | | |
| *Circassians.* | | | | | |
| Celtic Family. | 6 | 97 | 78 | 87 | |
| *Native Irish.* | | | | | |
| Indostanic Family. | 32 | 91 | 67 | 80 | |
| *Bengalees, &c.* | | | | | |
| Semitic Family. | 3 | 98 | 84 | 89 | |
| *Arabs.* | | | | | |
| Nilotic Family. | 17 | 96 | 66 | 80 | |
| *Fellahs.* | | | | | |
| . . . . . | | | | | |
| ANCIENT CAUCASIAN GROUP. | | | | | |
| From the Catacombs. Pelasgic Family. | 18 | 97 | 74 | 88 | |
| *Græco-Egyptians.* | | | | | |
| From the Catacombs. Nilotic Family. | 55 | 96 | 68 | 80 | |
| *Egyptians.* | | | | | |
| MONGOLIAN GROUP. | | | | | |
| Chinese Family. | 6 | 91 | 70 | 82 | |
| MALAY GROUP. | | | | | |
| Malayan Family. | 20 | 97 | 68 | 86 | 85 |
| Polynesian Family. | 3 | 84 | 82 | 83 | |
| AMERICAN GROUP. | | | | | |
| Toltecan Family. | 155 | 101 | 58 | 75 | 79 |
| *Peruvians,* | 22 | 92 | 67 | 79 | |
| *Mexicans.* | | | | | |
| Barbarous Tribes. | 161 | 104 | 70 | 84 | |
| *Iroquois,* | | | | | |
| *Lenapé,* | | | | | |
| *Cherokee,* | | | | | |
| *Shoshoné, &c.* | | | | | |
| NEGRO GROUP. | | | | | |
| Native African Family. | 62 | 99 | 65 | 83 | 83 |
| American-Born Negroes. | 12 | 89 | 73 | 82 | |
| Hottentot Family. | 3 | 83 | 68 | 75 | |
| Alforian Family. | 8 | 83 | 63 | 75 | |
| *Australians.* | | | | | |

**Notice that the number of skulls varies from group to group. Morton measured "cranial capacity"—the interior size of the skull—in cubic inches.**

After reading Samuel Morton's *Crania Americana*, Frederick Douglass, a leader in the fight against slavery and himself a former slave, strongly disagreed. He described the scientist as reasoning "from prejudice rather than from facts." Douglass went on to say: "It is the province of prejudice to blind; and scientific writers, not less than others, write to please, as well as to instruct, and even unconsciously to themselves, (sometimes,) sacrifice what is true to what is popular. Fashion is not confined to dress; but extends to philosophy as well—and it is fashionable now, in our land, to exaggerate the differences between the Negro and the European."[1]

In the mid-1800s, however, most scientists accepted both the methods and the data Morton used to arrive at his conclusions. Among the few to raise questions was Friedrich Tiedemann, a German professor who also used skulls to investigate the ways race, intelligence, and brain size are linked. According to *The Skull Measurer's Mistake* by Sven Lindqvist, Tiedemann measured skulls by filling them with millet, then weighing the millet. The largest skull in his collection held 59 ounces. It was from a Native American man. The second largest was from a white man. Third was an African, fourth a white, and fifth place was shared by three whites, a Mongol, and a Malay. The largest female skull came from a Malay woman, whose cranium held 41 ounces. A white and a Native American shared second place, and one black and one white woman shared third place. These results did not support Morton's conclusion. Nor did they fit the race hierarchy of Tiedemann's time, in which whites were always at the top and blacks at the bottom.

## CONNECTIONS

What does it mean for a human being to be measured, ranked, and then labeled? Does it matter who does the measuring? What is the difference between being ranked by a scientist or a teacher? By a relative or a friend? Which has a greater impact on the way you see yourself and others?

What is the scientific method? Why do scientists claim it is impartial? How important is impartiality to the method?

To evaluate a scientific finding, it is important that the data be not only accurate but also relevant to the question under investigation. How would you determine the accuracy of Morton's data? How relevant are Morton's measurements to the qualities he ascribes to the various "racial groups" (Reading 4)?

The *mean* is the average—the sum of all of the items divided by the number of items or in this case, the number of skulls. What conclusions about cranial capacity does the "Mean" column in Morton's table suggest?

In *The Mismeasure of Man*, biologist Stephen Jay Gould uses Morton's original notes and raw data to evaluate his methods. Gould concludes:

> —Morton's sub-samples were not inclusive. For example, of the 333 skulls in his "American Indians" sample, 155 were Inca from South America. Their skulls tended to be smaller than those of other Indian groups. At the same time, he lumped the relatively larger Iroquois skulls into a separate category called "Barbarous Tribes." When he found that skulls from India were smaller than other Caucasian skulls, he omitted them from his "Modern Caucasian" group.
>
> —Morton's measurements were influenced by his subjective expectations. Morton used mustard seed to measure the cranial capacities of his skulls. Gould found that the seeds were often packed tightly in the European skulls but not in Indian or African American skulls. As a result, Morton inflated the sizes of European skulls and deflated those of other groups.
>
> —Morton failed to correct his figures for gender and stature. Since females tend to be smaller than males, they have smaller skulls. Morton included more female skulls in his African and Indian groups than in his European group. The result was to inflate the size of European skulls and decrease those of other groups.
>
> —Morton miscalculated some numbers and left out others. For example, he rounded down measurements for Egyptian skulls and rounded up measurements of German and Anglo-Saxon skulls.[2]

Despite these errors, Gould does not think that Morton intended to deceive anyone. If that had been his intention, he probably would have tried to cover up his data and hide his procedures. How would you account for Morton's errors? What does Gould's study suggest about the ways unconscious assumptions may affect one's objectivity?

To illustrate some of the problems Gould sees in Morton's measurements, pour the contents of a bag of peppercorns into a skull (plastic or real) until it seems full. Then pour the peppercorns into a calibrated beaker. Record the volume and round the number downward. Then redo the experiment. This time try to get as many peppercorns into the skull as possible. Pour the new amount into the beaker and round the number up instead of down. Same skull—two different calculations!

What similarities do you notice in the ways Morton and Tiedemann approached their research? What differences seem most striking? How important are those differences?

In the 1870s, Paul Broca, a noted French anthropologist, criticized Tiedemann's research as "imprecise." He believed that Tiedemann had "set out to prove that the cranial capacity of all human races is the same." Yet Broca had nothing but

praise for Morton. What does the word *objective* mean? To what extent was Morton objective? Tiedemann? Identify instances where unstated assumptions have affected your objectivity or the objectivity of someone you know.

Tiedemann came to believe that there is no relationship between skull size and intelligence as a result of his study of dolphins. He found that the size of a dolphin's brain varies with gender, body length, body weight, and body condition but not with intelligence. His work with dolphins also taught Tiedemann "not only to study averages in large groups, but also to take an interest in individuals and the variations between individuals as well as between groups and divisions of groups." What may a study of averages in large groups reveal? What may it conceal? What may a study of individuals and the variations among them reveal? What may such a study conceal?

Both Tiedemann and Douglass challenged the "conventional wisdom" about race. What experiences may have prompted them to question ideas? Challenge assumptions? What is the conventional wisdom about "race" today? Who determines the conventional wisdom? How does the "conventional wisdom" change?

1. *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, Vol. 2. Edited by Philip S. Forer. International Publishing, 1950, p. 298.
2. Paraphrased from *Mismeasure of Man* by Stephen Jay Gould. W.W. Norton & Co., 1996, 1981, pp. 100-101.

## Reading 6

By the middle of the 1800s, the idea that some "races" are superior to others had become the "conventional wisdom." Respected scientists like Samuel Morton gave racism legitimacy. As a result, racist ideas were taught in universities, preached from pulpits, and reinforced in books, magazines, and newspapers. After surveying the leading publications of the day, historian Reginald Horsman notes, "One did not have to read obscure books to know that the Caucasians were innately superior, and that they were responsible for civilization in the world, or to know that inferior races were destined to be overwhelmed or even to disappear. These ideas permeated the main American periodicals and in the second half of the century formed part of the accepted truth of America's schoolbooks." [1] They also shaped the way Americans defined citizenship.

Immediately after the American Revolution, only three states—Virginia, South Carolina, and Georgia—limited the right to vote to white men. Until 1800, no northern state limited suffrage on the basis of race. After 1800, however, every state that entered the Union with the exception of Maine placed restrictions on the right of African Americans to vote. States that permitted blacks to vote began to narrow or remove that right entirely. In 1837, a delegate to the Pennsylvania Constitutional Convention justified taking away voting rights from African American citizens by describing the United States as "a political community of white persons." By the late 1850s, blacks could vote on the same basis as whites only in five states—all of them in New England.

In 1857, the language of exclusion reached the Supreme Court. In the Dred Scott decision, Chief Justice Roger B. Taney ruled that blacks "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect." The American people, Taney argued, constituted a "political family" restricted to whites. Historian Eric Foner notes, "It was a family of which blacks, descended from different ancestors and lacking a history of freedom, could never be a part. In effect, race had replaced class as the boundary separating which American men were entitled to enjoy political freedom and which were not."[2]

As race increasingly defined citizenship, free blacks in the North and West as well as the South found themselves outside the nation's "universe of obligation." When they looked for work on the docks of New York City, they were attacked by white workers. When young African Americans applied for the apprenticeships that would lead to good jobs in places like Cincinnati, Ohio, white mechanics blocked their every attempt. As one young black man complained, "Why should I strive hard and acquire all the constituents of a man, if the prevailing genius of the land admit me not as such, or but in an inferior degree!

Pardon me if I feel insignificant and weak. . . . What are my prospects? To what shall I turn my hand? Shall I be a mechanic? No one will employ me; white boys won't work with me. . . . Drudgery and servitude, then, are my prospective portion."[3]

Even the most educated African Americans experienced hostility, prejudice, and discrimination at every turn. Historian Ronald Takaki relates the experiences of Martin Delany, the son of a slave father and free mother in Charles Town, Virginia (now Charleston, West Virginia), to suggest the breadth and depth of the shame and humiliation African Americans experienced in all parts of the nation in the early 1800s.

> As a child, Martin learned that his membership in the black race made him the object of white scorn. [His mother's] efforts to teach her children to read and write aroused angry opposition from white neighbors who were anxious to preserve their belief in black intellectual inferiority. . . . White resentment was so intense that she felt compelled to move her family across the border to Pennsylvania.
>
> But even north of slavery, racism was prevalent. As a young man studying in Pittsburgh during the 1830s, Delany experienced the brutality of anti-black riots led by mobs composed of white workers.
>
> As a journalist and as an antislavery lecturer during the 1840s, Delany traveled widely throughout the North and often encountered racial hostility and violence. On one occasion, a white mob in Marseilles, Ohio, threatened to tar and feather him and burn him alive. Delany found that white children, even while involved in play, were never too busy to notice a black passing by and scream "nigger.". . . Delany found that the racial epithets were not only "an abuse of the feelings," but also "a blasting outrage on humanity."
>
> His bitterness toward northern society was sharpened by an admissions controversy at Harvard Medical School. In 1850, Delany along with two other blacks were admitted to the school. Their admission, however, was conditional: upon graduation, they would have to emigrate and practice medicine in Africa. Even so, their presence at Harvard provoked protests from white students. Demanding the dismissal of the blacks, they argued that integration would lower the "reputation" of Harvard and "lessen the value" of their diploma. The whites refused to attend classes with the blacks. . . .
>
> The faculty quickly capitulated, ignoring a student counter-petition favoring the admission of the blacks. Deeming it "inexpedient" to allow blacks to attend lectures, the faculty defended their decision based on their commitment to teaching and academic excellence.[4]

Two years after the incident at Harvard, Delany wrote a book that encouraged African Americans to return to Africa. He was convinced that even if slavery were abolished, blacks would not be accepted as equals in the United States. Yet even as he made plans to leave the country, he dedicated his book "to the American people, North and South. By their most devout and patriotic fellow-citizen, the author." He also reminded his readers of the contributions that blacks had made to the nation. "Among the highest claims that an individual has upon his country," he wrote, "is that of serving in its cause, and assisting to fight its battles." In 1861, when the Civil War began, he abandoned his dreams of Africa and volunteered for the Union Army. He served as a major in the 104th Regiment of the United States Colored Troops.

## CONNECTIONS

According to scholar Leon Higginbotham, Jr., race was increasingly entwined with the idea of citizenship in the years just after the American Revolution. Increasingly, he writes, a citizen was a man who could help his neighbors put down slave rebellions or fight Indians. How is the word *citizen* defined by the mid-1800s? How did notions about race shape that definition?

A young African American quoted in this reading asks, "What are my prospects? To what shall I turn my hand?" How do you think Samuel Morton and other "race scientists" would answer his questions? How might Martin Delany answer them? How would you answer them? To what extent do Samuel Morton's rankings place that young man and other African Americans beyond the nation's "universe of obligation"? What does Martin Delany's story suggest about the consequences of being outside a nation's universe of obligation?

How do you explain the change from a society that emphasizes equality to one that stresses differences? What role may education have played in that change?

1. *Race and Manifest Destiny* by Reginald Horsman. Harvard University Press, 1981, p. 157.
2. *The Story of American Freedom* by Eric Foner. W.W. Norton & Company, 1998, pp. 74–75.
3. Quoted in *North from Slavery* by Leon Litvak. Chicago, 1965, pp. 153-154.
4. *A Different Mirror* by Ronald Takaki. Copyright © 1993 by Ronald Takaki. By permission of Little, Brown and Company, 1993, pp. 127-128.

## Reading 7

When Thomas Jefferson questioned the intellectual capabilities of people of African descent in the late 1700s, his opponents reminded him of the words he wrote in the Declaration of Independence*:* "We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." By the mid-1800s, Governor James Hammond of South Carolina and a growing number of other white Americans viewed "as ridiculously absurd, that much lauded but nowhere accredited dogma of Mr. Jefferson that 'all men are born equal.'"

Among the few Americans in the early 1800s to keep alive the language of the Declaration of Independence were abolitionists—those who sought to end slavery in the nation. Although many of them did not believe that "all men are born equal," their long struggle to abolish slavery gave new meaning to personal liberty and the rights attached to citizenship.

In the 1830s, writes historian Eric Foner, politicians and ordinary citizens tried to silence those who were critical of slavery. In northern cities, mobs broke up the meetings of abolitionist societies and destroyed their printing presses. In 1836, the U.S. House of Representatives refused to consider any petition that called for the abolition of slavery. At about the same time, Postmaster General Amos Kendall allowed U.S. postal officials in southern states to remove from the mail any written material critical of slavery. Foner argues:

> The fight for the right to debate slavery openly and without reprisal led abolitionists to elevate "free opinion"—freedom of speech and of the press and the right of petition—to a central place in what [William Lloyd] Garrison called the "gospel of freedom." The struggle for free speech also reinforced the contention that slavery threatened the liberties of white Americans as well as black. Free expression, abolitionists insisted, should be a national standard, not subject to limitation by those who held power within local communities.[1]

The struggle against slavery also inspired two definitions of citizenship. One was based on race. The other was based on a civic understanding of nationhood. It was summarized by Lydia Maria Child in 1833 in a popular essay entitled "An Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans." Foner writes:

> Child's text insisted that blacks were compatriots, not foreigners; they were no more Africans than whites were Englishmen. At a time

> when the authority to define the rights of citizens lay almost entirely with the states, abolitionists maintained that "birth place" should determine who was an American. The idea of birthright citizenship, later enshrined in the Fourteenth Amendment, was a truly radical departure from the traditions of American life.[2]

Black abolitionists were particularly adamant in their insistence on the equality of African Americans. In 1854, in a speech in Cleveland, Ohio, Frederick Douglass responded to an editorial in a Virginia newspaper that justified slavery by claiming that African Americans were less human than white Anglo Saxons—the descendents of a mythical people who settled in England in the fifth century. Douglass told his audience:

> Man is distinguished from all other animals by the possession of certain definite faculties and powers, as well as by physical organization and proportions. He is the only two-handed animal on the earth—the only one that laughs, and nearly the only one that weeps. Men intuitively distinguish between men and brutes. Common sense itself is scarcely needed to detect the absence of manhood in a monkey, or to recognize its presence in a Negro. His speech, his reason, his power to acquire and to retain knowledge, his heaven-erected face, his [inclinations], his hopes, his fears, his aspirations, his prophecies plant between him and the brute creation a distinction as eternal as it is palpable. Away, therefore, with all the scientific moonshine that would connect men and monkeys; that would have the world believe that humanity, instead of resting on its own characteristic pedestal—gloriously independent—is a sort of sliding scale, making one extreme brother to the orangutan, and the other to angels, and all the rest intermediates!
>
> Tried by all the usual, and all the unusual tests, whether mental, moral, physical, or psychological, the Negro is a MAN—considering him as possessing knowledge, or needing knowledge, his elevation or his degradation, his virtues, or his vices—whichever road you take, you reach the same conclusion, the Negro is a MAN. His good and his bad, his innocence and his guilt, his joys and his sorrows, proclaim his manhood in speech that all mankind practically and readily understand.
>
> A very [profound] author says that "man is distinguished from all other animals, in that he resists as well as adapts himself to his circumstances." He does not take things as he finds them, but goes to work to improve them. Tried by this test, too, the Negro is a man. You may see him yoke the oxen, harness the horse and hold the plow. He

can swim the river; but he prefers to fling over it a bridge. The horse bears him on his back—admits his mastery and dominion. The barnyard fowl know his step, and flock around to receive their morning meal from his sable hand. The dog dances when he comes home, and whines piteously when he is absent. All these know that the Negro is a MAN. Now, presuming that what is evident to beast and to bird, cannot need elaborate argument to be made plain to men, I assume, with this brief statement, that the Negro is a man.

. . . Indeed, ninety-nine out of every hundred of the advocates of a diverse origin of the human family [i.e., polygenesis, or multiple creations] in this country, are among those who hold it to be a privilege of the Anglo-Saxon to enslave and oppress the African—and slaveholders, not a few, like the Richmond Examiner to which I have referred, have admitted, that the whole argument in defense of slavery, becomes utterly worthless the moment the African is proved to be equally a man with the Anglo-Saxon. The temptation therefore, to read the Negro out of the human family is exceeding strong, and may account somewhat for the repeated attempts on the part of Southern pretenders to science, to cast a doubt over the Scriptural account of the origin of mankind. . . .

By making the enslaved a character fit only for slavery, [slaveholders] excuse themselves for refusing to make the slave a freeman. A wholesale method of accomplishing this result, is to overthrow the instinctive consciousness of the common brotherhood of man. For, let it be once granted that the human race are of multitudinous origin, naturally different in their moral, physical, and intellectual capacities, and at once you make plausible a demand for classes, grades, and conditions, for different methods of culture, different moral, political, and religious institutions, and a chance is left for slavery, as a necessary institution.[3]

## CONNECTIONS

Nations, like individuals, have an identity. Make an identity chart for the United States in 1776. What values and beliefs were central to the nation's identity? What changes were Americans making in that chart in the early 1800s? In 1860? What might such a chart look like today?

What motive does Douglass attribute to those who want to "read the Negro out of the human family"? What does he consider the logical result of a belief in polygenesis?

Sociologist Orlando Patterson writes that the "first men and women to struggle for freedom, the first to think of themselves as free in the only meaningful sense of the term were freedmen." What is the paradox, or seeming contradiction, Patterson describes?

In 1861, the United States fought a civil war over the right of African Americans to be free—to be part of the "human family." When the Civil War ended in 1865, the nation added three amendments to the Constitution. The Thirteenth Amendment ended slavery. Research the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments. What was the goal of each amendment? Why do many constitutional experts regard the Fourteenth as the more revolutionary of the two?

People often think of a historical event in terms of a simple cause and an immediate effect. How does the long crusade against slavery complicate that view? To more fully appreciate its legacies, you may want to investigate the history of the Civil Rights Movement or of particular groups like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People or the American Civil Liberties Union.

The editorial to which Douglass responded appeared in a Virginia newspaper. If Douglass had expressed his ideas in a letter to the editor, it would not have been published. If he had given his speech in the state of Virginia rather than Ohio, he would have been arrested. By the mid-1800s, Virginia and almost every other southern state outlawed anti-slavery publications and speeches. What effect do you think such limitations on debate had on science and scientists? On democracy? What is the link between scientific inquiry and freedom of expression? Between democracy and freedom of expression?

1. *The Story of American Freedom* by Eric Foner. W.W. Norton & Company, 1998, pp. 85-86.
2. Ibid., p. 86
3. "The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered" by Frederick Douglass. Excerpts from an address delivered at Western Reserve College, July 12, 1854.