

LET'S TALK: WORDS 101

Presented by the R.A.R.E. Committee
of the Nebraska Synod ELCA



Introduction

- "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.
- "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace." John 1:1-5, 14-16



Why
words
matter

- “Like a nontechnical user trying to understand a technical problem, our racial illiteracy limits our ability to have meaningful conversations about race.”
– Robin DiAngelo



“We must recognize that the underlying biological diversity of the human species cannot be artificially apportioned into races, because

rac^es are simply not biologically justified.

If we can understand that all allegiance to racism is ideological, not scientific, then we may be able to silence the bigots once and for all.” – Joseph Graves

A brief history of Caucasian

- Johann Blumenbach separated humans into 5 races.
 - Africans, excluding light-skinned North Africans, as “Ethiopians” or “black.”
 - Non-Caucasian Asians into two separate races: the “Mongolian” or “yellow” race of Japan and China, and the “Malayan” or “brown” race, which included Aboriginal Australians and Pacific Islanders.
 - Native Americans the “red” race.
- Blumenbach proposed that people who originated in the **Caucasus Mountains** (located between the Caspian and Black seas) were created in God’s image as an *ideal form* of humanity.
- Blumenbach proposed a system of **racial classification** which was **used to justify slavery** in the United States

A brief history of Caucasian

- In the 20th century, political leaders and scientists supported a new racial science called **eugenics** that built on 19th-century notions of race
- Caucasian was defined as having subraces which were ranked with *Nordic having the highest intellectual and moral ranking* and *Jew (Semitic) having the lowest intellectual and moral ranking*.
- “Eugenics” comes from the Greek roots for “good” and “origin,” or “good birth” and involves beliefs and practices that aim to improve the genetic quality of a human population historically by **excluding people and groups judged to be inferior and promoting those judged to be superior**.

+

o

Why do people use the term Caucasian?

- Formal/official usage by
 - Government – state, local, federal
 - Education
 - Criminal Justice System
 - News & Media
- Pseudo-scientific history
- Discomfort with identifying as white

•



What does it mean to be white?

- The meaning of and who the term applies to *or more importantly does not apply to* has shifted over time.
 - 1600s – used to separate Anglo-Saxons from African and Indigenous people
 - 1700s – used to distinguish lower class whites from African laborers. Functioned socially and legally.
 - 1800s – eugenics & the federal government sought to outline precisely what rights black people in the nation could have. Jim Crow.
 - 1900s – Jim Crow, suffrage movement, civil rights movement, Jane Crow, etc



TL;DNR

- Race is **not scientific**, there are no superior or inferior races
- Caucasian is a term that was developed by eugenicists who invented the term **to establish white people at the top of an imaginary racial hierarchy**
- Don't say Caucasian
- Do say white.

On Whiteness

- *“Whiteness and white racialized identity refer to the way that white people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other groups of are compared. Whiteness is also at the core of understanding race in America. Whiteness and the normalization of white racial identity throughout America’s history have created a culture where nonwhite persons are seen as inferior or abnormal.”*
- National Museum of African American History & Culture

Prejudice and Racism

Prejudice refers to a preconceived idea about a particular group, while racism involves an unequal distribution of power on the basis of race.

Prejudice

- A preconceived opinion of another person not based on reason or experience.
- Can be positive or negative.
- Some (but not all) are racial in nature and have racist outcomes.
- Unlikely to impact people as negatively as racism.

Racism

- Belief that race is equated with particular traits.
- Belief that some races are superior to others.
- Results in unequal distribution of power on the basis of race.

Source: Nicki Lisa Cole, Ph.D., "What's the Difference between Prejudice and Race"

Colonial History/Slavery

- 1619 – Arrival of African slaves in North America
- 1676 – Bacon's Rebellion

“Rich planters learned from Bacon's Rebellion that poor Whites had to be forever separated from enslaved Blacks. They divided and conquered by creating more White privileges.”

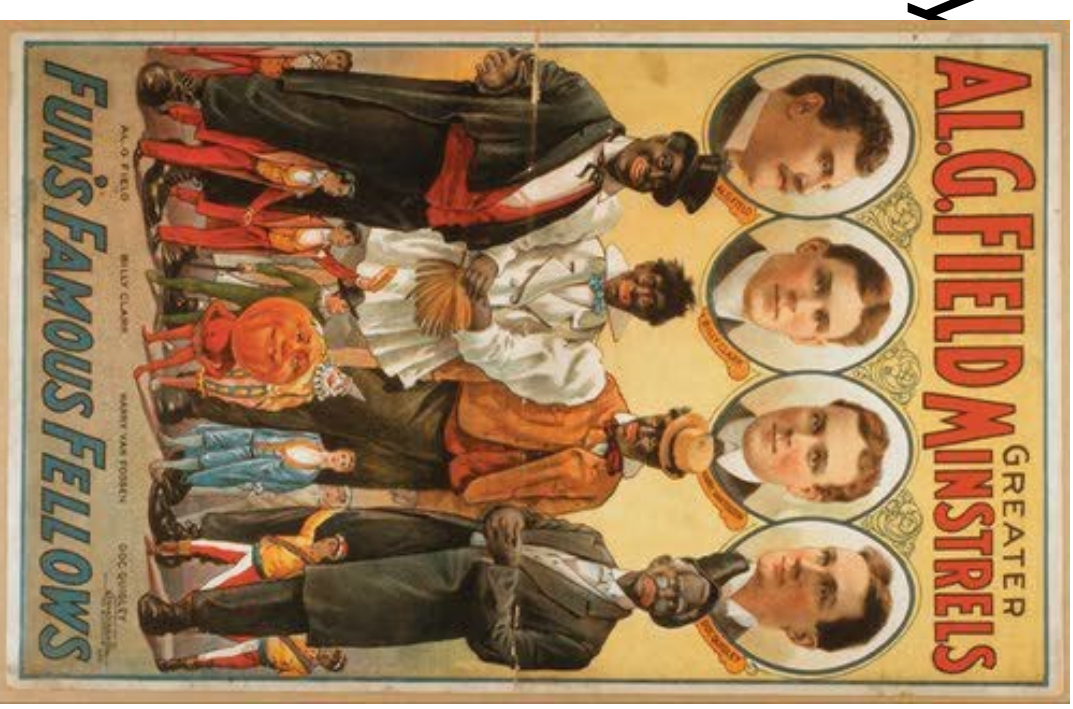
- Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*

Jim Crow Era/Post-Slavery

Following emancipation, “the notion of racial difference – specifically the notion of white supremacy – proved far more durable than the institution that gave birth to it.”

– Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*

Source: *Lewiston Tribune*, June 7, 2018; poster from 1907



21st Century – Institutional Racism

- Law enforcement profiling
- Discrimination in education

+

o

How to Be an Antiracist

by Ibram X.
Kendi

•

“The opposite of ‘racist’ isn’t ‘not racist.’ It is anti-racist. What’s the difference? One endorses either the idea of a racial hierarchy as a racist, or racial equality as an antiracist. One either allows racial inequalities to persevere, as a racist, or confronts racial inequalities as an antiracist.”

RARE (Racial Awareness, Reconciliation, and Engagement) Team

- Present tonight:
 - Julie McKinney
 - Pr. Megan Morrow
 - Michelle DeRusha
 - Pr. Miriam Blair
 - Whitney Fritzingler
 - Adam Vander Tuig
 - Jon Gathje
 - Brad Johnson
 - Charise Alexander Adams