

From www.pbs.org/race. This information is sent out to participants prior to the training.

Description of Documentaries- *RACE—The Power of An Illusion*

RACE—The Power of an Illusion is a provocative three-hour series that questions the very idea of race as biology. Scientists tell us that believing in biological races is no more sound than believing the sun revolves around the earth. So if race is a biological myth, where did the idea come from? And why should it matter today? *RACE—The Power of an Illusion* provides an eye-opening discussion tool to help people examine their beliefs about race, privilege, policy, and justice.

Episode I – “The Difference Between Us” examines how recent scientific discoveries have toppled the concept of biological race. The program follows a dozen diverse students who sequence and compare their own DNA. They discover, to their surprise, that their closest genetic matches are as likely to be with people from other “races” as their own. The episode helps us understand why it doesn’t make scientific or genetic sense to sort people into biological races, as it dismantles our most basic myths about race, including natural superiority and inferiority.

Episode II – “The Story We Tell” uncovers the roots of the race concept, including the 19th-century science that legitimated it and the hold it has gained over our minds. It’s an eye-opening tale of how America’s need to defend slavery in the face of a radical new belief in freedom and equality led to a full-blown ideology of white supremacy. Noting the experience of Cherokee Indians, the U.S. war against Mexico and annexation of the Philippines, the film shows how definitions of race excluded from humanity not only Black people, but anyone who stood in the way of American expansion. The program traces the transformation of tentative suspicions about difference into a “common-sense” wisdom that people used to explain everything from individual behavior to the fate of whole societies, an idea of race that persists to this day.

Episode III – “The House We Live In” focuses not on individual behaviors and attitudes, but on how our institutions shape and create race, giving different groups vastly unequal life chances. Who defines race? In the early 20th century, the courts were called upon to determine who was white, employing contradictory logic to maintain the color line. After World War II, government policies and subsidies helped create segregated suburbs where Italians, Jews and other not-quite-white European ethnics were able to reap the full advantages of whiteness. The episode reveals some of the ordinary social institutions that quietly channel wealth and opportunity, so that white people benefit from a racist system without personally being racist. It concludes by looking at why we can’t just get rid of race.