

# Race is . . . race isn't: the privilege of knowing the difference

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



## Race

I would describe my race as African. I have seen race in many incidents in my life. The first instance was when I traveled to Europe for a conference and I was constantly addressed as African by my colleagues and other Europeans I met during the visit. Throughout the visit, it seemed that the people I met found it easy and comfortable to address me as “ the man from Africa” instead of using my official names. This was exacerbated by the fact that I was the only non-White person in attendance. I have also witnessed race in an incident that occurred in my home country. I once visited a high-end coffee shop in my hometown but was politely informed that the outlet does not serve “ Black people.” I should have known because the store was located in an area dominated by White people and there was not a single non-White customer in the shop.

I have learned that race is a creation of a few elitist individuals and societies that are intent on classifying and labeling people in order to identify them as inferior to them. This is evident by the fact that nobody is born aware of his or her race. We only become conscious of our race when others remind us about it and try to stereotype us (Barzon, Osher and Fleischman, 2005). We also start labeling others when we feel that we are also labeled. I have learned that despite attempts by schools demystify racial divisions, race is a powerful influence in school and it cannot be eradicated (Barzon, Osher and Fleischman, 2005). Students often remind each other (depending on capabilities and background) of their race. For example, a White student might be perceived as brighter than Black counterparts simply because of his race, and despite records showing otherwise.

All men were created equal, but race still exists and plays out daily because it is a convenient tool for labeling and locking out others, things which human beings naturally enjoy doing (Barzon, Osher and Fleischman, 2005). I am going to use what I have learned to sensitize young people on the dynamics of race and encourage them to see their racial makeup as nothing more than color. I will tell them that their race is not their personality, and it does not determine anything.

#### Reference

Barzon, B., Osher, D., & Fleischman, S. (2005). Creating Culturally Responsive Schools. *The Whole Child*, 63(1), 83-84.