

PLATFORM

The Human Race

JANET CHOI of San Gabriel teaches English conversation to Japanese and Chinese students. She commented on reports that all people are descended from a common ancestor:

The obvious problem with assumptions—stereotypes—based on race is that all people with the same superficial physical characteristics are not the same. They cannot be contained in neat groups the way, say, all balls of the same color can be. Racial groups are like mercury. They disintegrate into ever tinier pieces with a touch. On close inspection, each piece reveals itself to be a separate culture.

Lines are drawn around mutually hostile groups because they appear identical to the outsider. But it is differences in culture that explain the distinctions among people within apparently homogeneous racial groups: Indians and Pakistanis, for example; Vietnamese and Cambodians; English and Irish; Tutsi and Hutu. Races are no more uniform than are families, which also contain members with whom we might prefer not to be associated.

It's time to put our cultural as well as our racial biases aside. For whether we consider Adam or Lucy to be our common ancestor, the end result is the same. Let's get on with the things that really matter.

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