

Letters to the Editor

Scientific Hoax

To the Editor:

In their articles, "Victim of Scientific Hoax," *Society*, Vol. 31, March/April 1994, pp. 40-44, and "Egalitarian Fiction and Collective Fraud," *Society*, Vol. 31, March/April 1994, pp. 53-59, Rushton and Gottfredson duck the really difficult question that arises from their research: what do we do with the information on racial differences that they have unearthed? What does society do? I don't see that there's anything to be done, but I may be wrong. If I'm right, however, then that could well explain the peculiar behavior of scientists that both Rushton and Gottfredson describe. For what is unfolding, has been unfolding, is a tragedy. People, and scientists are people after all, don't point out a tragedy; they run and hide.

We were told—about 200 years ago by Thomas Jefferson, no less. When he was 77, in 1821, 5 years before his death, he wrote in his *Autobiography* recalling his days as a delegate to the legislature of Virginia around 1780 as follows:

Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate that these people are to be free. [These words are etched in some manner on the Jefferson Memorial.] Nor is it less certain the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government. Nature, habit, opinion has drawn indelible lines of distinction between them. It is still in our power to direct the process of emancipation and deportation peaceably, and in such slow degree as that the evil will wear off insensibly, and their place be pari passu filled up by free white laborers. If on the contrary it is left to force itself on, hu-

man nature must shudder at the prospect held up. We should in vain look for an example in the Spanish deportation or deletion of the Moors. This precedent would fall far short of our case.

I think it is the utter lack of historical perspective that Rushton and Gottfredson and *Society* itself exhibit that is amazing. Surely, Jefferson's writings are no secret. And I am equally sure that there are other political thinkers/writers, both before and after Jefferson, who have talked about this problem. For example, Solzhenitsyn told us, in his 1978 Harvard commencement address, the following:

How short a time ago, relatively, the small world of modern Europe was easily seizing colonies all over the globe, not only without anticipating any real resistance, but usually with contempt for any possible values in the conquered peoples' approach to life. It all seemed an overwhelming success, with no geographic limits. Western society expanded in a triumph of human independence and power. And all of a sudden the twentieth century brought the clear realization of this society's fragility. We now see that the conquests proved to be short-lived and precarious (and this, in turn, points to defects in the Western view of the world which led to these conquests). Relations with the former colonial world have switched to the opposite extreme and the Western world often exhibits an excess of obsequiousness, but it is difficult yet to estimate the size of the bill which the former colonial countries will present to the West and it is difficult to predict whether the surrender not only of its last colo-

nies, but of everything it owns, will be sufficient for the West to clear this account.

The ancestors of the African-American living today were part of this colonial expansion. The African-American here today is its living embodiment.

Should research results trump what Jefferson aptly termed an "evil"?

Professor Daniel R. Vining, Jr.
University of Pennsylvania

To the Editor:

I reject Vining's counsel of despair. Having engaged publicly in more resolute denial than productive dialogue about racial-ethnic disproportions on the subject of general intelligence, it is hardly surprising that we might feel overwhelmed by their ramifications. Cynicism and resigned pessimism are thus an abdication of responsibility, a preemptive surrender to an adversary whose measure we have never taken.

To be sure, the challenges are fundamental. For example, how can we not be deeply disturbed by learning that about one out of seven blacks (vs. one out of fifty whites) scores below IQ 70? Individuals below this level, often the threshold for defining borderline mental retardation, have very poor odds of functioning independently in any modern, industrialized society.

However, our nation's fate will depend less on such disparities themselves than on our collective response to them. Even should the gaps remain intractable, we can still find ways to live together in dignity and mutual concern for the less able members of all groups. After all, brothers and sisters differ about as much on the average (12 IQ points) as do blacks and whites (15 points).

The major barrier is current social policy on race, which only exacerbates our problems. It forces us to flout a conspicuous reality and live a corrosive lie, thereby degrading the welfare and dignity of individuals from all groups. Energy, honesty, creativity, and confidence are the keys to reversing this self-inflicted damage and meeting the sociopolitical challenges posed by cur-

rent group disproportions in general intelligence. Surely, those resources are within our reach.

Linda S. Gottfredson
University of Delaware

To the Editor:

Vining asks what society should do with evidence that the races average differently in brain size and intelligence. The answer is simple: accept. Until such time as the truly enormous degree of genetic diversity in the human species is accepted and pondered over, prescriptions are as likely to make matters worse as better. It is counter-productive, for example, to blame white racism for the continued underrepresentation of blacks in jobs requiring higher levels of intelligence. Teaching children that black people's problems come mainly from without rather than from within does not provide a service and only fuels black resentment of whites and Asians.

Not mentioned by Vining is the larger average brain size and intelligence of east Asians in America. As I describe in *Race, Evolution and Behavior* (1994, Transaction) the racial gradient of Asian-white-black occurs worldwide. Thus predictions are as clear for future economic growth in southeast Asia versus southeast Africa as for various areas in New York and Los Angeles. The "American dilemma" has become international. We have no choice but to learn to live with differential ethnic achievement.

J. Philippe Rushton
University of Western Ontario
