Concept of Race Puzzles Seminar Attendees

Human Race Machine Centers Discussion at Western Michigan University

Christina Pillsbury
Opinion Editor

Most Americans, or rather, most people on Earth believe that race is a physical feature defined by one's genes. It seems to make sense; if your mother is white, you are white, so it must be genetic right?

Timothy Ready, Director of the Lewis Walker Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnic Relations would implore intelligent minds to think otherwise. Rather, race should be viewed in two separate capacities; race as a social concept, and race as a biological concept.

"Race is a concept that everyone is supposed to know about, we check off boxes, the census bureau categorizes us, but do we really know what race is?" Ready questioned the audience of "The Human Race Machine" seminar in early March of this year.

The seminar exploring the concept of race was held at the Western Michigan University Berhard Center, to educate the public about the relevance of race as a social factor, and the relative irrelevance of race as a biological factor.

As participants entered, they were presented with informative material and a quick, self-administered quiz. The results were shocking. Attendee Kristen Wehling, a LN senior, was in awe about the wake up call she received about race.

"I didn't realize how little I knew about race and how we're all NOT that different," said Wehling.

One fact that was particularly shocking to many participants is that the most diversity in genetic make up is found within one local population and race. What this means is that Wehling, a white female is more likely to have the same genetic make up of a male in Zimbabwe than another white American female.

"I was shocked to learn about this. I didn't expect that there wouldn't be many [genetic] differences between me and someone of a completely different race," said Wehling.

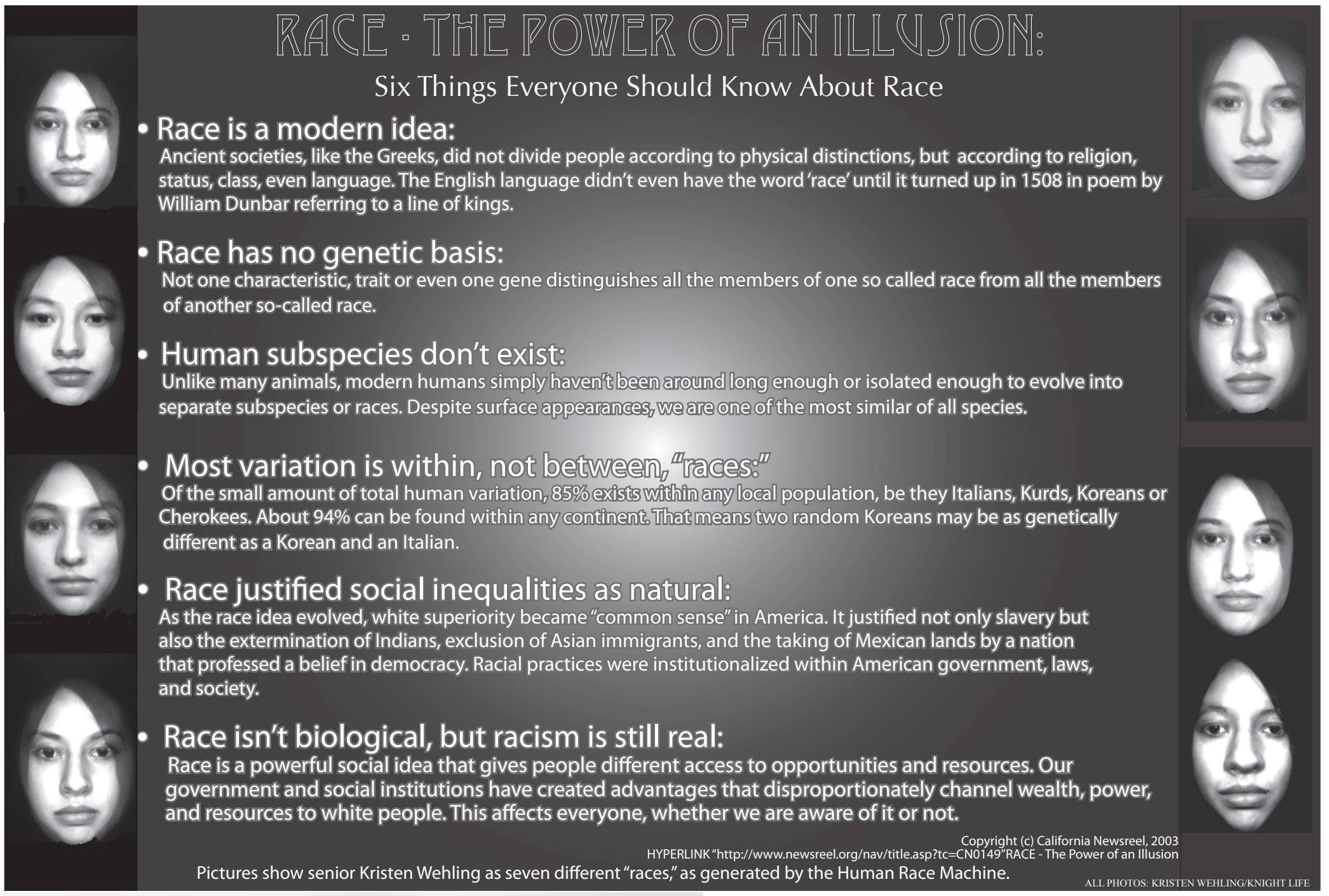
Indeed, this is the reaction that Ready is used to with his seminar. He not only hopes, but he expects for eyes and minds to be opened in his seminars.

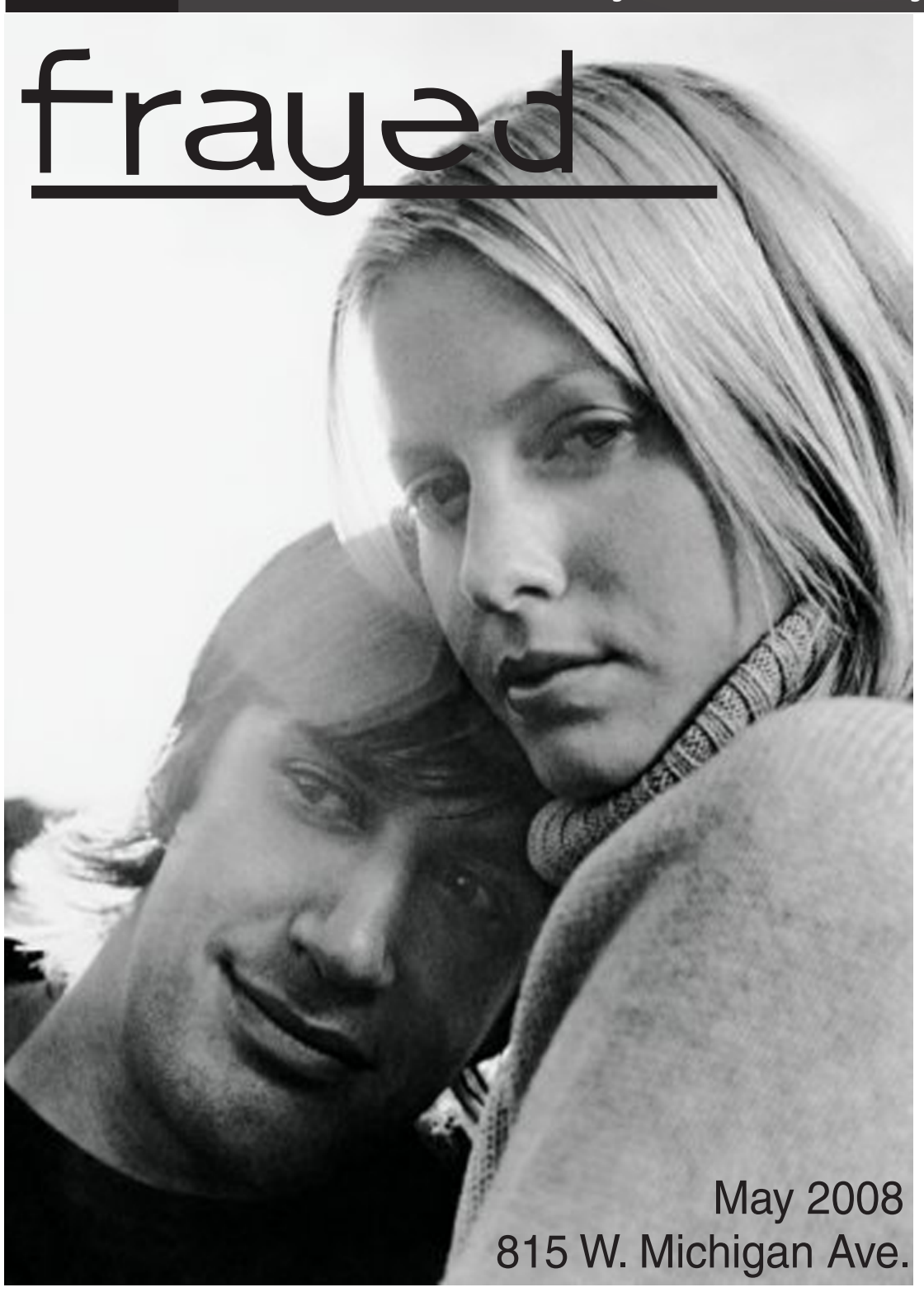
"A lot of us can have a lot to learn about race; when it comes to biology, it [race] explains nothing," said Ready.

After reading the race literature, attendees engaged in a discussion, watched three short films, and were invited to take part in the Human Race Machine project. This machine captures an image of a volunteer and then alters the picture to portray the person as several different races. Participants were able to view themselves in several new lights.

A final part of the discussion analyzed race as a social concept. Simply because race is not genetic does not completely erase its relevance in society. Because it is so visible and apparent, it is used as a factor to divide and separate the country.

When people become accepting of the fact that race is a social construct and not a biological phenomenon many of the racial issues may be able to solved.





Douglass Community Association Fundraiser

June 27th
6:30 p.m.
Mascot Game
@ 5:30 p.m.

Celebrities include:
T.J. Duckett
Greg Jennings
Dwayne Young
and more

Where: Kalamazoo Kings Stadium at Mayors Riverfront Park.

What: A contest between the Douglass Celebrity Softball Team and the local police force and other civil leaders.

SENIORS:

FREE tailgate starting at 4 p.m. prior to the game, also FREE admission to game. Seniors from LN, KC, Pheonix and Reach and Teach will be honored before the game.

Contact Mr. Boggan to attend tailgate

Admission is $5 for all non-seniors

For more information go to Douglasscommunity.org