

Aspects of Ubuntu for International Research Ethics

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Bishop Desmond Tutu

“Ubuntu [...] speaks of the very essence of being human. [We] say [...] "Hey, so-and-so has ubuntu." Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, "My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours." We belong in a bundle of life. We say, "A person is a person through other persons.”

Invocations

Analects, “To see what is right and not do it is want of courage.”

Micah 6:8, “What does YHWH (GOD) require of you, but to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God”

Quran Chapter 16, Verse 90 “Behold, God requires justice, and the doing of good, and generosity toward one’s fellow men.”

Summary of Session

- This session highlights the USPHS Syphilis Study at Tuskegee as a paradigmatic violation of Ubuntu.
- We develop an understanding of UBUNTU suitable for pedagogy, andragogy, and research in biomedical and behavioral research settings.
- We explore how a loss of such aspects of UBUNTU as connectedness, respect, and humility on the part of the researcher and research participants contributes to undesirable research.

U.S. Public Health Service Syphilis Study at Tuskegee

- Dates?
- Researchers?
- Key Events?
- Impact?
- Legacy?



What about the Syphilis Study?

'The American people are sorry'

Survivors of syphilis experiments graciously accept nation's apology

By Stewart M. Powell

Hearst Newspapers

WASHINGTON — President Clinton apologized on behalf of the nation Friday to survivors of the "Tuskegee experiment" in which 399 black men from rural Alabama were deliberately denied medical treatment for syphilis during a secret 40-year federal study assessing the effects of the gruesome disease.

Herman Shaw, a survivor representing the last eight living participants, gracefully accepted the nation's apology at a White House ceremony in the East Room.

"We are delighted to come here today to close this very tragic and painful chapter in our lives," said Shaw, 94, who worked for 44 years at Tallassee Mill in Tallassee, Ala.

"We were treated unfairly — to some extent like guinea pigs," Shaw said. "We were not pigs. We were not dancing boys. We were all hard-working men, not boys, and citizens of the United States."

Shaw added: "In my opinion, it is never too late to restore faith and trust."

Clinton, who embraced Shaw, spoke slowly, with emotion in his voice.

"We can look at you in the eye and finally say on behalf of the American people, what the United States government did was shameful, and I am sorry," Clinton declared.

"The American people are sorry — for the loss, for the years of hurt," Clinton added. "You did nothing wrong, but you were grievously wronged. I apologize and I am sorry that this apology has been so long in coming."

The controversial research study was conducted by the U.S. Public Health Service from 1932 to 1972, a period that began during the depths of the Great Depression and spanned the administrations of seven presidents.

The U.S. Public Health Service enticed black men, many poor sharecroppers from rural Macon County, Ala., to take part in the secret research study by promising free medical care, free meals and burial insurance.

The 399 patients afflicted with the debilitating disease were never told that they were suffering from infectious syphilis. Doctors told the participants that they were being treated for "bad blood."

Victims were given only vitamins for their illness. Physicians did not even treat their patients with the blend of arsenic and mercury that was commonly used to treat syphilis in the 1930s.

The participants were later denied updated medical treatment after penicillin was discovered in 1941 and determined to cure syphilis in 1947. In addition to the 399 men with syphilis, another 201 Alabamans without syphilis took part in the study to serve as a "control group."

Syphilis, a sexually transmitted disease, can cause brain damage, paralysis and death if left untreated.

By the time the study was unmasked by the Associated Press in 1972, 28 patients had died of syphilis, 100 more had died from related complications and at least 40 wives had been unwittingly infected by their husbands.

Surviving participants settled a class action suit against the federal government in 1974 for \$9 million. The federal government agreed to pay surviving participants with syphilis \$37,500 each. Participants who did not have syphilis were paid \$15,000. Heirs to deceased participants who suffered untreated syphilis were paid \$15,000. The government also agreed to provide ongoing medical care.

Clinton's apology comes amid an ongoing White House campaign to use the bully pulpit of the presidency to help overcome racial divisions that afflict the United States.



Herman Shaw, one of the last surviving participants in the secret Tuskegee syphilis study, hugs President Clinton Friday at the White House after Clinton apologized for the federal research that led to nearly 400 black men.

What Does UBUNTU Mean for Them?

<http://topics.nytimes.com>



<http://topics.nytimes.com>

www.picsearch.com



www.rosaparksfacts.com



www.dalailama.com/gallery



Bantu Philosophy

- Umuntu Ngubuntu Ngabantu (Zulu)
- Munhu Anehunhu Muvanhu (Shona)
- Enikan kije awade (Yoruba)
- A Person is a Person through other People.
- “I am because we are, and because we are, therefore, I am” – John Samuel Mbiti

UBUNTU As RESPECT in Biomedical and Behavioral Research Settings: Three Views

1. Race Science

- Charles Linnaeus (1707 – 1788)
- Arthur Gobineau's *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* (1853-1855)

2. Bantu Philosophy

3. Principlism and the Belmont Report Mandate

--RESPECT Reexamined (Dickert, 2010)

Race Science: Carl Linnaeus Legacy (1707 – 1778)

- 1. **Americanus**. Native American males were supposedly red; had black hair and sparse beards; were stubborn; prone to anger; "free"; and governed by traditions. Thus, this form of *Homo sapiens* was **definitely inferior** and **uncivilized**.
- 2. **Asiaticus**. The male Asian was said to be "yellowish, melancholy, endowed with black hair and brown eyes...severe, conceited, and stingy. He puts on loose clothing. He is governed by opinion." Thus, like the aforementioned type of *Homo sapiens*, the *Asiaticus* could only be a **mediocre prototype**.
- 3. **Africanus**. The male of this subset, according to Linnaeus, could be recognized by his skin tone, face structure, and curly hair. This kind was apparently cunning, **passive, and inattentive**, and ruled by impulse. The female of this kind was also apparently shameless, because "they lactate profusely."
- 4. **Europeaus**. The males of this subset were supposedly "changeable, clever, and inventive. He puts on tight clothing. He is **governed by laws**."

Race Matters

**E. Africa:
First
anatomically
modern
humans**

**Modern
humans
throughout
Africa**

**Modern
humans
leave Africa**

**First
agriculture,
settled
villages**

“races”



200,000

100,000

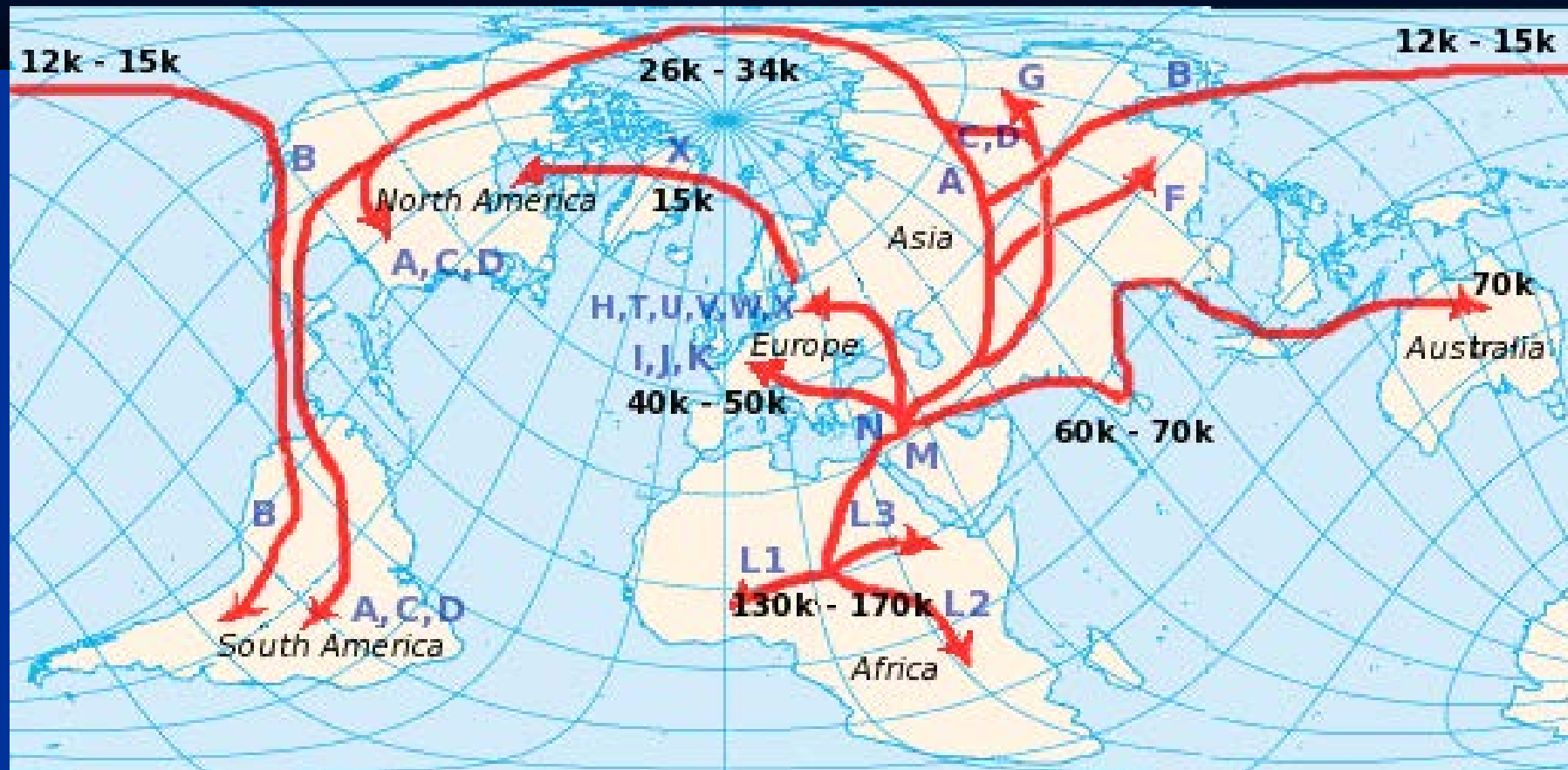
60,000

20,000

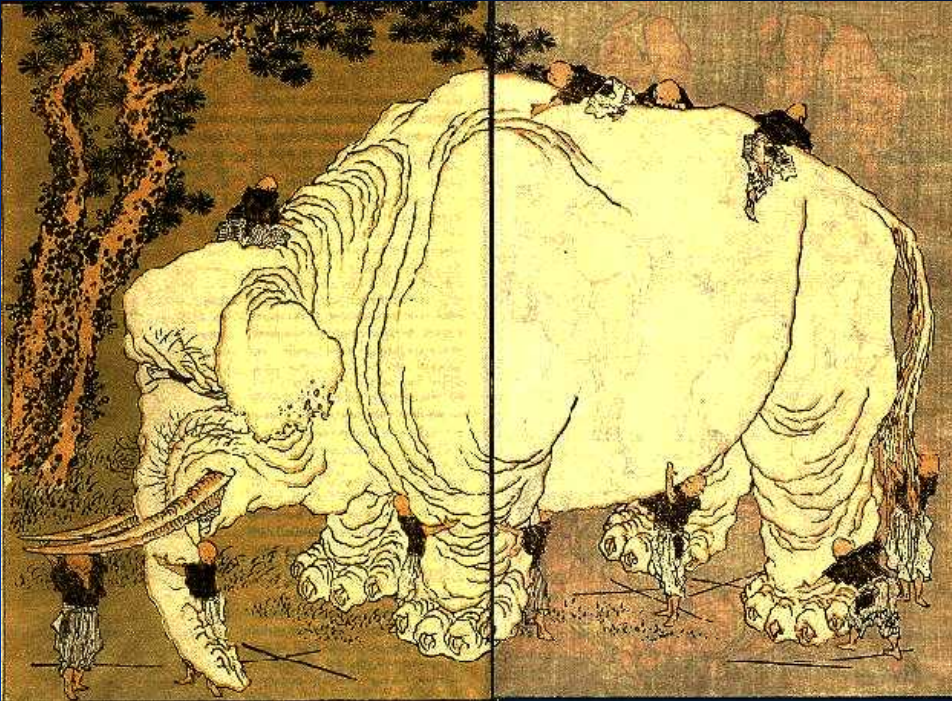
500

Ancient Migrations of Homo sapiens (WikiBooks)

Basis for UBUNTU: We are ALL Connected



UBUNTU as Antidote to Moral Blindness



- FIRST BLIND MAN (*placing hand on elephant's side*). Well, well! Now I know all about him! He is exactly like a wall!
- SECOND BLIND MAN (*feeling the tusk*). He is not like a wall! He is round and smooth and sharp. He is like a spear.
- THIRD BLIND MAN (*feeling the trunk*). Both of you are wrong. He is like a snake.
- FOURTH BLIND MAN (*feeling a leg*). Oh, how blind you are! He is round and tall like a tree!
- FIFTH BLIND MAN (*feeling an ear*). Why, he is exactly like a great fan!
- SIXTH BLIND MAN (*feeling the tail*). This elephant is not like a wall, or a spear, or a snake, or a tree, or a fan. He is exactly like a rope.

UBUNTU PAST AND PRESENT

Immanuel Kant's Ubuntu, 1724-1804

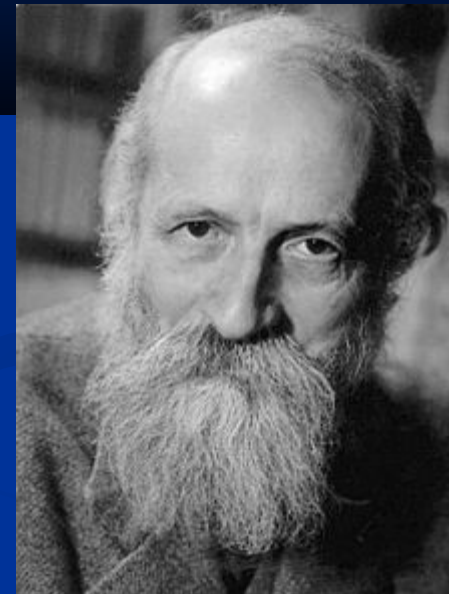
- “Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end.”



Martin Buber's Ubuntu (1878-1965)

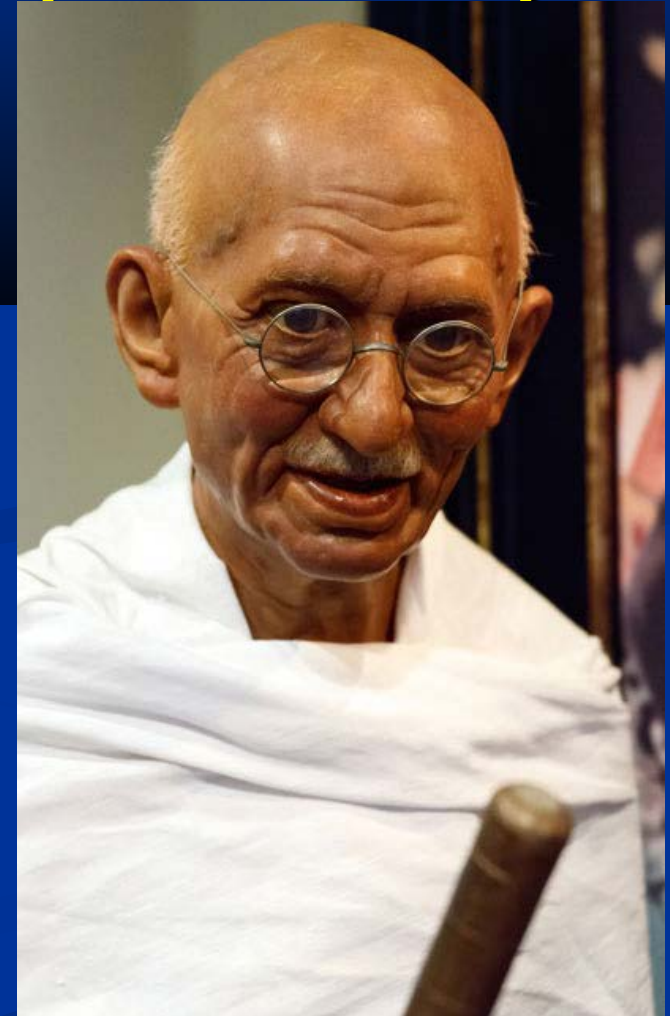
- “Inscrutably involved, we live in the currents of universal reciprocity.”
- “What, then, does one experience of the You? Nothing at all. For one does not experience it. What, then, does one know of the You?

Only everything. For one no longer knows particulars.”



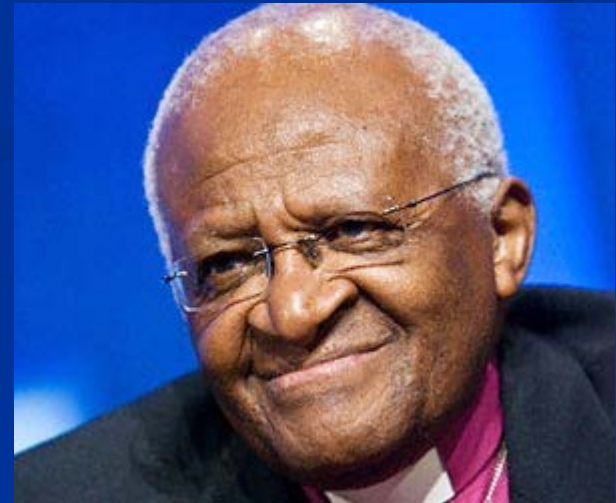
Mohandas Gandhi's Ubuntu (1869-1948)

- “You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is like an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty.”



Desmond Tutu's Ubuntu (b. 1931)

- A person with **ubuntu** is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are.”



John Rawls, 1921-2002

UBUNTU as Distributive Justice

“A just society must provide the social bases of self-respect for all citizens, for without self-respect, their lives are severely diminished”

“Self-respect is a social good”

“Robbing people of their self-respect is oppressive and it is injustice”

Rawls, J. (1971) *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press

UBUNTU AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Teaching UBUNTU: How we Learn

■ How We Learn (Approx.)

- 1 percent through taste
- 1 ½ percent through touch
- 3 ½ percent through smell
- 11 percent through hearing
- **83 percent through sight**

• How we Retain Information

- 10 percent of what they read
- 20 percent of what they hear
- 30 percent of what they see
- 50 percent of what they see and hear
- 70 percent of what they say as they read aloud
- **90 percent of what they say as they do something**

Teaching UBUNTU: Baby Lab

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRvVFW85IcU>

UBUNTU in Principlism and the Belmont Report Mandate

- **Principlism:** (Beauchamp and Childress, James F. *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. 5th ed. New York: Oxford Univ. Press; 2001)

Universal Ethical Principles

- Beneficence
- Non-maleficence
- Autonomy
- Justice

Belmont Report Mandate (1979)

- **Respect** for persons
- Beneficence
- Justice

UBUNTU Bioethics and Moral Transformation

Question: What should underlie our ability to apply an UBUNTU bioethics lens to International research partnerships?

Possible responses:

- Our vision, principles, values, beliefs
- Understanding of Theories that ground Ethical Principles
- Understanding of “Universal” Ethical Principles: Principlism as currently expressed in the United States **(Moral Judgment is possible without principles using the theory of “particularism”—See Johnathan Dancy, 2004)**
and
- Courage to understand and re-examine respect, beyond the Belmont Report Mandate, and to act positively, all things considered. **(See Dickert, N. Re-Examining Respect for Human Research Participants, Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal Vol. 19, No. 4, 311-338, 2010)**

From Here to There via UBUNTU

- Vision, values, virtues, vices
- Choices, character, conduct, consequences
- Relationships, roles, responsibilities, respect, rights, results, review, reevaluation, resources.

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Thank You, Ndinotenda, Zikomo, Ngiyabonga!!!