

**Questions on Omi & Winant, Smedley, Federal Statistical Directive,  
Jefferson, Du Bois, Jensen, Jacobs**

1. Omi and Winant: says discovering that by legal definition one is not white because one is 1/32 Negro is “catastrophic.” Why?
2. In contrast to the other major distinction of this type, that of gender, there is no biological basis for distinguishing among human groups along the lines of race (p. 55). Discuss.
3. Racial formation is a process of historically situated projects. Provide two examples of such projects.
4. Race is a concept that signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies. Provide two examples
5. Omi and Winant write that racial formation processes occur through a linkage between structure and representation. Give 2 examples of such linkage.
6. What is hegemony? (Omi and Winant pp. 56, 67, 68).
7. Discuss the neoconservative and liberal conceptualizations of equality with respect to race.
8. If you can, prove an anecdote about a person encountering a non-white person and assuming they are servants or tradespeople.
9. Omi and Winant on p. 64 speak of an essentialist approach. What is this?
10. Do you agree with Omi and Winant that the U.S. has until recently been a racial dictatorship? Discuss.
11. Omi and Winant state that hegemony operates by simultaneously structuring and signifying (p. 68). Give an example.
12. Omi and Winant write that discrimination, far from manifesting itself only (or even principally) through individual actions or conscious policies, is a structural feature of U.S. society (p. 69). What do they mean? Give an example.
13. Omi and Winant say it is important to distinguish racial awareness from racial essentialism (p. 71). What’s the difference?
14. How does Smedley distinguish between “race” and “ethnicity”?
15. When, according to Smedley, did “race” appear in human history? What transformation did it bring about (p. 693-694)? What was its “real meaning”?

16. Discuss “racial ideology” (Smedley p. 696-697).
17. Describe “blood quantum.” What is its purpose? What membership criteria did it replace? Who is the official judge of who is and is not Native American in the U.S.?
18. To what degree is it true that “the black parent has ‘black’ culture and the white parent has ‘white’ culture”? (p. 697)
19. “It was not only slavery that robbed African Americans of their identity. Far more powerful and telling has been the cruelty of racism.” (p. 695). What evidence does Smedley offer for this position?
20. How is race a “social invention” (p. 699)?
21. Compare the Jefferson piece to Peggy Pascoe’s essay on miscegenation law.
22. The Du Bois work, part of a book, was published in 1899. What evidence can you find within the work that it was written more than a century ago?
23. Describe the differences in style between the excerpts from “The Philadelphia Negro” and “The Souls of Black Folk.” Why, do you think?
24. Compare Du Bois’ autobiographical writing with Harriet Jacobs’.
25. List ten examples of white privilege (Jensen).
26. Describe 3 of the negative responses to Jensen’s newspaper Op Ed essay, and his responses to the points made.
27. Harriet Jacobs’ narrative is very moving. Pick a passage that especially drew your attention you and discuss it. What features made this part so moving?

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