

This letter is driven by politics, not science. I am confident that most of the signatories have not read my book and are responding to a slanted summary devised by the organizers.

As no reader of the letter could possibly guess, “A Troublesome Inheritance” argues that opposition to racism should be based on principle, not on the anti-evolutionary myth that there is no biological basis to race.

Unfortunately many social scientists have long denied that there is a biological basis to race. This creed, prominent throughout the academic world, increasingly impedes research. Biologists risk damaging their careers if they write explicitly about race. Needless to say, this makes it hard to explore the different evolutionary paths that human populations have taken through history since the dispersal from the African homeland 50,000 years ago.

“A Troublesome Inheritance” seeks to explain how race can be understood without racism, a problem increasingly posed by advances in understanding the human genome. Many reviewers have ignored the substance of the book in favor of standard political attacks on the idea that race is biological. I wish they had put their political passions aside and had focused instead on the problem the book seeks to resolve.

These attacks have included repeated assertions that the book is scientifically inaccurate, a charge for which I have seen no basis. In the same vein, this letter issues general charges without supporting evidence.

That is no coincidence. The two principal signatories of the letter, Graham Coop and Michael Eisen, have written previously that the book is full of scientific errors. I wrote to both of them asking for a list of errors that I could correct in the next edition. Coop never replied; Eisen said he would get back to me but never did. Neither had the grace to withdraw his original accusations. This is how politicians are expected to behave, not people professionally committed to the truth. Their baseless attacks on my book are a classic smear technique which they have now extended by organizing this letter. I hope that readers will see through the lack of specifics in their charges and judge my book for themselves.

Perhaps I could point out an error in one of the few specific statements in their letter. They charge me with saying that “recent natural selection has led to worldwide differences in I.Q. test results.” I say no such thing. What I do say (p. 193) is that “It may be hazardous to compare the IQ scores of different races if allowance is not made for differences in wealth, nutrition and other factors that influence IQ.” The fact that Coop and Eisen can attack my book only by misrepresenting it is in my view a powerful indication of its solidity.

I would urge all the geneticists who signed the Coop-Eisen letter, several of whom I count as friends, to now read my book and judge to what extent, if any, their condemnation was justified.