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Blinded by Sight: Seeing Race through the Eyes of the Blind. By Osagie K. Obasogie. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2013. Pp. xviii+269. $85.00 (cloth); $24.95 (paper).

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In 1958, Prentice Hall published a high-school textbook entitled *Biology Serving You* that included a full-page illustration of the "Races of Man." Intent upon introducing students to the full array of human diversity, the image is a pastiche of black-and-white photographic cutouts of roughly 40 individuals from around the globe, reminiscent of Norman Rockwell's 1961 painting *The Golden Rule*. The caption provided by the authors, Charles Gramet and James Mandel, was simple: "There are, as you can see, three races with variations within each of them" (p. 539). Their confidence in the visual obviousness of racial boundaries—despite the veritable hodgepodge of grayscale faces they present—was typical of American biology textbooks then, when visual taxonomies and the occasional table of phenotypic characteristics were routinely used to teach young people about "the stocks of mankind."

This faith in the visual pedagogy of race may seem antiquated in our genomic age, where textbooks now teach that race is a matter of DNA. As I show in *The Nature of Race: How Scientists Think and Teach about Human Difference* (University of California Press, 2011), today's high school biology text is likely to assert that races are genetically identifiable populations, not to quiz students on their visual recognition of Caucasoids, Negroids, and Mongoloids. Yet as Osagie Obasogie demonstrates in his brilliant new book, *Blinded by Sight*, new references to race as anchored in our DNA have in no way diminished our credence in the phenotypic reality and obviousness of racial categories.

This first book is extremely ambitious—and successfully so. It has a startlingly original research design (involving interviews with blind people about race) that is based on a rare ability to question what seems obvious—in this case, the notion that blind people can't know race. Moreover, it effortlessly extends what could have been simply a fascinating empirical exercise to a deeper meditation on how our preconceptions about racial difference structure our laws and therefore the most fundamental processes of inequality and social outcomes. As if this were not enough, *Blinded by Sight* is also a methodological treatise and scholarly call to arms: Obasogie urges collaboration between critical-race legal scholars and empirical social scientists in order to advance theory on race. The author himself spans varied literatures with ease, opening with Biblical exegesis before moving on to

neuroscience and linguistics and settling into jurisprudence. This text is highly learned one that takes aim at a staggeringly "big picture."

Blinded by Sight makes two major arguments. The first is that the widespread belief that race is visually obvious is simply wrong. Discovering through his evocative interviews that people who have been blind since birth are just as cognizant of racial identities and boundaries as sighted people, and just as likely to equate race with visual characteristics, Obasogie realizes that our racial classifications and connotations must come from somewhere else than a visual apprehension of some objective racial reality. In other words, if blind people report "seeing" race in exactly the same terms as sighted people, then we know that in fact none of us are actually just "seeing" race; other forces must be producing the feeling that we are simply passively observing race. Obasogie's insight is that "shared social practices rather than any sense of obviousness produces the visual salience of race" (p. 7); it is these practices and not some objective, apparent racial order that "[lead] up to race becoming visible yet experienced as self-evident" (p. 18).

The second principal argument put forth in *Blinded by Sight* is that the inaccurate presumption that race is a matter of visual perception permeates American jurisprudence, particularly equal protection remedies, to dangerous effect. This focus on what Canadians call "visible minorities" may "prematurely exclude certain groups facing discrimination from appropriate legal remedies" (p. 145), and it gives rise to a deeply problematic normative stance: that of "color-blindness." Not only is the goal of color-blindness based on the erroneous premise that blindness eliminates consideration of race, but it produces "a jurisprudential logic that reframes race as a socially insignificant, individual, and ahistorical trait with zero-sum sensibilities" (p. 136).

In a brief review it is difficult to do justice to the subtle and challenging ideas that fill *Blinded by Sight*. They are challenging precisely because they run against the grain of what we have been socialized to believe about the visual nature of race, an idea that the author is right to point out has been little challenged by sociologists. Fortunately, this book is written in a very fluid and clear style, and its arguments are illuminated by evocative quotations from interviews with blind people. However, the author would have been assisted in working with counterintuitive ideas by relying more thoroughly on works from the sociology of knowledge that help us understand how our perceptions of the physical world are never just unmediated apprehensions of reality. From Ludwik Fleck's "ideovision" (see his masterful *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*[University of Chicago Press, 1979]) to Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Anchor

Books, 1966), as well as reflections by Jacques Barzun, Ashley Montagu, Karen Fields, and others on the similarity between racial and magical thinking, there is a body of sociological literature that could have lent greater support to Obasogie's arguments. However, he is impatient with our discipline, declaring that "race scholarship is in a moment of crisis" (p. 6) and that "existing race discussions have become . . . dull and not useful. It is past time to reboot race, in terms of developing new approaches to thinking about, examining, and remedying the enduring problem of substantive inequalities across the life spectrum in light of formal equality by law" (p. 180). *Blinded by Sight* indeed takes us in an important new direction, but we should not discard the guideposts that earlier generations have left us.

Land of the Cosmic Race: Race Mixture, Racism, and Blackness in Mexico. By Christina A. Sue. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xii+234. $24.95.

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In *Land of the Cosmic Race: Race Mixture, Racism, and Blackness in Mexico*, Christina A. Sue takes on the intricate task of unraveling meanings about race and color in Mexico. The text is a well-researched and well-written ethnography, broad in its scope and implications.

Sue begins the text by situating contemporary discourse on race and racism in Mexico within the country's historical landscape. She points out that Mexican national ideology developed following the Mexican Revolution in the early 20th century remains a "powerful conceptual backdrop" in the everyday negotiation of race and racial identity. This nationalism, intended to create racial unity in a postwar, racially divided country, relied on three "ideological pillars": *mestizaje* (race mixture), nonracism, and nonblackness. The discourse of mestizaje, which reframes race mixture as a positive thing (in contrast to prevailing scientific racism at the time), provided a sense of national unity and identity. This emphasis on mixed-race identity also supported the elites' claim that Mexico was not divided by race, that racism could not exist in a racially mixed society, thereby removing any need to actually document race. This mestizo identity and the claim of nonracism works exists in tandem with the minimization of blackness from the Mexican national image (blackness having been absorbed through race mixing).

While this official discourse is well established in the national Mexican ideology and seems ever present in participant narratives, Sue is able to move beyond this official discourse, using extensive observations and qualitative