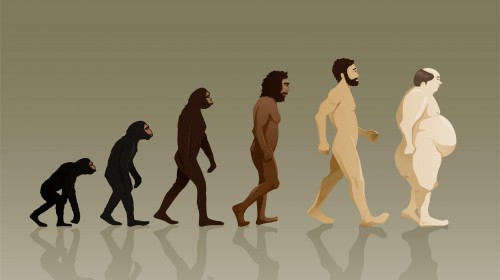
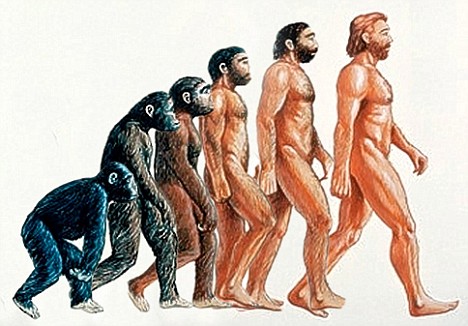
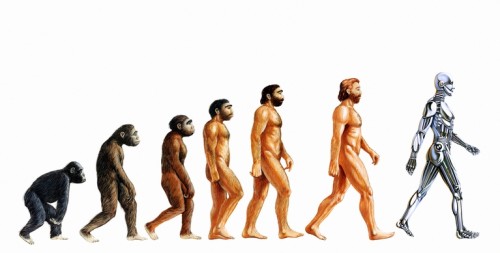
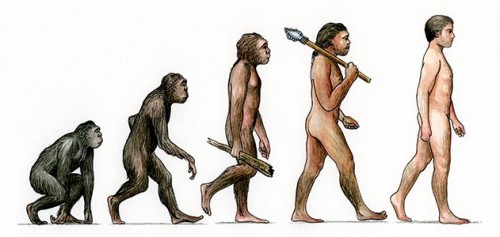
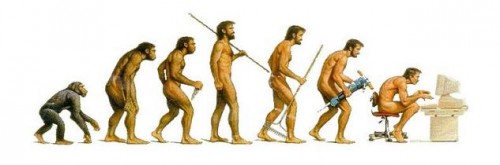
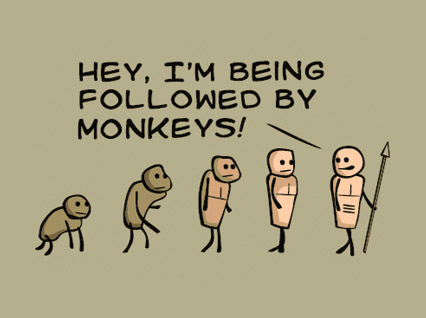
**[Racialized Representations of Evolution](http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2012/08/28/racialized-representations-of-evolution/" \o "Permalink)**

by [Lisa Wade](http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/author/lisa/), Aug 28, 2012, at 12:38 pm

Paul M. sent along the image below, from [an NPR story](http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2012/06/02/154166626/the-paleo-diet-moves-from-the-gym-to-the-doctors-office), commenting on the way skin color is used in the portrayal of evolution. There’s one obvious way to read this graphic: lighter-skinned people are more evolved (dare we say, “civilized”) than darker-skinned people. (The portrayal of fatness and its relevance to evolutionary fitness is another story in this particular graphic, as is the use of men and not women to represent humanity).

[](http://static.thesocietypages.org/socimages/files/2012/08/12.jpeg)

It seemed worthy to make a point of Paul’s observation, because this racialized presentation of evolution is really common. A search for the word on [Google Images](https://www.google.com/search?q=evolution&hl=en&prmd=imvnslb&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=1fs8UPDhLIfc2QXRj4DIDA&ved=0CAsQ_AUoAQ&biw=1600&bih=787#q=evolution&hl=en&sa=X&tbm=isch&prmd=imvnslb&bav=on.2,or.r_gc.r_pw.r_cp.r_qf.&fp=f9dc2005c1c47f5a&biw=1600&bih=787) [quickly](http://emikegarcia.blogspot.com/2012/01/evolution.html) [turns](http://the4faces.com/2011/09/29/stages-of-evolution/) [up](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-1070671/Evolution-stops-Future-Man-look-says-scientist.html) [several](http://www.vizfact.com/evolution-the-anti-science-video/) [more](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/The-Top-Ten-Daily-Consequences-of-Having-Evolved.html). In fact, almost every single illustration of evolution of this type, unless it’s in black and white, follows this pattern. (See also our post on [representations of modern man](http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2010/08/25/guest-post-the-unbearable-whiteness-of-being-human/).)

[](http://static.thesocietypages.org/socimages/files/2012/08/43.jpg)[](http://static.thesocietypages.org/socimages/files/2012/08/51.jpg)[](http://static.thesocietypages.org/socimages/files/2012/08/36.jpg)[](http://static.thesocietypages.org/socimages/files/2012/08/7.jpg)[](http://static.thesocietypages.org/socimages/files/2012/08/61.jpg)

This is important stuff. It reinforces the idea that darker-skinned people are more animalistic than the lighter-skinned. It also normalizes light-skinned people as people and darker-skinned peoples as Black or Brown people, in the same way that we use the word “American” to mean White-American, but various hyphenated phrases (African-American, Asian-American, etc) to refer to everyone else. So, though this may seem like a trivial matter, the patterns add up to a consistent centering and applauding of Whiteness.