



White Purity, Eugenics Ideology, and Mass Murder

Thomas White | Cohen Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies

“The laws of nature require the obliteration of the unfit, and human life is valuable only when it is of use to the community or race.” - Madison Grant, American Eugenicist

“It is better for all the world if, instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind. . . Three generations of imbeciles are enough.” – Oliver Wendell Holmes, Supreme Court Justice

“Nazism is applied biology.” - Rudolf Hess, Hitler’s deputy.

Why and how does an elitist, antidemocratic, race-based eugenics ideology like eugenics gain mainstream popularity and get implemented in the U.S.? How does eugenics grow out of the progressive movement and what about its narrative makes sense to the American imagination? How does the American experiment with eugenics, that included legislative success and financial support, inform and shape Nazi eugenic policies? To what degree are the programs similar? What is the connection to Nazi race policy and murder? How does the medical profession come to perceive their patients as threats and justify their actions as moral and necessary? How, asks Dr. Matthew Wynia, did healers become killers?

What is the context that led to the Eugenics Movement?

Eugenic ideas emerge and are shaped by the dramatic social and cultural shifts and shocks brought on by the Industrial Revolution (1760s onward) and the French Revolution and its aftershocks (1830s, 1848). By the 1830s laissez-faire liberalism’s belief in free-market capitalism that opposes government intervention is fueling English economic expansion. On the other hand, it also fuels the lack of response to the Great Irish Famine of 1845-1852. With the rise in urban poverty, disease, violence, increased emigration and population shifts, there is growing interest in finding reasons and solutions for growing discontent and social upheavals. Victorian England ends Tudor poor laws and transfers care for the poor from the church to the state. Emigration from the colonies and maintaining a colonial empire creates pressure to “solve” new problems.

Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau, is a French aristocrat and royalist horrified by the idea that “lesser peoples” are taking over. Democracy, he believes, strips power from the natural born elites. He is particularly frightened by the threat of the 1848 revolution. He is the first to claim to prove the superiority of the “Nordic” race and uses scientific race theory to legitimize a racist belief in an Aryan master race. In 1853-55, he writes, *An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races* in which he argues that aristocrats are superior to commoners because they are more “Aryan”. In an early connection between American racism and eugenics, white supremacist, pro-slavery Americans like Josiah C. Nott and Henry Hotze, praise his book and translate it to English in 1856. Hotze’s translation brings on the ire of de Gobineau who notes that “American decay generally [mixing of races] and slaveholding in particular” are left out.¹

What is Eugenics?

Eugenics, the study of how to arrange reproduction within a human population to increase desirable heritable characteristics, begins as an intellectual exercise in the mid-late nineteenth century. The movement is informed by Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859) Francis Galton, an English naturalist and mathematician, wealthy, snobbish half cousin of Darwin (whose work and fame he admires), is convinced that social and mental traits (such as talent and intelligence), are inherited. He writes about notable white people (eminent, not necessarily accomplished) as superior – dismissing factors of wealth, education, social connections, and access to resources. He decides that Darwin’s “natural selection” does not work in human society because people interfere with the process. Darwin’s writing inspires him to

¹ Burnett, Lonnie Alexander Burnett and Henry Hotze, *Confederate propagandist: selected writings on revolution ...*, (University of Alabama Press, 2008) 5.

solve the “threat” to society by exploring “race betterment” solutions. In 1869 he writes *Hereditary Genius: An Inquiry into its Laws and Consequences* and argues that selective breeding can improve the species. In 1883, Galton coins the term “eugenics” as a movement to breed better humans through hereditary engineering. The goal of what comes to be known as “positive eugenics” is to identify “valuable” humans to encourage their reproduction. His important contributions as a statistician coincide with French doctors using statistics to treat patients.

In 1864, Herbert Spencer, an English philosopher writes about “Survival of the Fittest” and opposes any laws that help workers, the poor, and those he deems genetically weak. This is an expression of “negative” eugenics, the philosophy that “inferior” people are a threat, endangering the nation and placing a financial burden on society and that resources must be redirected away from people with “inherited” traits (depravity, criminality, promiscuity). Reproduction and inter-racial marriage is to be discouraged and sterilization, segregation and cutting off access to social safety nets in good public policy. There is always tension between positive and negative eugenic ideas while thinkers debate whether “degenerate” behavior is a product of nature or nurture (genes or environment). Eugenics also has a strong antisemitic bias.

Alfred Ploetz, a German physician introduces the German concept of “racial hygiene” in 1895 which advocates the killing of the deformed and handicapped. Sometimes referred to the “better off dead” faction of eugenics, negative eugenics develops in the United States and Germany, playing on fears of “race degeneration.” Ploetz will later serve on a Nazi advisory council on race policy.

In this context, Houston Stewart Chamberlain, a wealthy English philosopher and Germanophile writes what will later become an essential text of Nazi ideology, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* in (1899). Chamberlain marries Richard Wagner’s daughter Eva, and praises the superiority of the “Aryan”, a concept that had great appeal to German nationalists. Chamberlain is antiemitic (a consistent theme of eugenic thinkers), anti-Catholic (due to polyglot nature of Austro-Hungarian Empire), and mythologizes Teutonic (German peoples) virtue and argues that Jesus was a Teuton, not a Jew. Jews, he argues, are morally defective due to their race (reflective of German conservative nationalism). His theories are informed by the writings of de Gobineau.

In 1877 American sociologist Richard Dugdale publishes *The Jukes: A Study in Crime, Pauperism, Disease and Heredity*. Even though Dugdale is not an eugenicist and never advocates for anything more than penal reform, improved public health and education, the Jukes are used as an example for eugenicists of the heritability of criminal tendencies. “Juke” becomes a popular phrase. William Z. Ripley, another American, writes *The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study* in 1899. Ripley is a careful scholar and therefore much more influential. He considers attributing virtues or vices to “race” to be wrong and influenced by environmental and non-biological factors such as traditions. He believes nature and nurture are intertwined. Although he argues that there is no way to identify “pure” members of any race due to cross-fertilization, he writes that race is a phenomenon of geographical and social isolation, can explain human difference and history. He classifies Europeans into three racial groups: “Teutons” tall, blond and blue-eyed. “Alpines” shorter and somewhat darker and “Mediterraneans” slimmer and darker still. In 1891 Victoria Woodhull’s *The Rapid Multiplication of the Unfit* argues for survival of the fittest.

From Eugenic Discussion to Action

In 1897 German geographer Friedrich Ratzel coins the term *Lebensraum* “living space”. In 1901 he defines it as: Utilizing geographic space necessary to sustain the *Volk*, expanding it or else perishing due to lack of resources, and that only a *Volk* with strong agricultural base could flourish. German nationalists see SW Africa as a place where Germans can regain the “true” German spirit being undermined by modernization and urbanization. Rudolph Hess, later Hitler’s deputy, devours Ratzel’s writings and will later share them with Hitler when they write *Mein Kampf*. Eugenic theory begins to shift towards practice in German South West Africa (now Namibia) run by Governor-General Heinrich Ernst Göring (Hermann’s father). Göring is part of the German effort to suppress the Herero revolt (1904-1907) and oversees the genocide of the Herero (80% of its population) and Namaqua people (about 50% of its population). The slaughter is justified as a “superior race” ruling over a “sub-human” one (*lebensraum*) through brutality and slavery. The Germans establish two types of concentration camps: camps to work people to death while extracting economic value and killing camps (Shark Island).

Franz Rotta von Epp is a German officer who spends two years in SW Africa. From 1919-1928, he commands the *Reichswehr's* Battalion Epp (Munich). Serving under him are Rudolph Hess; Gregor Strasser; Walter Schultze (later Nazi National Labor of the Association of University Lecturers who will remove Jews from university posts and participate in Nazi euthanasia program); Ernst Röhm (Brownshirt uniforms likely inspired by SW Africa uniform of Epp); and Adolf Hitler, who Epp employed as an "educator" charged with instilling anti-Bolshevist sentiments. Epp pushes Hitler into speaking and into right-wing politics. Hitler will appoint Epp to be Governor of Bavaria in 1933 and he will oversee the building of Dachau.²

Dr. Eugene Fischer, an anthropologist from Freiburg, the center of the extreme Nordic wing of the German race hygiene movement, uses the genocide to conduct one of the first major laboratories of race supremacy. In 1906, Fischer uses the concentration camps the Germans have established to lead field research and medical experiments (sterilization, injections of smallpox, typhus and tuberculosis) on those targeted "inferior (black) races". Fischer recommends that "inferior races" should not reproduce and that mixed marriages between white and black must be forbidden. In 1912, interracial marriage is prohibited in German colonies. In 1913, Fischer writes, *Rehoboth Bastards and the Problem of Miscegenation Among Humans* that promotes Nordic superiority and warns of the threat posed by mischlinge, mixed children of Dutch men and Hottentot women. Back in Germany, he is sent severed heads and other body parts from SW Africa. Fischer's textbook, *Principles of Human Heredity and Race Hygiene* (1921-1940 editions) will later have a direct impact on the thinking of Adolph Hitler. He will employ and then mentor Dr. Josef Mengele.

Despite Fischer's work, eugenics remain the realm of a handful of intellectuals in Germany (and Briatin). It is Americans who make eugenics more widely practiced and popular. There is however, considerable debate about its efficacy.

The Progressive Era (1896-1917)

Inspired by post-Civil War generation's trauma and fixation on law (bringing order out of chaos, compromise instead of conflict) and a rejection of the corruption, monopolies, and greed of the "Gilded Age" (1870s-1900) progressives seek a higher moral purposes beyond enrichment and turn to service and social, political, and educational reforms. Debates of the day (immigration, infant mortality...) dovetail with social reform movements (labor conditions, abolition of prostitution, sanitization and public health, alcoholism, women's' suffrage...) Progressives work to find solutions for inequity and rely on informed "experts" and scientific innovations to guide policy. Utility will bring various groups together who support eugenical thinking when it benefits their cause. Each can praise eugenics when useful and reject it when they disagree. Eugenics language is useful to amplify fears and reinforce the importance of laws and social action.

In 1895 Connecticut passes the first eugenics marriage laws. "Feeble-minded, imbecilic, and epileptic men and women under 45 years of age" cannot marry (repealed in 1967). On May 16, 1897, Michigan is the first state to introduce a mandatory sterilization bill for the castration of criminals and degenerates. It fails to pass. In 1907, Indiana passes the first mandatory sterilization law, but it is struck down by the Indiana Supreme Court in 1921 as a violation of 14th amendment. In 1912 the First International Eugenics Congress meets in London chaired by Major Leonard Darwin, the son of Charles Darwin. Attendees include Dr. Alexander Graham Bell and the Right Honorable Winston Churchill. The Congress legitimizes eugenics and social improvement through sterilization. In 1921, the Second Eugenics Congress will be held at New York's American Museum of Natural History.

Charles Davenport, a wealthy scientist becomes the first American to elevate Galton's theory into something practical. In 1900 Moravian scientist Gregor Mendel's book on pea plants experiments is translated into English (originally published in 1866). His discovery of units of inheritance (genes) in pea plants emerges just as eugenics movement is picking up steam and Davenport reads his work.

² Benjamin Madley, *From Africa to Auschwitz: How German South West Africa Incubated Ideas and Methods Adopted and Developed by the Nazis in Eastern Europe*, (European History Quarterly, 2005).



Laughlin and Davenport, ERO, circa 1912. (Truman State Univ).

In 1910, Davenport establishes the Eugenics Records Office (ERO) (named after Galton's in London) in Cold Springs Harbor (NYC). Importantly he secures financial support from the Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations and Mrs. E. H. Harriman who had inherited a railway fortune. Other philanthropists such as Julius Rosenwald spends millions instead to build nearly 5,000 schools for African Americans in rural south alongside Booker T. Washington. Davenport, however, will connect the ERO with the American Breeders Association, shifting their studies to practical ways to breed better humans. Using Mendel's work and German zoologist August Weismann who argued that single "germ plasma" explains heredity, he links human traits to single gene theory. In 2003 genome sequencing reveals that there are thousands of monogenic traits, all influenced by other genes, other phenomena within the genome, and are heavily influenced by environment. In other words, the single gene theory does not hold up scientifically.

In 1910, Harry Laughlin, PhD from Princeton, is chosen as the ERO director. The ERO will search to link behavior to singular genes and collect measurable data on single genes that create hereditary traits like memory, loyalty, shiftlessness, color blindness, criminality... (ie: He believes that he can measure the gene that makes a man go to sea).

In 1911, Davenport gets fixated on "defectives" (insane, feeble-minded, epileptic, criminal, blind) who should be sterilized. "Where the life of the state is threatened, extreme measures may and must be taken."³ His eugenic zeal replaces his scholarly discipline.⁴ Indeed, Davenport's work will later be seen as "sloppy" by other eugenicists who fear it will tarnish the international eugenics movement.⁵ He searches for and shapes data to support his conclusions. Davenport and Laughlin create *The Trait Book* listing 3500 human attributions and defects by assigning each a number. Laughlin sends out teams (almost all women from finest eastern colleges with six weeks of "training") to document American family genetic history. These women are progressives anxious to demonstrate the merits of their education and that they are not docile or superficial. Laughlin publishes *Eugenical News* looking at pedigrees of "prominent families" (built on suspect sources). Most research done in cooperation with mental hospitals, poorhouses, prisons and public institutions. Subjects are all wards of the state (poor). Researchers are urged to consult town records and church genealogies as well. Interestingly, Laughlin's teams are the first to trace family history of illness by seeking American family genetic and traits history records.

Armed with *The Trait Book*, an interviewer can describe an individual with a single index card and classify them on a scale of human worth. Field workers are expected to make determinations on such things as: hair and skin color; hair texture; disease history; ability to retain urine; was someone easily offended; depressed by alcohol; suffering from wonder lust; having philosophical tendencies; a taste for sentimental drama; being open or secretive; trustful or suspicious; whiny; good penmanship ability; an ability to play chess; a violator of game rules... If people are not available, judgements can be made through hearsay. The ERO wanted data and prized quantity over quality. By 1924, 750,000 index cards are stored in fireproof vault. Because of the subjective nature and narrow pool of interviewees, the "data" reveals the social prejudices of the wealthy and educated who believe that mental ability is connected to moral behavior. Davenport writes to his supporter Mrs. Harriman, "You see what you have knndled! It is going to be a purifying conflagration some day!"⁶ American eugenicists (and the ERO) are greatly admired internationally (especially Germany) both for its funding and its growing influence on legislation.



Eugene Fischer

German Eugenics Movement and early American Connections

In 1908, two years before opening the ERO, Charles Davenport begins a correspondence with Dr. Eugene Fischer, exchanging information on hair and eye color. In 1911, Ernst Rüdin consults Davenport about an exhibit he is creating. Both of these connections will be important. Fischer becomes the Director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology,

³ Daniel Okrent, *The Guarded Gate* (New York: Scribner, 2019), 131,

⁴ Ibid, 147.

⁵ Ben Turner interview with Geneticist Adam Rutherford on how eugenics, 'Darwin's monster', took over the world. April 9, 2023.

⁶ Harry Bruinius, *Better World For All: The Secret History of Forced Sterilization and America's Quest for Racial Purity* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 216.

Human Heredity, and Eugenics (1927), the German equivalent of the Eugenics Record Office. It is also funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. Fischer will use skulls from the genocide in South West Africa at the Institute. Fischer will become the leading racial hygienist under the Third Reich. He helps to craft the Nuremberg Laws in 1935. Rüdin becomes head of Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Psychology and will become a key figure in Nazi eugenics and is the primary author of Nazi sterilization law in 1933.

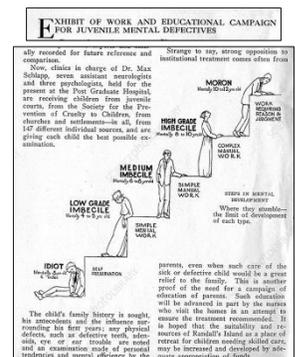
German eugenicists continue to push ahead, often informed by American practices. Geza von Hoffmann, the Austrian vice-consultant in California will keep his eugenics colleagues up to date on developments in the U.S. and specifically California, the leading U.S. eugenics state. In 1913, he publishes *Racial Hygiene in the United States of North America*. In 1920, eminent scholars from Freiberg, Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche, publish *Authorization for the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life*, advocating for the killing of “incurably feeble-minded”. That same year German geneticist Erwin Baur writes Davenport seeking his expertise on the history of American eugenics legislation. Baur is concerned with the “Black shame”, a German nationalist lie about French negro regiments “all over” Germany giving “free rein to their impulses towards women and children.”⁷ Although few black troops serve in this duty and no rapes are reported (indeed these colonial troops were some of the best disciplined in the French army) the racist myth about aggressive, sexualized blacks strikes a chord with Americans. Davenport writes Laughlin to send data to Bauer’s colleague, Eugene Fischer.

Eugenic Appeal to Religious and Progressives

American eugenicists believe they have replaced “religious superstition” with science, but many of their hopes, imaginings, and zeal (and audience) are shaped by particular American Christian religious traditions. Charles Davenport, for example, is a descendent of Reverend John Davenport who founded the Puritan town of New Haven, CT. in 1638. Harry Laughlin is the son of deeply pious, progressive parents. Laughlin sending out teams of young women to root out biological failings (rooting out “sins” of nature) and that salvation and progress emanates from individual purity, especially among women, are classic religious tropes. Davenport and Laughlin’s focus on “good moral and mental hygiene” has religious overtones. Indeed, the creation of a purer race echoes the idea of “American exceptionalism” seeking an Eden or city on a hill. In a darker sense, Calvinist and Puritan ideas of the chosen and the damned, will create a sense of urgency and apocalyptic mission of success or doom. It is interesting to note that Davenport is thinking in these ways when he writes, *Eugenics as Religion*. Shifting the inner spiritual struggle about “natural inclinations” to one of biology (the need to develop “inhibition genes”) reflects sexual mores and guilt. Davenport offers a eugenic “creed” to scientists from Harvard, Yale, Stanford: “I believe in repressing my instincts when to follow them would injure the next generation. I believe in doing so for the race.”⁸ “Belief” is being offered to those who rely on the scientific method? Laughlin even writes *A Eugenics Catechism* arguing that eugenics does not contradict the Bible. Eugenics, he argues does not mean less sympathy for the unfortunate, but that treating fewer of them is a kindness. The idealization of Mary as virginally pure and Eve as temptress will also play a part in eugenics thinking.

Shifting focus to “Feeble-minded” women

Henry H. Goddard, an American psychologist and eugenicist, decides to apply an IQ test (Simon-Binet mental test from France) to develop “measurable categories” of “moral defectives” with “feeble-mindedness” (a variety of mental disabilities including intellectual disability, learning disabilities, and mental illness.) His testing identifies feeble-minded categories of “Idiot”: a person with a “mental age” of 2 or less; “imbecile”: a person with a “mental age” of 3-7; and “moron”: a person with a “mental age” of 8-12. To Goddard, the moron is the most dangerous because they can pass as intelligent and appear normal, but they cannot lead moral, productive lives. It is so subtle, that people can be literate and fully function in society, but their illness gives them weak wills and poor judgement, making them easily influenced by “evil”. As progressive women seek education, are active social reformers, and are working towards suffrage (some males see as something making them hysterical) attention shifts to poorer women. As doctors begin to make breakthroughs in sterilization that are more “humane” and more “progressive” than castration, focus shifts to the possibility of sterilizing females in institutions. In



⁷ Ibid, 277.

⁸ Bruinius, 222.

1880 the first modern female sterilization procedure is performed by Dr. Samuel Lungren in Toledo, Ohio. What follows is a targeting of poorer, uneducated women who are labeled as promiscuous, defective, and unable to control their sexual urges. This misogynistic thinking is a projection of racist tropes that are assigned to Jews, black, brown, indigenous people, and especially the poor. Progressive activists and conservatives worry about those who are “easily influenced” and cannot control their sexual urges. Conveniently overlooked is the behavior of enslavers to the enslaved in the Antebellum South. In 1899 the first vasectomy is conducted for non-medical reasons by Harry Sharp in Indiana. In 1913 the UK passes the Mental Deficiencies Act but does not pass involuntary sterilization that is championed by Home Secretary Winston Churchill – who has been reading Sharps’ pamphlet.

In 1912, Goddard writes what will become a popular standard of eugenics thinking, *The Kallikak Family: A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-Mindedness*. It becomes a popular best seller. “Deborah Kallikak” (kallos “good” and kakos “bad”, real name Emma Wolverton), is a 22 year-old inmate at Goddard’s New Jersey Home for the Education and Care of Feeble-minded Children (Vineland Training School). She is determined to be “unusually affectionate and flirtatious” and with sloppy fieldwork, shoddy techniques, and built-in prejudices, he “discovers” a morality tale. Her great-great-great grandfather is presented as a Revolutionary War hero whose one moral failing, on his way back from battle, was a dalliance with a “feeble-minded” barmaid. According to Goddard, only the children from this affair are unwholesome. The descendants of the barmaid, including Deborah, are less intelligent, have less moral ability, and are criminals. She is the “victim” of flawed genetics. Rather than judge people like Kallikak, society should limit their reproduction.

Importantly, alcohol plays a fundamental role in this morality tale. The setting is a bar and the children of the barmaid is a eugenic threat due to the “poison” of alcohol. Alcohol is not only to blame for her feeble-mindedness, but also the environmental cause of the drunken mistake of the soldier. In 1909 Scottish eugenicist Dr. Caleb Williams Saleeby writes *Parenthood and Race Culture* which focuses on alcohol as a link to degenerate behavior and argues for its prohibition. Some eugenicists will argue that alcohol “poisons” the blood and is another example of environmental toxins that are a danger to the race (like abusive parents or unregulated foods and drugs).⁹

Kallikak appeals to conservatives (emphasis on morals and sexual purity) and progressives (promise of a future free of social ills; desire to replace old system of charity with new state-run bureaucracies; seeing poverty and moral degeneration as biological, not spiritual; with allies in the suffragette movement with their focus on self-improvement and birth control). “Feeble-minded” women of childbearing age should be institutionalized for their own benefit in order to stop the births of illegitimate children. This begins a shift in institutionalized behavior from care to prevention. Many medical officials begin suggesting the introduction of restrictive marriage laws to combat poverty and crime. Goddard popularizes eugenics just as D.W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) popularizes the KKK. Lewis Terman, a Stanford psychologist, states, “Not all criminals are feeble-minded, but all feeble-minded persons are at least potential criminals. That every feeble-minded woman is a potential prostitute would hardly be disputed by anyone.”¹⁰ In 1914, Terman will argue that the handicapped should be sterilized.

Marriage restrictions and sterilization becomes a popular means to enforce morality. States begin to build new asylums and “training schools” to help poor women “escape” pregnancies. Connecticut passes the first eugenic marriage law in 1896. Reflecting the growing tide of eugenic targeting, in 1905 it becomes illegal to marry if “mentally deficient” in Indiana. In 1907 Congress passes the Expatriation Act stating that U.S. women who marry non-citizens will lose their citizenship. In 1909 California begins coordinating seven institutions that are sterilizing inmates. In 1912, seven states are following Indiana’s example with laws for involuntary sterilizations for certain wards of the state. In 1913 New York public schools are administering the Simon-Binet aptitude test. By 1914, thirty states have passed eugenics marriage laws. California is the leading state, sterilizing 70% of those targeted by eugenics. In 1916 *The Woman’s Home Companion* creates the “Better Babies Bureau” examining infants during agricultural fairs and the US Public Health Service offers official certificates to prove eugenic suitability for marriage. Women are empowered to reject suitors who are abusive or alcoholic.

⁹ See Paul Lombardo, “We Who Champion the Unborn’: Racial Poisons, Eugenics, and the Campaign for Prohibition”, Cambridge University Press Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics, Volume 50, Issue 1.

¹⁰ <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/targeting-unfit>

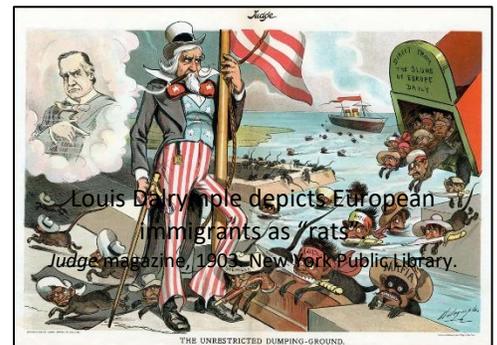
Until World War I, eugenics remains a hobby of the few (although it is becoming more popularized in California). Courts are striking down eugenic legislation in some states (NJ, NY, MI) as violation of a 14th amendment equal protection clause. In Indiana, Iowa, and Oregon, however, courts are upholding sterilization, ruling that doctors should not have decision-making power over the bodies of their patients. Even here, some institutions hesitate. Other forces are coalescing that will create the groundwork for what will happen after World War I.

Dangerous Mingling: Immigration Restrictionists and Eugenicists

Immigration into the United States is not restricted until after the Civil War. Those who want to put limits on immigration find strange and unexpected bedfellows in two places: the former Confederacy and eugenicists. As Reconstruction comes to a screeching halt due to President Johnson who pardons Confederate traitors and allows them to run for congress in spite of the 14th amendment. They are readmitted to Congress without any penalty or consequences for their treason (1868-1870). They immediately use their power to begin the process of “winning the peace” by shaping the narrative of the Civil War and depriving Blacks of citizenship rights and protections. The goals and language of white supremacy and racism will find allies outside of South.

At the same time resentments and racial violence is growing in California. Chinese immigrants who have built the transcontinental railway are now out of work and competing with poor whites. Local leaders are gaining power by targeting them and forcing them into the ghettos of “Chinatowns”. Southern leaders decide to invite Chinese laborers in, hoping to pay them less and fuel white resentment. Poor whites, lied to once again by their Southern leadership, are told that the Chinese are coming to take their jobs. Violence and legislation soon followed. In 1879, the U.S. Supreme Court bars Chinese and Asian immigrants from citizenship. In 1882, Congress passes the Chinese Exclusion Act. Both Democrats and Republicans, however, are hesitant to support immigration restriction based solely on race after Chinese exclusion.

In May 1891, patrician, progressive Boston Brahmins, such as Oliver Wendell Holmes (Supreme Court Justice) and Henry Cabot Lodge (Senator), are frightened that, in Lodge’s words, immigration by “the races who have peopled the United States” is declining, while “the immigration of people removed from us in race and blood” is on the rise.¹¹ They react to the growing number of immigrants (especially poor Irish) by forming the Immigration Restriction League (IRL) in 1894. Lodge, a key spokesman, proclaims that, “Race pride or race prejudice, or whatever it may be called...has long since ceased to be harmful.”¹² There are at least three threads that are coming closer together: former Confederates, Boston brahmins, and eugenicists who are providing pseudo-scientific language to justify racist agendas. From 1900-1915 pressure builds as 1.5 million immigrate to the United States.



Louis Dalrymple depicts European immigrants as “rats” in Judge magazine, 1903. New York Public Library.

The White Replacement Theory prevalent in U.S. right-wing media and politics in the 2020s emanates from this comingling and the negative eugenics belief that nationalities are breeds or species that are irredeemable. American neo-Nazi David Lane popularizes a victimhood narrative of “white genocide” and it becomes mainstream political rhetoric:

For many Americans, what seems to be happening or what they believe right now is happening is what appears to them is we’re replacing national-born American – native-born Americans to permanently transform the landscape of this very nation. – Scott Perry, R-PA. April 2022.

Tucker Carlson warns his viewers of the “great replacement” of white Americans by Democrats who are “importing more obedient voters from the third world” to “replace the current electorate” (Sept. 2021) and dehumanizing rhetoric like the “flood of illegals” making America “poor and dirtier.” (April 2021)

¹¹ Okrent, 52.

¹² Ibid.

World War I (1914-1918) Radicalizes the United States

A peculiar anti-democratic mood is prevalent in the U.S. before entering World War I. In 1915, a new English-language version of de Gobineau's *The Inequality of Human Races*, translated by Adrian Collins, is published in Britain and the U.S. In 1916, President Wilson is in an all out war on hyphenated Americans (Italian-Americans, Irish-Americans, Black-Americans) and immigrants "who have powered the poison of disloyalty into the very arteries of our national life."¹³ In 1902, Wilson had written about what he described as the threat from immigrants as foreign blood with "ever deteriorating" genetic material.¹⁴ In December 1916, President Wilson calls for "such creatures of passion, disloyalty, and anarchy" to be "crushed out."¹⁵ In Washington, Wilson has segregated black Americans and has shown the first movie in the White House, Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*; the film that resuscitates the Ku Klux Klan.¹⁶ As American entry into war grows closer, Wilson sees hyphenated Americans and immigrants as potential spies and saboteurs.

In 1916, Madison Grant, an American lawyer and zoologist writes, *The Passing of the Great Race*. This book will become a core Nazi reference book and will bridge whatever divide exists between American immigration restrictionists, eugenicsists, racists, and antisemites. Grant believes that New York City Jews are a "curse" having come from the "great swamp" of Poland.¹⁷ Even though immigration to the U.S. has plummeted nearly 75% since 1914, Grant obsesses that non-Nordic, lower-class European immigrants are flooding in undermining and fracturing society and out-breeding white racial stock. He raises the spectre that in the midst of white race blood-letting in Europe, unchecked immigration poses a threat to the white, blond hair and blue eyed (Nordic) race in America. He goes on to rant that feeble-minded poor and "lower races" such as Negroes and Jews should be annihilated and sterilized by utilizing the public health system. He blames the French Revolution (inspired by de Gobineau) for the horrible idea of the brotherhood of men and argues that unfavorable races should be segregated in ghettos. He writes, "The laws of nature require the obliteration of the unfit, and human life is valuable only when it is of use to the community or race."¹⁸

Charles Davenport is impressed and, focusing on the problem of immigration, will write a letter to Grant on April 7, 1925: "Our ancestors drove Baptists from Massachusetts Bay into Rhode Island but we have no place to drive the Jews to. Also, they burned the witches but it seems to be against the mores to burn any considerable part of our population."¹⁹

When the U.S. enters WW I huge numbers of Americans join the ranks and are thrown together for the first time. As the military begins to expand they decide to employ intelligence tests as a way to identify individual worth and properly assign them.²⁰ Following on the heels of Goddard's testing of 200 immigrants on Ellis Island are the infamous 1917 Army intelligence tests are conducted by Harvard psychologist Robert Yerkes. The Alpha test is written and Beta is for illiterates. Approximately 1.75m soldiers are tested, including recent immigrants who are unfamiliar with the English language or American culture. These tests are more of a current events quiz for white Americans than intelligence tests. They have no value if used today. Biased from the beginning, the tests create important data that "reveal" that intelligence is hereditary and "proves" that darker peoples of Southern Europe and Slavs are "less intelligent". 6,346,856 immigrants are determined to be "inferior or very inferior."²¹ Again, the data collectors find what they are looking for; almost. Northern Blacks upset the racial calculus by performing much better than poor whites from Mississippi, Arkansas, Kentucky. This is an outcome of philanthropist Julius Rosenwald (alongside Booker T. Washington) using his money to build nearly 5,000 schools for African Americans in rural South rather than patronizing eugenics researchers. Of course the successful results of black Americans is suppressed. The use of eugenics tests by American leaders on such a scale meant that a threshold

¹³ Richard Breitman, *FDR and the Jews* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 21013), 161.

¹⁴ Okrent, 186.

¹⁵ Ibid, 220.

¹⁶ The KKK had been destroyed by President Grant who created the Department of Justice to wage war on the KKK.

¹⁷ Okrent, 208.

¹⁸ <https://apnews.com/article/e1e05048ed434a55b55df4fdc0a80b62>

¹⁹ Okrent, 251.

²⁰ The scale of the IQ test: 1. Near genius or genius 2. Very Superior 3. Superior 4. Above average 5. Normal or average 6. Below average 7. Dull of borderline 8. Feeble-minded, Moron 9. Imbecile 10. Idiot.

²¹ Ibid, 320.

had been crossed. Also in 1917, Hollywood's "The Black Stork" (advertised as a "eugenics love story") was widely distributed. The movie celebrates the heroic decision of a wife in a eugenically mismatched marriage who has the courage to let her defective child die. The child ascends to heaven where he is welcomed by Jesus.²²

Meanwhile, other thresholds are crossed. World War I unleashes the lethality of scientific progress. The mass destruction destroys accepted reality and alters human expectations. The war raises questions about the inevitability of progress and the survival of humanity itself. There is a spiritual and moral void as they look into the abyss. Fears grow about the devastation of white race and what that might mean. Field Marshal Hindenburg's memoirs reveal the racist thinking prevalent among the upper classes during the war. He thought it unfair that the French and then the Americans were using black troops. How, he pondered, will they find out which white European race is superior if the other side cheats? Significantly, the war brings about the trauma necessary for absurd, irrational beliefs to become acceptable. Until WW I, eugenics in Germany is the focus of a small group of intellectuals, all doctors. The war changes that. Eugenics will offer the hope and clarity that traumatized people need to reconstruct their lives, or reclaim it in some way that gives it meaning and purpose.

In October 1919 the United States ratifies the 18th Amendment (passed by Congress in 1917). The National Prohibition Act (Volstead Act) is the culmination of a religious revival in the 1820s and 1830s that encouraged moral purity and abolitionism and mingled with the idea identifying "defectives" who are undermining society. Prohibition targets the perceived immorality of the poor, the immigrant, and the Jew. Immigrants are a particular target and are stereotyped as drunken Irish or saloon-keeping Italians. One poster describes the threat to the nation: "THE DRUNKARD is subject to Tuberculosis, Venereal Diseases, Delirium Tremens, General Debility. The DRUNKARD has children threatened with Tuberculosis, Rickets, Insanity, Epilepsy."

Prohibition brings together those who believe alcohol poisons the blood and others who think that immigrants poison the nation's blood. Prohibition is also informed by antisemitism and the recent Russian fraud *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1902-03) that creates the conspiratorial fantasy that Jews are secretly plotting to undermine the world with weapons such as alcohol. In 1920, industrialist Henry Ford mainstreams the conspiracy theory by publishing one of the first versions of the *Protocols* (just after the German version) in his 1920, *The International Jew*.

In 1919 U.S. troops return home to find housing and job shortages, race attacks, nativism, and a growing animosity towards immigrants. Black veterans, who had been the first to volunteer, fight, receive decorations and headlines, returned home to face attacks and murder by white supremacists who want to put them "back in their place." In 1920, Lothrop Stoddard, a Harvard PhD from Brookline, MA and KKK member, writes *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy*, framing the postwar period as a time of reckoning with "undermen" and "unwashed [revolutionary] masses".²³ Debating W.E.B. Du Bois he argues against racial equality and opposes "race mixing". He sees WW I as "white race-suicide", a white civil war that is opening the world up to white surrender, revolution and chaos. It has an appeal for certain Americans.

In 1920 German geneticist Erwin Baur writes Charles Davenport seeking his expertise on the history of American eugenics legislation and references the "Black shame" lie of negro regiments.²⁴ This will grow the link between eugenics and American and German racist stereotypes of the threat posed by sexually aggressive black males. While this is a lie in Germany, it reflects yet another attempt to rewrite the Black experience of slave women being raped by their white masters. American inability to deal honestly with its slave past continues to generate mass atrocities such as the May 31-June, 1921 Tulsa massacre. Although the *Tulsa World*



²² Edwin Black, "Hitler's Debt to America", February 2004.

²³ Stoddard will support Nazi sterilization programs and help several Nazi judges in Jewish sterilization.

²⁴ In 1920 French army has some 30-40,000 black troops. Only 5,000 serve in Europe from 1919 until June 1920. Black troops are shifted to warmer climate of southern France. Only posted to occupation duty in April 1920. Regardless, the German (British and American) press expands the racism and sense of German "victimization" by expanding racist conspiracy theories and stories. Of the mixed-race children born (102 in 1920), only one of the German mothers claims to have been assaulted.

headline laments “Two Whites Dead in Race Riot” the reality was that up to 300 Black Americans are murdered, more than 1,400 Black homes and businesses are burned, and nearly 10,000 Black people are left homeless. German eugenicists Fischer, Erwin Bauer, and Fritz Lenz utilize the data from the U.S. Army intelligence tests and publish, *Human Heredity and Race Hygiene*, in 1921. The test, they write, prove that “the Nordic race marches in the vanguard of mankind.”²⁵ It will be an influential source for Hitler in prison while writing *Mein Kampf* in 1925.

In 1921, as discussion about various methods (including lethal chambers) of eugenic euthanasia continues (the “Black Stork” is still in theaters) Nevada approves the gas chamber as a means of executing criminals.

Immigration Laws Become Eugenic Race Laws

In 1921 a Congressional committee develops an Emergency Quota Act to deal with the perceived threat of poor, eastern and southern European immigrants coming to the U.S. after World War I. The Senate votes 78-1 in favor, with 17 abstentions and the House of Representatives passes the Quota Act by acclamation. The “Emergency” Act will limit

immigration to 3% of people born in a country where people are already in the U.S. according to the 1910 census. An annual cap of 385,000 immigrants will be imposed. Polish immigration will be cut by 70%, Yugoslavs by 74%, and Italians by 82%. The Beacon Hill (Boston) Immigration Restriction League (IRL) and the KKK play an important role.²⁶ Madison Grant praises the legislation as preferencing Nordics over “Jewish tailors and Greek banana vendors.”²⁷ Stoddard also testifies in favor of keeping “undesirables” out.

Representative Albert Johnson (R-WA), Chairman of the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, is a member of the KKK and continues to work towards developing a permanent immigration law. Laughlin and Grant testify in favor of a new law. Grant tells his readers that, “Jumbled-up mass of undigested race material” threaten the nation.²⁸ Laughlin testifies and provides stats and voluminous data detailing ethnic groups who could “dilute the bloodstream of America”.²⁹ The committee does not even bother to examine Laughlin charts, stats, jargon, and mathematical tables that he provides as “evidence”. The committee utilizes the 1917 army tests to show that six million are “inferior” and “unfit.”

Opponents like Herbert S. Jennings, “Undesirable Aliens: A Biologists Examination of the Evidence Before Congress” (December 1923) testifies to the committee that Laughlin’s data of the “socially inadequate” is limited to public institutions not the private ones utilized by people with means and likely not foreign born. He points to the manipulation and numerous errors in Laughlin’s statistics. Laughlin’s own data shows immigrants from Great Britain are more prone to feeble-mindedness than Italians, Romanians, Blacks, and others. He also points out Laughlin’s racism. Laughlin is arguing that there are so few Blacks in state institutions, not because Jim Crow excludes them, but because “the dependent or inadequate Negro is taken care of by the plantation.” (This, of course, is the grotesque “Lost Cause” myth developed after the Civil War that slavery was a caring system, created by good-hearted and responsible whites, for Blacks who knew they needed it and were grateful.) He also notes that in five categories (feeble-minded, epilepsy, deafness, blindness, deformity) foreign born individuals are superior to natives born of native parents! Louis Marshall, Constitutional and corporate lawyer, President of American Jewish Committee asks why Nordics, the supposed superior race, should feel so threatened? “I worried why this fabled race was so frail and fragile.”³⁰

Johnson, frustrated by this opposition turns to threats. “If the Jewish people combine to defeat the immigration bill as reported by the Committee, their children will regret it.”³¹ He threatens to cut the quota or even add a constitutional amendment to deny citizenship to American-born children of aliens.

²⁵ Okrent, 322.

²⁶ 1933: KKK active in all 48 states. 11 governors and 16 Senators openly members.

²⁷ Okrent, 288.

²⁸ Ibid, 331.

²⁹ Ibid, 317.

³⁰ Okrent, 337.

³¹ Okrent, 341.

April 24: 1924, *New York Times*, “America of the Melting Pot Comes to an End”

In 1924 Congress passes the final Immigration Act, the Johnson–Reed Act or National Origins Act, by a Senate vote of 69-9 and a House vote of 308-62.³² The new quota provided through immigration visas issued in the nation of origin, reduces eligibility to 2% of the total number of people of each nationality in the U.S. based now on the 1890 national census. The annual cap for immigration is reduced to 164,000. Cleverly, eugenic experts have limited immigration by nationality, not race. Of course, they view Slavs, Italians and others as racially inferior and threatening. “Aryans” and “Nordics” will dominate the quota. England will have the highest quota (64,721) and Germany the second highest (25,957). The Asian Exclusion Act is folded into the law allowing only 100 Asians per country. The U.S. government hunts down Indian nationals (declared by the court to be Asian) to strip them of citizenship. Vasishno Das Bagai, an Indian immigrant and decorated WW I veteran, loses his citizenship in 1928 and commits suicide. American women who married an alien are allowed to return if they are widowed or divorced. The quota law is devastatingly effective in cutting off immigration from “undesirable” parts of Europe. European immigration: 1890s: 3.7 million. 1900-10: 7.6 million. In 1914: 1.2 million. In 1921, 222,260 Italians entered and by 1925, only 2,662, In 1914, there are 46,000 Greek immigrants and in 1925, only 100.³³ The annual Polish quota is 6,524.

Reflecting the xenophobic, nativist, anti-immigrant, racist enthusiasm, Georgia Governor Clifford Walker, speaking to “Second Imperial Klonevocation” (KKK) in 1924, states: “I would build a wall of steel, a wall as high as Heaven, against the admission of a single one of those Southern Europeans who never thought or spoke the language of democracy...”³⁴ Vice President Calvin Coolidge (1920-24) writes in *Good Housekeeping*: “America must be kept American. Biological laws show that Nordics deteriorate when mixed with other races.” “Racial considerations” and “biological laws” enter official conversations.³⁵ Steven Miller, President Trump’s senior presidential policy advisor praises the 1924 immigration act and uses links to white supremacy and neo-Nazi websites to support his views.

“Three Generations of Imbeciles are Enough”

In 1922 Harry Laughlin (ERO), publishes *Eugenical Sterilization in the United States* and describes a Model Sterilization Law to implement his eugenic fantasies to battle poverty, crime, and racial degeneration. U.S. states should have the right to sterilize (involuntary) people considered as genetically inferior and living under state supervision in prisons, almshouses, mental institutions. Sterilization should begin in state-run institutions (less than 1% of the population) then gradually expand into the general population for people found to be feebleminded. Defectives, he believes, can be cut from 10% (his estimate) to 2.77% by 1970, and 1.32% by 1985.³⁶ In 1925 the Scopes “Monkey” Trial continues to build eugenics momentum as William Jennings Bryan’s is unable to defend the Bible and Clarence Darrow (for Scopes) uses Davenport’s texts to successfully argue in favor of evolution. This proves to be a turning point as Christian fundamentalists (a key opponent to eugenics along with the Catholic Church) who retreat from the public political arena for six decades. These developments are being followed by Adolf Hitler who is sitting in prison after a failed coup attempt and is finishing his political manifesto, *Mein Kampf*.

In 1927 a Supreme Court case, *Buck v. Bell*, solidifies the turn towards eugenics and ends the legal assault against sterilization laws. The plaintiff, Carrie Buck, is 17 when raped by a member of her foster family. Institutionalized in the Virginia State Colony for Epileptics and Feebleminded, she is sterilized for being diagnosed as “feeble-minded” under the authority of the Eugenical Sterilization Act of 1924, part of Virginia’s eugenics program. Arthur Estabrook, a doctor representing the ERO, testifies to Carrie’s “feeble-mindedness” because, he says, his interviews with her proves it. The U.S. Supreme Court rules (8-1) that the Constitution does not prohibit forced sterilization of U.S. citizens. This ruling overturns the 14th Amendment’s equal protection and due process under the law. Citizens of the “wrong type” (unfit) can be sterilized against their will. Emma Buck, Carrie’s mother is also ruled to be “feeble-minded” and sterilized along with Carrie’s child.

³² This immigration restriction act will remain the law of the land until it is revised with the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 and replaced by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.

³³ Okrent, 345.

³⁴ John Meacham, *The Soul of America: The Battle for Our Better Angels* (New York: Random House, 2018),

³⁵ Bruinius, 266.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 213.

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes (known for support of individual rights and judicial restraint) writes that a state statute permitting compulsory sterilization of unfit inmates in state institutions, including the intellectually disabled, is necessary "for the protection and health of the state." "It is better for all the world if, instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind....Three generations of imbeciles are enough."³⁷ The door is now wide open. Harry Laughlin intensifies his lobbying of legislatures, eugenics societies form, and the U.S. becomes the first country to pass eugenic legislation. Estabrook works with Indiana to help them pass a new forceable sterilization law (that remains the law until 1974). German jurists study how U.S. lawyers are getting laws passed.

In 1928 the Human Betterment Foundation is formed in Pasadena California by a wealthy and noteworthy group who will coordinate California's eugenics work while utilizing propaganda and education to promote forced sterilizations. In 1931, Vermont passes its sterilization law (29th state) and approximately 200 people: poor, disabled, French-Canadians, and Native Americans (Abenaki), are sterilized. In 1937 a *Fortune Magazine* poll reveals that two in three Americans favor forced sterilizations of mental defectives.

How Does the American Experience Influence Nazi Germany?

Hitler knows little about the U.S. and cares less. His views are wildly superficial. He likes the KKK. Hitler studies Madison Grant and is fascinated by the United States and its eugenics race laws and praises it as a country with "Nordic" pride in its politics.³⁸ Hitler cites Grant in his speeches, writes Grant a fan letter, and at the time of suicide in the bunker below Berlin, he has an autographed copy of Grant's book "warmly inscribed" to him. Hitler praises Henry Ford, an American antisemite whose writings, shaped by the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* fraud,³⁹ are fueling global antisemitism. Hitler has Ford's picture in his office. Hitler's fixation with the U.S. is evident in *Mein Kampf* (1925). His imagination and sense of purpose is shaped by American and German eugenicists and racists. He writes, "There is today one state in which at least weak beginnings toward a better conception [of citizenship] are noticeable. Of course, it is not our model German Republic, but the United States."

Hitler salutes the U.S. as the one state in which at least they are "simply excluding certain races from naturalization." He notes that U.S. states divide inhabitants into three categories: citizens, nationals [blacks, indigenous], and non-citizen nationals [Puerto Rico...]. He admires Americans who use immigration acts to keep "undesirables" out. In 1928 his unpublished second volume of *Mein Kampf* incorporates the U.S. Immigration Acts of 1921 and 1924 and applies them to the Nazi Party platform. In 1928 a Hitler speech admires how Americans "gunned down the millions of Redskins to a few hundred thousand, and now keep the modest remnant under observation in a cage."⁴⁰ His *lebensraum* "race and space" plan (originally a German plan for Eastern Europe in 1914) imagines a "wild east" that includes murder and "reservations". It is justified, he argues, by U.S. precedents: Nordic peoples extermination of indigenous, Mexicans, creation of an internal market, and an economy built on slavery.⁴¹ In June 1941 as the attack on the USSR begins, Hitler refers to the Volga River as our Mississippi".

On January 21, 1933, Hitler is named chancellor of Germany by President Hindenberg. Hitler's focus, backed by the conservative and nationalist coalitions that support him, is to destroy Germany democracy from within. He also wants to create a race state. In a 1933 speech to Nazi doctors he proclaims that, "I cannot do without you for a single day, not a single hour. If not for you, if you fail me, then all is lost."⁴² Eugene Fischer is named the rector of the University of

³⁷ <https://www.npr.org/2017/03/24/521360544/the-supreme-court-ruling-that-led-to-70-000-forced-sterilizations>

³⁸ James Whitman, *Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 46-47.

³⁹ The infamous *Protocols* fraud is also one of the main sources for the QAnon conspiracy theory that becomes mainstream during the Presidency of Donald Trump and the COVID 19 pandemic.

⁴⁰ Whitman, 9.

⁴¹ Michael Letsinger, "The Nazi Genocide: Eugenics, Ideology, and Implementation (1933-1945)", Thesis presented to the faculty of the Department of history, East Tennessee University, May 2015.

⁴² Okrent, 364.

Berlin in his inaugural address he states, [genetics] “has destroyed the theory of the equality of man.”⁴³ Hitler promotes himself as the “Doctor of the German People” and claims he identified Jews as a bacillus on society. Hitler often bragged about how closely he followed American eugenic legislation.

German Health Care and Health Science

Before WW I Germany is the standard and leading country in medicine and medical training. In ten years before WW II, 6 of 10 Nobel Prizes in Physiology and medicine are German or Austrian. The postwar trial of Nazi doctors utilizes the only two ethical guides in the Western world on human research - both are German. In 1900 Prussia responded to public outrage at clinical trials on syphilis by passing Ethical Standards for Human Subjects Research in Prussia. In 1931, those standards are adopted by the Weimar Republic and include the need for patient consent. Despite this, medical professionals join the Nazi Party in high numbers. Perhaps it is hubris driving them to believe that they are capable of solving social problems with medical solutions. Only Germany banned indoor smoking and studied its links to cancer. German doctors promoted self-examination for breast cancer and taught expectant mothers to avoid alcohol and tobacco. Despite these positive social programs, eugenics lays a key role and is supplanted by antisemitism. The Nazis pass laws to protect animals and outlaw vivisection (experiments on live animals). However, they make a sinister connection by outlawing kosher slaughter of animals and deliberately misrepresent Jewish practice to tie it to the myth of ritual killing (blood libel). The merger of political ideology with medicine conceptualizes and shapes Nazi actions and reshapes the goals of medicine. Curing and treating the nation as patient replaces the doctor/patient relationship. Accepting antisemitic lies is interwoven with social action. When asked by an inmate how he could reconcile Auschwitz’s smoking chimneys with the Hippocratic oath that requires the preservation of life, SS Dr. Fritz Klein responds, “Of course I am a doctor and I want to preserve life. And out of respect for human life, I would remove a gangrenous appendix from a diseased body. The Jew is the gangrenous appendix in the body of mankind.”⁴⁴

German Eugenic Sterilization Law

In 1927 forced sterilization is already being discussed by Bavaria government officials, who view it as desirable, but illegal under existing law requiring sterilization to be voluntary. Having failed to pass eugenics legislation after World War I (the Weimar Republic is drafting a voluntary sterilization law in 1932), the new Nazi Reich Health Office orders German consuls to study U.S. publications to discover how and why the Americans have been successful. Fritz Lenz, Nazi Party member, begins studying American eugenicist Paul Popenoe’s *Eugenic Sterilization in California* in the *Journal of Heredity* (1928) and Eugene Gosney and Paul Popenoe’s, *Sterilization for Human Betterment: A Summary of Results of 6,000 Operations in California, 1909-29*. (1929). Popenoe asserts that the Nazis are not racists, but progressive scientists and praises Hitler’s careful reading of Fischer, Bauer, and Fritz Lenz’s *Human Heredity and Race Hygiene*, rooted in the U.S. Army intelligence tests and perhaps the most widely-read eugenics book.⁴⁵ Fritz Lenz becomes a main link to U.S. eugenics due to his relationships with Davenport and Laughlin. Walter Schultze, physician and educator, calls for German geneticists to head example of U.S., its immigration laws and sterilization campaign. The *Nazi Handbook for Law and Legislation* specifically cites American immigration law as a model for Germany. Dr. Hans Maccos’s book *Racial Problems of the Third Reich* (1933) calls for the immediate sterilization of the “Rhineland bastards” gypsies and black jazz musicians.

On July 14, 1933, Germany passes its first eugenics law, the Law for the “Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases” that mandates involuntary sterilization of people with physical and mental disabilities or mental illness, Roma (Gypsies), “asocial elements,” and Afro-Germans. The connection to the U.S. is direct. The anti-democratic thread of the eugenics movement is also front and center when the date of the beginning of the French Revolution (that has brought about the “false” ideology of the brotherhood of men) is chosen. The announcement of the law is delayed until July 25, 1933 in order not to interfere with the Concordat with the Vatican that is announced on July 14, 1933.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/09/21/magazine/german-doctors-and-the-final-solution.html>

⁴⁵ Sefan Kühl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (New York: Oxford, 1994), 50.

The impact is immediate. Large numbers of forced sterilizations begin of patients who are denounced by doctors relying on specifically constructed IQ test (relying on the U.S. experience) for their diagnoses. During the test, the interviewer (modeling on the work of the ERO) observes a person's eyes, voice, expression... The Nazi legislation creates an "incurables census", a nationwide search for social undesirables conducted by all local doctors, private nurses, prisons. There are also Hereditary Health Courts (3 people: judge, doctor, and doctor with expertise in heredity) attached to lower courts of general jurisdiction. The law also creates appellate courts of hereditary health attached to regional circuit courts. All rulings are to be reviewed by the German State Sterilization Superior Court whose decisions are final. Well-known geneticists, psychiatrists, and anthropologists sit on the courts. This creates the illusion of legality and due process as the courts mandate the sterilizations of an estimated 400,000 Germans.⁴⁶



1936, German Federal Archive.

Harry Laughlin receives the full text of the Nazi sterilization law from German consul Otto Krepfgust days after it is passed. Laughlin is stunned and flattered as the Germans are implementing his ideas which have not gained mainstream traction in the United States. "The text of the German statute reads almost like the 'American model sterilization law'" he beams.⁴⁷ All that he reads are his ideas: Statewide surveys and field data, special state courts, using state-run medical institutions, are part of the "due process" he believes needs to be the cornerstone of sterilization law. The Nazis have developed their sterilization law by utilizing Laughlin's Model Sterilization Law of 1922. It is an important contribution. The target groups are almost identical.

Laughlin's Model Sterilization Law (1922):

(1) Feeble-minded; (2) Insane (including the psychopathic); (3) Criminals (including the delinquent and wayward); (4) Epileptic; (5) Inebriate (including drug-habitues); (6) Diseased (including the tuberculous, the syphilitic, the leprous, and others with chronic, infectious and legally segregable diseases); (7) Blind (including those with seriously impaired vision); (8) Deaf (including those with seriously impaired hearing); (9) Deformed (including the crippled); and (10) Dependent (including orphans, ne'er-do-wells, the homeless and paupers).

Nazi Law for the Prevention of Hereditary Diseased Offspring (1933)

Any person will be considered as hereditarily diseased who is suffering from any one of the following diseases:

(1) Congenital Mental Deficiency; (2) Schizophrenia; (3) Manic-Depressive Insanity; (4) Hereditary Epilepsy; (5) Hereditary (2) Chorea (Huntington's); (6) Hereditary Blindness; (7) Hereditary Deafness; (8) Any severe hereditary deformity; (9) Any person suffering from severe alcoholism may be also rendered incapable of procreation.⁴⁸

The sterilization law uses California (Human Betterment Foundation) precedents as well. Some U.S. newspaper editors note with concern that "Hitlerites" will apply the law to Jews and political opponents. However, the American Eugenics Society views the Nazi law as the logical development of earlier thinking by Germany's "best specialists" and not as "the hasty improvisation of the Hitler regime."⁴⁹ Hitler's sterilization policy, they argue, demonstrates his great courage and statesmanship! These are "positive advancements" against criminal activity by centralizing eugenic laws and removing loopholes! The American Eugenics Research Association offers membership to Fischer and Rüdin. Heinrich Krieger, a German lawyer and perhaps the single most important figure in assimilating American race law into Nazi laws, spends the 1933-34 academic year as an exchange student at University of Arkansas Law School.



"We Are Not Alone"
1930s Nazi poster
points to other
forced sterilizations.

Lothrop Stoddard travels to Germany in 1939, visits Hitler and Himmler, and writes: *Into the Darkness: Nazi Germany Today* which praises, in great detail, the work of the "Eugenics courts".

⁴⁶ <https://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/traveling-exhibitions/deadly-medicine>

⁴⁷ Bruinius, 279.

⁴⁸ USHMM online lecture, "History of Eugenics", Patricia Rice and Lutz Kaelber.

⁴⁹ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-biological-state-nazi-racial-hygiene-1933-1939>.

Other Nazi Eugenic Initiatives:

In February 1935 a meeting is held, “Ways of solving the [Rhineland] bastard question” to deal with German citizens born to unwed mothers who had relations with black French soldiers. The Nazis have located 385 children, 370 of whom are children of French soldiers (learned from the 1933 compulsory registration of “half breeds”). Facing the German civil law constraints that sterilizations have to be voluntary, the committee wrestles with possible solutions. Should they create a new law? No, possible public debate might bring a backlash. Should they ask doctors to sterilize them, but have them make up fake justifications or symptoms? At this stage, they are not sure they can trust doctors. Can they deport them? The Foreign Office reports that other countries will not accept them. Significantly, tying black race prejudice to the “Jewish problem” the committee wonders if the laws and perhaps deportation can be applied to Jews.



Slide of doctors working at an asylum for the mentally ill. “Life only as a burden.” Germany, 1934. — USHMM, courtesy of Marion Davy

In June 1935 the Nazi sterilization law is amended to force abortion if Hereditary Health Courts find any pregnant women to be unfit. In October 1935 the Marriage Health Law mandates screening of the entire population to prevent marriages of those with hereditary degeneracy. In November 1933 the Law “Against Dangerous Habitual Criminals” allows courts to commit “asocials” to state hospitals and mandates castration for sex offenders. Eugenicists believe in removing an economic safety net for the unfit and remove Jews (“non-Aryans”) and “gypsies” (Roma/Sinti) from public welfare. Local governments have an incentive to remove as many “undesirables” as possible as they are responsible for paying the mandated health care costs. In 1934 Sweden’s Democratic Party passes a Sterilization Act which is supported by the Swedish Lutheran Church. From 1935-1975, Sweden sterilizes 63,000 people.⁵⁰ In November 1933 the “Law Against Dangerous Habitual Criminals” allows arrests of Romani, “asocials”, beggars, vagrants, homeless, alcoholics. In June 1935, the Nazi sterilization law is amended to force abortion if Hereditary Health courts find any pregnant women to be unfit. In October 1935, the Marriage Health Law mandates screening for entire population to prevent marriages of those with hereditary degeneracy.

Eugenics, Race Law, and the Jews

In September 1933 Hitler sends a memorandum to the Prussian Ministry of Interior to create anti-Jewish and race laws. On June 5, 1934, Hitler’s Minister of Justice Roland Freisler chairs a meeting of lawyers to craft what will become the Nuremberg Laws. They begin discussing what they have learned about U.S. race law, mostly from Krieger. The *National Socialist Handbook for Law and Legislation* (1934-35) devotes about a quarter of the book to U.S. legislation – including rules governing American Indians; citizenship criteria for Filipinos, Puerto Ricans and African Americans; immigration regulation; and anti-miscegenation laws. The question they are asking is, “How can we apply these laws to German Jews?”

The Nazis admire Jim Crow laws and segregation, but in 1933, see Jim Crow as “too radical” for Nazi Germany. This reflects the initial struggle between radical and more moderate lawyers in the Nazi Party and also a recognition of its legal flaws which made it inactionable in the German legal system. In America, judges and sheriffs can be elected. They can rule to overturn federal law. Additionally, the study of U.S. state laws reveal that each has different ways to of defining who counts as white or Black. Indeed, the American one drop rule (any drop of black blood made you Black) was just too extreme for Nazi race thinkers. Although Jim Crow was admirable, especially the lynching aspect, the system was not transferable because Blacks are already oppressed, poor, and segregated in the U.S. More radical action is needed for Jews. As pressure grows from the SA brownshirts and more radical Nazis to “do something” about the Jews, Nazi lawyers focus on “race hygiene” and “race defilement”. This is an easier link as they examine how 30 U.S. states prohibit, and some even criminalize, intermarriage with Blacks, Asians, and Native Americans.

⁵⁰ Letsinger.



The Nazis will utilize the racist lie that Blacks are biologically predisposed to be sexually aggressive. Grafting these stereotypes onto Jews (note how the Jewish stereotype is also black in this “Race defilement” poster from the USHMM) and utilizing American law to make Jews second-class citizens (nationals) will be the basis of the Nuremberg Laws. In essence, the Nazis will turn German Jews into American Blacks. A key vehicle in normalizing this are German health care professionals. With the only rules for ethical conduct for experimentation (later used as the only standard and against them at the Nuremberg Trials), German doctors are on the cutting edge in connecting smoking to cancer and warning of the dangers of alcohol for pregnant women. They connect Jews to a secret conspiracy to undermine the public health. This belief will justify behavior and allow physicians to ignore the Hippocratic oath. At his trial after in 1945, SS Doctor Fritz Klein is asked how he could reconcile Auschwitz’s smoking chimneys with the Hippocratic oath that requires the preservation of life:

“Of course I am a doctor and I want to preserve life. And out of respect for human life, I would remove a gangrenous appendix from a diseased body. The Jew is the gangrenous appendix in the body of mankind.”

The Nuremberg Laws | September 15, 1935

The Nuremberg Laws are the bedrock of Nazi race laws. They owe a lot to American precedents. The “Reich Citizenship Law” strips Jews of full citizenship and political rights by distinguishing between “Reich citizens” (“German/Aryan” blood) and “nationals.” German Jews have been assigned the legal designation of American Blacks. The “Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor” forbids intermarriage with Jews to end “race defilement”. This too is based on American legal precedent. Unlike the one-drop rule, however, a Jew (“non-Aryan”) is defined as a person with three or four Jewish grandparents belonging to a religious Jewish community. A Nazi magazine uses Jack Johnson (a Black American hero and boxer not allowed to return to the U.S. because of his marriage to a Parisien white woman) to promote the laws: “Mixed marriage between white and black are forbidden in most states of the union.”⁵¹

Eight days after the Nuremberg laws are declared Ludwig Fischer⁵² leads a group of 45 Nazi lawyers to New York City (Association of Nazi German Jurists) as a reward for their work codifying the Reich's race-based legal philosophy. The stated purpose: is to gain “special insight into the workings of American legal and economic life...”⁵³ A reception is held for them at the New York City Bar Association. In 1936 Roland Freisler publishes *Race Law in the United States*.⁵⁴

Children’s Euthanasia

In 1935 Hitler tells Gerhard Wagner, the Reich physician leader, that he will implement euthanasia when war breaks out. At this stage, this is only aspiration as Hitler cannot be certain when that will happen. In July, 1939, Gerhard Kretschmar,



a child with severe disabilities is killed (according to Brandt on the request of the parents). Hitler sees this as an appropriate step forward and with war approaching, he appoints Karl Brandt, 34, his personal doctor and Philipp Bouhler, 39, Chief of the Hitler’s private Chancellery (KdF)⁵⁵ to rid the Reich of children suffering from mental or physical defects. Brandt and Bouhler will carry out Hitler’s order through subterfuge and secrecy to ensure that the role of Hitler’s private Chancellery remains hidden. On August 18, 1939, Hitler authorizes a fictitious front organization, the “Reich Committee for the Scientific Registration of Severe Hereditary Ailments” to run the program through the KdF). The “Reich Committee” exists only on paper with mailing address of PO Box 101, Berlin W9. All officials use code names. Brandt is “Jennerwein”. From February through-May 1939, men charged with children’s euthanasia work out methods of implantation. They agree to bring patients to the gas chambers.



Hereditary Ailments” to run the program through the KdF). The “Reich Committee” exists only on paper with mailing address of PO Box 101, Berlin W9. All officials use code names. Brandt is “Jennerwein”. From February through-May 1939, men charged with children’s euthanasia work out methods of implantation. They agree to bring patients to the gas chambers.

⁵¹ Whitman, 64.

⁵² March 8, 1947: Fischer is executed for crimes perpetrated in his work overseeing the Warsaw ghetto.

⁵³ <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/11/what-america-taught-the-nazis/540630/>

⁵⁴ Freisler attends the January 2, 1942 Wannsee Conference that solidifies the Holocaust in the Nazi bureaucracy and becomes “raving Roland” and “Head hunter” as the President of the of the “People’s Court” from 1942 to 1945. He is killed by a B-17 bomb in February 1945.

⁵⁵ Hitler’s Private Chancellery is created on November 17, 1934 and led by Martin Bormann.

In July 1939 Brandt and Bouhler meet with Professor Werner Heyde, head of the SS medical department, to discuss plans to expand euthanasia to adults. They agree to create a national register of all institutionalised people with mental illnesses or physical disabilities. From August–October 1939, the Ministry of Interior helps the Reich Committee coordinate data collection. In October 1939 public health authorities encourage parents of children with disabilities to admit their children to specially designed pediatric clinics with new 22 “children’s wards” for “expert care”. The Reich Committee is advertizing these wards as places where brand new, groundbreaking therapeutic techniques have been developed to help cure their children. In reality, they are designed to be killing wards. No one seems to ask any questions or wonder why the one page registration form for patients is sent to a private post office box.

The Reich Committee has to organize the transfer children to the killing wards. Health authorities in federal states are asked to arrange the transfers disguised as “relocation” due to an emergency. If a child is in local hospital, parental permission is needed for transportation. The Ministry of Interior applied pressure to reluctant, especially poorer mothers, threatening to take away their custodial rights or threatening to assign mothers to contract labor.

The forms are sent to the Berlin post office box and two men retrieve them. Neither have medical training, but their responsibility is to decide which merit special attention of the medical experts. Three “experts”, Werner Catel, Hans Heinze, and Ernst Wentzler, base their decision to kill on a singular form form that they share. Each can see if the other has written a red cross, “kill”, a green minus “live”, or “observation” if undecided.

The first gassings in Germany proper take place in January 1940 at the Brandenburg Euthanasia Center. Doctors also choose starvation or medication (barbiturates, sleeping pills, morphine as a second choice, are preferred) to do the killing. Doctors order nurses to dissolve pills in liquid (lace raspberry juice with poison). This will allow the perpetrator doctors profession and psychological cover as the deaths will appear to have come from an overdose from a common medication. The medication also did not cause instant death, but “complications” (pneumonia) which kills in 2-3 days. Physicians then report, with clean consciences, a “natural death”. Afterwards, many describe their victims as suffering, useless eaters, and burdensome. Getting the medicine could be problematic so the Reich Committee asks the SS to help. The SS tasks its Kripo (police detectives) to provide the medicines and during the war the Waffen SS helps. The killing hospitals serve as a laboratory that provides the opportunity for professional certification, achieving advanced degrees through coursework, and experience with autopsies. Doctors use their own initiative to visit local institutions to select patients – especially at institutions that have not submitted forms.

On June 18, 1940, the Ministry of Interior asks the welfare system to underwrite the costs of needy families – pointing to advanced scientific therapies – advising them that their investment could improve a handful of lives and create future savings in the welfare system. The Reich Committee tries to induce patients, whenever possible, or welfare agencies, to pay for what will be secret killings. By the end of 1942, the doctors report 93,521 “beds emptied”.⁵⁶

Aktion T4

Bouhler convinces Hitler to expand the “euthanasia” program to teens and handicapped adults. Some of this is already taking place, but now it becomes systemic. The cost-benefit analysis that had guided earlier eugenic thinking is discarded. Child “euthanasia” doctors are tasked and new leaders are recruited by Himmler to expand the program. One such leader recruited by Himmler is Professor Werner Hyde, Theodore Eicke’s psychiatrist. Eicke had been released from an asylum by Himmler and named the commandant of Dachau and later, organizer of the concentration camps (KL). The new staff is recruited through Party affiliations or join voluntarily. All sign a secrecy oath.

In September 1939 the first disabled adults murdered are Poles. They are shot by SS Einsatzkommando 16, Selbstschutz and EK-Einmann commanded by SS-Sturmbannführer Rudolf Tröger, under the overall command of Reinhard Heydrich. In October 1939 the first experiments with the gassing takes place at Fort VII in Posen (occupied Poznań), where hundreds of prisoners are killed by carbon monoxide poisoning,

⁵⁶ R.J. Lifton, *The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 1986), 142.

On August 18, 1939, the Ministry of the Interior circulates a decree requiring all physicians, nurses, and midwives to report newborn infants and children under the age of three who showed signs of severe mental or physical disability. On September 21, 1939 the decree is sent to German states. In Autumn 1939 Hitler signs a secret order (responding to the needs of the KdF and specifically to Himmler who is seeking cover) to convince doctors, administrators, and medical staff that they will not be prosecuted for killing patients. This allays any fears that they will be prosecuted though the pre-Nazi penal code's articles 211 and 212 which prohibit intentional killings. The order is backdated to September 1, 1939, to suggest that their work is related to wartime emergencies.

Viktor Brack will administer the T4 killings which he, Bouhler, and Brandt have disguised as the "Charitable Foundation for Cure and Institutional Care". Building on the child "euthanasia" program, T4 planners circulate questionnaires to all public health officials, public and private hospitals, mental institutions, and nursing homes for the chronically ill and aged. A cover letter and short form suggests that it is simply an effort to collect statistical data. As part of the funding mechanism T4 will collect per diem payments for patients already killed. To prevent tracing them and to create more subterfuge, patients are often sent to transit centers in major hospitals. They are moved again to the "special treatment" centers via the "Community Patients Transports Service". The T4 public health killing centers are operated by SS men wearing white coats to make it appear that patients are receiving medical care. Other front organizations include the "Reich Cooperative for State Hospitals and Nursing Homes", "Charitable Foundation for Institutional Cases" and so on. Each T4 center has a personnel office, but the number of staff is relatively small. Hadamar has a staff of 130-140 and Berburg 42.

In December 1939/January 1940, eight patients in Brandenburg are gassed with carbon monoxide in a "demonstration" to prove this method is more effective than the use of drugs. Nazi Party dignitaries write up a report to Hitler and Hitler writes back to approve gassing. T4 engineers will innovate with the invention of gas chambers and crematoria and disguise them as showers. T4 establishes six killing centers (only 4 operate at a time). Brandenburg, for example, closes in July 1940 because the crematoria smells. Fear of local responses of relatives lead to closing of Brandenburg and Grafenech.



Hadamar Institute personnel socializing, between 1940 and 1942. USHMM

New methods and techniques are developed to deceive and lure victims into gas chambers, disguised as showers. At first, the patients' clothing is sorted, labeled, and given a number.

A patient is taken to exam room where a doctor will give a quick examination. The doctor is actually making certain that the records are accurate and are looking carefully for scars (appendicitis) or other marks as they consider which of the T4 recommended causes of death they will register. Those with gold teeth are identified with a cross on their backs. The patient then enters a room to be photographed. They are then instructed to enter a room where they are told to receive treatment and inhale the medicine deeply. Hitler specifically authorizes doctors to conduct the gassing. The gas works in about five minutes. The staff then vents the chamber for two hours then take the corpses to the crematoria. The looting (gold, organs to study) now takes place as the autopsies give young doctors the training and academic credit needed toward their specialization. The killing center staff does the paperwork to trick relatives and secure payments. Killing center staff does paperwork to trick relatives. Three letters are sent to families: A notification of patient transfer, the announcing of "safe arrival" at a "treatment center" and telling families they will be notified "immediately" of changes in patient's condition or if visitations will be allowed, and then the letter from the "Condolence Letter Department". They typically wait ten days or more to send out a death notice and stagger them if victims come from the same area. Reflecting the moral shift and brutalization of the perpetrators, Walter Hess, a T4 engineer interviewed after the war was confused by the earnest questions asking about his participation. "What are you talking about; after all, it [gas] works."⁵⁷ T4 chemists Albert Widmann and August Becker will help *Einsatzgruppen* ("special task force"/SS murder units) with killing experiments.

The Judiciary learns about T4 early on in May 1940. State attorneys begin asking about the whereabouts of their charges. Receiving no response they report their misgivings to the Reich Ministry of Finance (RfM). Even though criticizing he

⁵⁷ Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1996), 86.

regime has been made illegal,⁵⁸ the perpetrators fear that the complaints might go public or be revealed in open court. The Judiciary, having ruled repeatedly that Hitler has full legal authority if he follows legal procedure, asks for a law to regulate killings or to end them. Pressure is exerted to stop the Judiciary which decides to cooperate with managers of T4. On April 23-24, 1941 Franz Schlegeberger, State Secretary in the Reich Ministry of Justice, meets with the attorneys general. Details of the T4 program are revealed and instructions are issued on how to officially respond to inquiries. No one objects.

Operation 14f13:

In Spring 1941 the SS turns to the KdF to utilize T4. Nazi relationships are important as the killing expands and accelerates (such as T4 expert Werner Heyde's relationship with Himmler favorite Theoder Eicke). Philipp Bouhler and Heinrich Himmler agree to use T4 expertise (technology and techniques) in concentration camps to kill ("retire") prisoners who are unable to work, are too weak or are sick. SS camp doctors preselect victims and T4 doctors visit concentration camps to expediate them using the earlier questionnaire for patients they have previously developed. All T4 doctors are members of the Nazi party. Bouhler offers T4 expertise in order to retain control of his institutions over the SS who are expanding their killing as well. From March-April 1941 ambitious and ruthless doctors, like psychiatrist Friedrich Mennecke,⁵⁹ are sent from T4 to KL to find "life unworthy of life" for "special treatment." The doctors often bring their families along for a vacation.



Friedrich
Mennecke

Soon concentration camps decide to murder on site rather than to transfer prisoners to T4 facilities. This first concentration camp gassing takes place in Sachsenhausen in April 1941. The code name reflects SS record-keeping: "14" (Concentration Camps Inspector), "f" (German word "deaths" *Todesfälle*) and "13" (the cause of death, in this case "special treatment", a bureaucratic euphemism for gassing).⁶⁰ Unlike the tightly controlled hospitals, the concentration camps have no need of subteruge and the deceptions crumble. SS guards brag about their deeds and the clothes and possessions of the victims are brought back to camps after the murders. T4 bureaucrats had sent the clothes of the victims home or to public relief (minus any clothes that had traces of gas). In 1941 many T4 doctors are transferred east to Lublin to assist with the gassing camps emergin in th East. These camps will utilize T4 subteruge techniques. Concentration camps begin to kill without waiting for doctors to arrive. In reality, the doctors are only needed for bureaucratic processes and paperwork. Bouhler, facing rivals to his power, is able to expand his influence and keep control of T4 and its built-in money making mechanisms.

Not everyone is on board. Rumors spread throughout Germany in 1940 and parents begin withdrawing their relatives from institutions. Some doctors help with the discharges of patients and provide new diagnoses. As protest letters begin to arrive to the Reich Chancellery and the Ministry of Justice, some from Nazi Party members, the SS report growing public opposition to the suspicious deaths in places like Hartheim. There is some protest from Protestant leaders and Catholic leaders as well. The Vatican protests in December 1940, but this is not generally upheld by German Catholic leaders. In December 1940 Himmler closes Grafeneck Euthanasia Center due to the lack of cooperation from the local population and church protests. In the summer of 1941 the Bishop of Münster, Clemens von Galen's sermons (not reported by the German press, but circulated and eventually dropped on German troops by the RAF) and statements (sent directly to Hitler via telegram) do lead to widespread public protests.

On August 24, 1941, Hitler orders the T4 (adult euthanasia) to stop. Historian Richard J. Evans credits the Church protests and public response while historian Henry Friedlander credits the public outrage as the secrecy of the program is lost, family members disappear, and the smell and ashes from the crematoria invade their communities. In response to public opposition and knowing that he has put his name on the order (something he did not consider to be murder) Hitler also

⁵⁸ March 21, 1933: Decree Against Malicious Attacks criminalizes statements harmful to the regime and stop criminal investigations of members of the National Socialist (Nazi) government.

⁵⁹ Mennecke is executed for his crimes in 1947.

⁶⁰ Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Ippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945*. (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 161

needs to distance himself. Hitler will never sign another mass murder order and the “final solution” (the Holocaust) will be ordered via the phone. Meanwhile, about one hundred T4 experts are out of work. Their experience with gas and conducting clandestine killing operations (it was illegal) will be a valuable asset.

In Spring 1942 Action 14f13 is scaled down and ends in 1943. T4 experts now offer their services to the killing campaign in the East. They ask for transfers. The killing hospitals continue their work on their own and devolve into “wild camps” where doctors and nurses continue to murder patients and, as the war continues, the elderly who have come to hospitals to escape the Allied bombing campaign. By 1945, at least 200,000 are killed. The last victim is a four year-old boy murdered in a Bavarian hospital on May 29, 1945. (Germany surrenders on May 7, 1945).

T4 and the Holocaust

After Hitler’s August 1941 cessation order, it is important for T4 leaders to keep their experienced staff together in anticipation of gassing being utilized in the future. In Poland, SS General Odilo Globocnik, a thug and criminal who has worked his way to top leadership in Poland, is tasked by Himmler to mass murder the Jews in Poland.⁶¹ Globocnik seeks out expertise to help figure out the best methods. In September 1941, Philipp Bouhler and Viktor Brack (who commands the men and women Bouhler has organized for volunteer service in the East) meet with Globocnik in Lublin, Poland. Soon after, Globocnik writes a memorandum to Himmler suggesting various approaches. By October, it is suspected that Globocnik, along with his collaborator SS Major Christian Wirth, have recommended assembly line mass gassing to Himmler. On October 15, 1941, the day after he meets with Reinhard Heydrich, Himmler assigns Globocnik to utilize Majdeniek and build gassing camps at Belzec, Treblinka, Sobibor to mass murder Jews. Globocnik needs staff to run his killing centers and turns to the experts in T4. In April 1942 Globocnik meets with Bouhler and Brack in Berlin and most likely agree to cooperate in implementing what will soon be called “Operation Reinhard” after the assassination of Heydrich in June 1942.⁶² These camps are built and staffed by T4 veterans.

Christian Wirth is transferred from his euthanasia center in Germany to oversee Chelmno, the first of six “extermination” camps in the East. He applies his experience of killing with carbon monoxide exhaust fumes (including ways to fool the victims) to the construction of the Operation Reinhard killing centers of Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka. He is appointed the first Commandant of the Belzec which begins its gassing murders in March 1942. Wirth later serves as inspector of the killing camps. He is killed by a Yugoslav partisan on May 26, 1944. Irmfried Eberl, the first commandant of Treblinka, is a physician and veteran of T-4. In August 1942 he is replaced by Franz Reichleitner, another T-4 vet. Franz Stangl is recruited from T4 and transferred to become commandant of Sobibor and then Treblinka. The fake train station at Teblinka uses deception tactics such as posting fake travel posters and marking a side door with a red cross marked “infirmary”. In reality, the door leads to a killing pit for those too weak to go to the gas chambers. SS notation: the patient was “cured” with “one pill”. Stangl is remembered for his distinct white lab coat that he wore as commandant. In 1970 Stangl is extradited from Brazil to West Germany. Given life sentence, he dies of heart attack in 1971.

Although doctors are no longer needed in the process of mass murder, German doctors offer their services on the premise that Hitler has authorized them to be in charge of the gasings. Auschwitz, as an example, offers unlimited possibilities for experimentation, professional growth, and exploitation. Doctors who are prisoners in the camps are forced to perform experiments and then provide their research papers to Nazi doctors. Doctors were assigned ramp duty to help in the selection process. T4 officials utilize their experience to find new jobs with the SS.

Epilogue

In 1946 Karl Brandt, Hitler’s doctor and leader of euthanasia program, and others, faced justice at the Doctors Trial at Nuremberg. The only legal precedent prosecutors could find came from Weimar Germany that had created an ethical code on human experimentation and the legal doctrine of informed consent. In their defense (Brandt was an accomplished liar) they invoked the Buck v Bell sterilization decision, Madison Grant’s, *The Passing of the Great Race*, and the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924. Indeed, they were often being tried for practices (forced sterilization) that were prevalent

⁶¹ Globocnik will be captured in June 1945 and commits suicide.

⁶² Friedlander, 297.

in the U.S. They did not say they were “following orders” but following the Americans.⁶³ Nazi doctors rejected the notion that Weimar laws applied to them. In 1947 *US vs Brandt* created the ethical standards for modern medicine which included informed consent and freedom from coercion. Dr. Karl Brandt was hung on June 2, 1948. In 1976 The Belmont Report, written by the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, identified basic ethical principles and guidelines that address ethical issues arising from the conduct of research with human subjects.

Charles Davenport stopped writing Nazis like Eugene Fischer and Ernst Rüdin in 1933, making it clear to them that he opposed Nazism. However, he kept up his connections with Nazi institutions and publications and never reflected upon his contributions to Nazi eugenics nor did he publicly disavow scientific racism. He continued to oppose taxes for social safety nets. In a 1938 Letter to the Editor of *Life* magazine, Davenport criticized both FDR and Goebbels as examples of crippled statesmen “burdening their country” with heavy taxes. He had a significant influence in funding genetics research. Even though he explained weakness and illness as biological weakness, his daughter was dyslexic and his son was often ill, He died of pneumonia in 1944. He is still quoted by white supremacists.

Harry Laughlin was awarded an honorary degree from University of Heidelberg in 1937. In 1936, the university had purged 47 Jewish professors which sparked a British boycott of German universities. The diploma which he picked up at the German consulate in New York City recognized him as “the farseeing representative of racial policy in America”.⁶⁴ Laughlin wrote a thank you letter to Carl Schneider, a professor at the university and later the senior researcher for Action T4. Schneider commits suicide while being tried for war crimes in 1946. Laughlin was forced to retire from the ERO in 1939 after a series of seizures (thought to be epilepsy). He died in January 1944 having fathered no children.

Due to Nazi expansion in its “race hygiene” program eugenics lost its momentum in the United States. Harvard rejected money to create a Eugenics department. In 1928, Henry Goddard retracted some of his work. In 1934, the IRL softened its race-baiting and discussed immigration as an economic “problem.” In 1936, Hollywood lampooned eugenics mating programs with *College Holiday*. The American Museum of Natural History began to turn away from and hide its eugenics history. Scholars declared Davenport and Laughlin's mountains of data as useless. In 1939 The Carnegie Institute shut off funding for Cold Harbor Springs and the ERO closes. Modern science has debunked eugenics theory and the 1990s sequencing of the human genome demolishes it. Of note, although Germans kill almost all of their schizophrenic patients during the war, in the post war years, Germany had the same amount of schizophrenic patients as other countries in Europe.

The U.S. Supreme Court has never overturned *Buck v. Bell*. It is weakened by *Skinner v. Oklahoma* (1942) and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which guarantees protections from the federal government to people with disabilities, including the intellectually disabled. Although debunked, Eugenics thinking still has a terrible legacy in the United States. The U.S. medical profession ignored the ethical implications for twenty-five years after the war.

- 1920s-1980s: Black women in Southern states were threatened with losing welfare benefits if they did not consent to sterilization. The “Mississippi Appendectomy” was the involuntary sterilization of poor, Black women.
- Georgia, North Carolina, Iowa, Virginia, and CA (Mexican, Mexican-American, and Chicana women), continue sterilization into the 1950s.
- 1930s-1970s: Nearly 1/3rd of the female population in Puerto Rico is sterilized; at the time, the highest rate in the world.
- 1950s: Majority of Americans oppose inter-racial marriage.
- 1950s-60s: North Carolina: sterilization law extended to those not institutionalized and Native Americans.
- Georgia, North Carolina, and Iowa: sterilization numbers increase after World War II even after modern biology and genetics discredits eugenics, These states argue that deviance is biologically spread.

⁶³ Okrent, 392-393.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 371.

- California, by 1964, a total of 20,108 people are sterilized, making that the largest amount in all of the United States
- 1930s-1970s, nearly 1/3rd of the female population in Puerto Rico is sterilized; at the time, this is the highest rate of sterilization in the world.
- 1967: Supreme Court rules Virginia's "Racial Integrity Act" unconstitutional. *Loving vs. Virginia* legalizes interracial marriage.
- 1970-1976: Approximately 40% of Native American women (60,000-70,000) and 10% of Native American men are sterilized by the Indian Health Service (IHS) in Arizona, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and South Dakota.
- 1972: Congressional testimony brings to light that at least 2,000 involuntary sterilizations have been performed on poor Black women in the South without their consent or knowledge.
- 1973-1976: 3,406 Native American women, 3,000 of which were of childbearing age, are sterilized by the Indian Health Service (IHS) in Arizona, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and South Dakota.
- 1978: Federal Sterilization Regulations outline a variety of prohibited sterilization practices that are often used to coerce or force women.
- 1979: The U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare released new regulations on informed consent for sterilization.
- 1994: Psychologist Richard Herrnstein and political scientist Charles Murray's *The Bell Curve* claims intelligence can be measured and is a key factor for success in America. They argue that intelligence is largely inherited, cannot be significantly influenced by environment (except adoption), and that progress is due to only a handful of intelligent people.⁶⁵
- 2006-10: 148 female prisoners in two California prisons are sterilized without consent.
- September 2014: California bans sterilization in correctional facilities, unless the procedure is required to save an inmate's life.
- December 2015: Eugenics Compensation Act. U.S. Senate votes unanimously to help surviving victims of forced sterilization. North Carolina has paid \$35,000 to 220 surviving victims of its eugenics program. Virginia will give surviving victims \$25,000 each.
- September 14, 2020: Complaints that women imprisoned at ICE Center in Ocilla, Georgia have undergone sterilizations.
- 2020: NFL agrees to compensate players with neurocognitive problems caused by head trauma (2012), but 2/3rds of the approximately 3,000 claims of dementia have been denied by doctors. Lawsuit accuses the NFL of using different cognitive baseline standard for black players who are "assumed, through a statistical manipulation called 'race-norming', to have started with worse cognitive functioning than former white players."
- 2022: Supreme Court passes a bill to protect same-sex and interracial marriages.

"Eugenics is a manifestation of power... it is the powerful dominating the powerless, in the most freedom restricting way possible – which is reproductive freedom... We expose it as a non-scientific idea... Eugenics was bigotry disguised as biology."⁶⁶ We build resiliency by facing and confronting difficult history. How can eugenics history help us confront the threat of racism and white supremacy? What do you do with difference? How do we discuss these difficult identity issues? Who determines what is "beautiful", "normal"? Why is "ugliness" a crime? How does looking back and confronting this history help us to notice, know, and own implicit biases? How does race, poverty, and gender impact policy? Importantly, how do the choices made by German doctors raise ethical and professional questions? There were no job applications for mass murderers in Nazi Germany. They were supplied by existing institutions and qualified individuals.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Letsinger.

⁶⁶ Adam Rutherford, *Control: The Dark History and Troubling Present of Eugenics*, W. W. Norton & Company, 2022.

⁶⁷ Henry Friedlander. *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution*. Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.