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REMARKS RELATING TO MY SPONTANEOUS AND UNREHEARSED TESTIMONY BEFORE THE *HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE'S SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION* ON THE HISTORICAL QUESTION OF EUGENICS AND RACISM DECEMBER 6, 2011, 1 PM.

*INTRODUCTION:* Preface: I come not as a Democrat or a Republican, nor as an advocate or adversary of the legislation now under consideration but rather as a historian who has chronicled the dark chapters of racist and genocidal eugenics in America and Nazi Germany. I will outline some historical points and answer questions.

My remarks will trace the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century collusion by government, academia, and tax exempt philanthropic organizations in a county-by-county and state-by-state crusade to eventually eliminate an estimated 90 percent of Americans. The population control and social engineering techniques debated and proffered to legislators included gas chambers, euthanasia, abortion, forced sterilization, confinement, and internal deportation. Many of these techniques were adopted into law, some were debated by legislatures, and some were adopted as *de facto* policy by governments. Targets were Blacks, Native Americans, Southern Italians, Eastern Europeans, Jews, Hispanics, the poor, criminals, the intellectually unaccepted, the so-called "shiftless," Appalachian whites with brown hair, and many others. Eventually, American eugenics proliferated its medicalized concept of racial supremacy into Nazi Germany which then emulated and expanded on what the U.S. had done. This was not less than a genocidal movement by the government against its own citizens, done in the name of progress. This movement did not end until the 1970s.

I attach some in-depth materials for the record to be considered in tandem with my testimony.

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## Eugenics in America

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### Government Death Panels and Mass Murder was Always an Option in 20th Century America's War Against the Weak

Edwin Black

August 24th 2009

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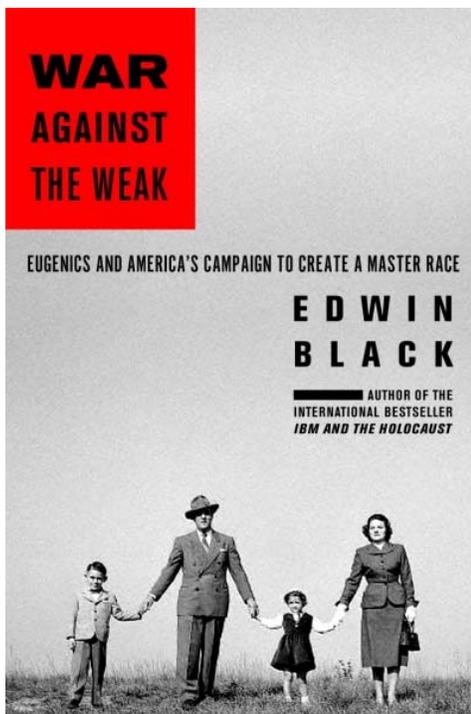
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This article is based on the award-winning bestseller *War Against the Weak--Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (Dialog Press). [Buy it here](#)

The summer of 2009 has been rife with misplaced fears about government death panels arising from proposed insurance reform. These fears are not based on anything in the proposed legislation. But government death panels and mass euthanasia were always a public option during the first decades of the twentieth century. This campaign to exterminate all those deemed socially or medically unworthy was not conducted by the worst segments of our society but by the elite of the American establishment. They saw themselves as liberals, progressive, do-gooders—and even utopians— trying to create a more perfect society.

The mission: eliminate the existence of the poor, immigrants, those of mixed parentage, and indeed anyone who did not approximate the blond-haired blue-eyed ideal they idealized. This racial type was termed Nordic, and it was socially deified by a broad movement of esteemed university professors, doctors, legislators, judges and writers. They called themselves eugenicists. This widely accepted extremist movement was virtually created and funded by millions in corporate philanthropy from the Carnegie Institution, the Rockefeller Foundation and the

Harriman railroad fortune through a complex of pseudoscientific institutions and population tracking offices at Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island. From there, leading academics supported by big money lead a termite-like proliferation of eugenics into the laws, social policies and curricula of the nation. During these turbulent decades, eugenics enjoyed the active support of the government, especially the U.S. Department of Agriculture which wanted to breed men the way they bred cattle, and many state and county offices.

Indeed, Eugenics was enacted into law in some 27 states during the first decades of the twentieth century, and then exalted as the law of the land by the U. S. Supreme Court. In a famous 1927 opinion, revered jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes compared social undesirables to bacteria to be wiped out. The sanctioned methods to be used were nothing less than a combination of pseudoscientific raceology, social engineering, ethnic cleansing and abject race law, designed to eliminate millions in an organized fashion. More specifically, the American eugenics movement sought to continually subtract the so-called “bottom tenth” of America. These were to include Blacks, Native Americans, Southern Italians, East Europeans, Jews, Hispanics, the poor, criminals, the intellectually unaccepted, the so-called “shiftless,” and many others. The drive for perfection even included excising the existence of Appalachians with brown hair, frequently rounded up by county officials for confinement. When this effort began in the early twentieth century, some fourteen million Americans were targeted for elimination.

#### Methods

To eliminate entire bloodlines of undesirables, American eugenics advocated marriage prohibition and marriage voiding for those deemed racially or socially undesirable. Such laws were enacted from coast to coast. These criminal sanctions for interracial marriage were not completely negated until 1960 when *Loving v Virginia* had such laws debunked.

Eugenics advocated detention or confinement camps—some would call them concentration camps. These were

 Yes

 No

 Unsure



established throughout Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey and other states to quarantine those considered otherwise unsuited to exist in society, especially the so-called “feeble-minded,” a never-defined and widely abused intelligence caste. Among the camps shrouded behind high-sounded names was The Vineland Training School in New Jersey and the Virginia Colony for the Epileptic and the Feeble-minded. Forced surgical sterilization of the undesired was imposed in jurisdictions across America. Some 60,000 individuals in 27 states, mostly young women, were forcibly sterilized, many without their knowledge, often by the use of trickery using misidentified medical procedures. Untold additional thousands were coercively or stealthily sterilized by federal programs. California led the union in forced sterilizations. But marriage restriction, concentration, and forced sterilization were always the B Plan.

For American eugenics, mass murder was always a public option.

### **Eugenic and Public Gas Chambers**

In 1911, the leading pioneer eugenicists, supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the American Breeders Association and the Carnegie Institution, met to propound a battle plan to create a master race of white, blond, blue-eyed Americans devoid of undesirables.

Point eight of the Preliminary Report of the Committee of the Eugenic Section of the American Breeders Association to Study and to Report on the Best Practical Means for Cutting Off the Defective Germ-Plasm in the Human Population specified euthanasia as a possibility to be considered. Of course, euthanasia was merely a euphemism—actually a misnomer. Eugenicists did not see euthanasia as a “merciful killing” of those in pain, but rather a “painless killing” of people deemed unworthy of life. The method most whispered about, and publicly denied, but never out of mind, was a “lethal chamber.”

The lethal chamber first emerged in Britain during the Victorian era as a humane means of killing stray dogs and cats. Dr. Benjamin Ward Richardson patented a “Lethal Chamber for the Painless Extinction of Lower Animal Life” in the 1880s. Richardson’s original blueprints showed a large wood- and glass-paneled chamber big enough for a Saint Bernard or several smaller dogs, serviced by a tall slender tank for carbonic acid gas, and a heating apparatus. In 1884 the Battersea Dogs Home in London became one of the first institutions to install the device, and used it continuously with “perfect success” according to a sales proposal at the time. By the turn of the century other charitable animal institutions in England and other European countries were also using the chamber.

This solution for unwanted pets was almost immediately contemplated as a solution for unwanted humans—criminals, the feeble-minded and other misfits. The concept of “the lethal chamber” was in common vernacular by the turn of the century. When mentioned, it needed no explanation; everyone understood what it meant.

In 1895, the British novelist Robert Chambers penned his vision of a horrifying world twenty-five years into the future. He wrote of a New York where the elevated trains were dismantled and “the first Government Lethal Chamber was opened on Washington Square.” No explanation of “Government Lethal Chamber” was offered—or necessary. Indeed, the idea of gassing the unwanted became a topic of contemporary chitchat. In 1901, the British author Arnold White, writing in *Efficiency and Empire*, chastised “flippant people of lazy mind [who] talk lightly of the ‘lethal chamber’...”

In 1905, the British eugenicist and birth control advocate H. G. Wells published *A Modern Utopia*. “There would be no killing, no lethal chambers,” he wrote. Another birth control advocate, the socialist writer Eden Paul, differed with Wells and declared that society must protect itself from “begetters of anti-social stocks which would injure generations to come. If it [society] reject the lethal chamber, what other alternative can the socialist state devise?”

The British eugenicist Robert Rentoul’s 1906 book, *Race Culture; Or, Race Suicide?*, included a long section entitled “The Murder of Degenerates.” In it, he routinely referred to Dr. D. F. Smith’s earlier suggestion that those found guilty of homicide be executed in a “lethal chamber” rather than by hanging. He then cited a new novel whose character “advocate[d] the doctrine of ‘euthanasia’ for those suffering from incurable physical diseases.” Rentoul admitted he had received many letters in support of killing the unfit, but he rejected them as too cruel, explaining, “These [suggestions] seem to fail to recognize that the killing off of few hundreds of lunatics, idiots, etc., would not tend to effect a cure.”

The debate raged among British eugenicists, provoking damnation in the press. In 1910, the eugenic extremist George Bernard Shaw lectured at London’s Eugenics Education Society about mass murder in lethal chambers. Shaw proclaimed, “A part of eugenic politics would finally land us in an extensive use of the lethal chamber. A great many people would have to be put out of existence, simply because it wastes other people’s time to look after them.” Several British newspapers excoriated Shaw and eugenics under such headlines as “Lethal Chamber Essential to Eugenics.”

One opponent of eugenics condemned “much wild and absurd talk about lethal chambers...” But in another article, a eugenicist writing under the pseudonym of “Vanoc” argued that eugenics was needed precisely because systematic use of lethal chambers was unlikely. “I admit the word ‘Eugenics’ is repellent, but the thing is essential to our existence... It is also an error to believe that the plans and specifications for County Council lethal-chambers have yet been prepared.”

The Eugenics Education Society in London tried to dispel all “dark mutterings regarding ‘lethal chambers.’” Its key activist, Caleb Saleeby, insisted, “We need mention, only to condemn, suggestions for ‘painless extinction,’

lethal chambers of carbonic acid, and so forth. As I incessantly have to repeat, eugenics has nothing to do with killing....” Saleeby returned to this theme time and again. When lecturing in Battle Creek, Michigan, at the First National Conference on Race Betterment in 1914, Saleeby emphasized a vigorous rejection of “the lethal chamber, the permission of infant mortality, interference with [pre]-natal life, and all other synonyms for murder.”

But many British eugenicists clung to the idea. Arthur F. Tredgold was a leading expert on mental deficiency and one of the earliest members of the Eugenics Education Society. His academic credentials eventually won him a seat on the Brock Commission on Mental Deficiency. Tredgold’s landmark *Textbook on Mental Deficiency*, first published in 1908, completely avoided discussion of the lethal chamber. But three subsequent editions published over the next fourteen years did discuss it, with each revision displaying greater acceptance of the idea. In those editions Tredgold equivocated: “We may dismiss the suggestion of a ‘lethal chamber.’ I do not say that society, in self-defense, would be unjustified in adopting such a method of ridding itself of its anti-social constituents. There is much to be said for and against the proposal....” By the sixth edition, Tredgold had modified the paragraph to read: “The suggestion [of the lethal chamber] is a logical one... It is probable that the community will eventually, in self-defense, have to consider this question seriously.” The next two editions edged into outright, if limited, endorsement. While qualifying that morons need not be put to death, Tredgold concluded that for some 80,000 imbeciles and idiots in Britain, “it would be an economical and humane procedure were their existence to be painlessly terminated...The time has come when euthanasia should be permitted.”

Leaders of the American eugenic establishment also debated lethal chambers and other means of euthanasia. But in America, while the debate began as an argument about death with dignity for the terminally ill or those in excruciating pain, it soon became a palatable eugenic solution. In 1900, the physician W. Duncan McKim published *Heredity and Human Progress*, asserting, “Heredity is the fundamental cause of human wretchedness... The surest, the simplest, the kindest, and most humane means for preventing reproduction among those whom we deem unworthy of this high privilege [reproduction], is a gentle, painless death.” He added, “In carbonic acid gas, we have an agent which would instantaneously fulfill the need.”

By 1903, a committee of the National Conference on Charities and Correction conceded that it was as yet undecided whether “science may conquer sentiment” and ultimately elect to systematically kill the unfit. In 1904, the superintendent of New Jersey’s Vineland Training School, E. R. Johnstone, raised the issue during his presidential address to the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-minded Persons. “Many plans for the elimination [of the feeble-minded] have been proposed,” he said, referred to numerous recently published suggestions of a “painless death.” That same year, the notion of executing habitual criminals and the incurably insane was offered to the National Prison Association.

Some U.S. lawmakers considered similar ideas. Two years later in 1906, the Ohio legislature considered a bill empowering physicians to chloroform permanently diseased and mentally incapacitated persons. In reporting this, Rentoul told his British colleagues that it was Ohio’s attempt to “murder certain persons suffering from incurable disease.” Iowa considered a similar measure.

By 1910, the idea of sending the unfit into lethal chambers was regularly bandied about in American sociological and eugenic circles, causing a debate no less strident than the one in England. In 1911, E. B. Sherlock’s book, *The Feeble-minded: a guide to study and practice*, acknowledged that “glib suggestions of the erection of lethal chambers are common enough....” Like others, he rejected execution in favor of eugenic termination of bloodlines. “Apart from the difficulty that the provision of lethal chambers is impracticable in the existing state law....,” he continued, “the removal of them [the feeble-minded] would do practically nothing toward solving the chief problem with the mentally defective set..., the persistence of the obnoxious stock.”

But other eugenicists were more amenable to the idea. The psychologist and eugenicist Henry H. Goddard seemed to almost express regret that such proposals had not already been implemented. In his infamous study, *The Kallikak Family*, Goddard commented, “For the low-grade idiot, the loathsome unfortunate that may be seen in our institutions, some have proposed the lethal chamber. But humanity is steadily tending away from the possibility of that method, and there is no probability that it will ever be practiced.” Goddard pointed to family-wide castration, sterilization and segregation as better solutions because they would more broadly address the genetic source.

In 1912, Carnegie-financed eugenicist Harry Laughlin and others at the Eugenics Section of the American Breeders Association considered euthanasia as the eighth of nine options. Their final report, published by the Carnegie Institution as a two-volume bulletin, enumerated the “Suggested Remedies” and equivocated on euthanasia. Point eight cited the example of ancient Sparta, fabled for drowning its weak young boys in a river or letting them die of exposure to ensure a race of warriors. Mixing condemnation with admiration, the Carnegie report declared, “However much we deprecate Spartan ideals and her means of advancing them, we must admire her courage in so rigorously applying so practical a system of selection...Sparta left but little besides tales of personal valor to enhance the world’s culture. With euthanasia, as in the case of polygamy, an effective eugenical agency would be purchased at altogether too dear a moral price.”

William Robinson, a New York urologist, published widely on the topic of birth control and eugenics. In Robinson’s book, *Eugenics, Marriage and Birth Control (Practical Eugenics)*, he advocated gassing the children of the unfit. In plain words, Robinson insisted: “The best thing would be to gently chloroform these children or to give them a dose of potassium cyanide.” Margaret Sanger was well aware that her fellow birth

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control advocates were promoting lethal chambers, but she herself rejected the idea completely. “Nor do we believe,” wrote Sanger in *Pivot of Civilization*, “that the community could or should send to the lethal chamber the defective progeny resulting from irresponsible and unintelligent breeding.”

Still, American eugenicists never relinquished the notion that America could bring itself to mass murder. At the First National Conference on Race Betterment, University of Wisconsin eugenicist Leon J. Cole lectured on the “dysgenic” effects of charity and medicine on eugenic progress. He made a clear distinction between Darwin’s concept of natural selection and the newer idea of simple “selection.” The difference, Cole explained, “is that instead of being natural selection it is now conscious selection on the part of the breeder...Death is the normal process of elimination in the social organism, and we might carry the figure a step further and say that in prolonging the lives of defectives we are tampering with the functioning of the social kidneys!”

Paul Popenoe, leader of California’s eugenics movement and coauthor of the widely-used textbook *Applied Eugenics*, agreed that the easiest way to counteract feeble-mindedness was simple execution. “From an historical point of view,” he wrote, “the first method which presents itself is execution... Its value in keeping up the standard of the race should not be underestimated.”

Madison Grant, who functioned as president of the Eugenics Research Association and the American Eugenics Society, made the point clear in *The Passing of the Great Race*. “Mistaken regard for what are believed to be divine laws and a sentimental belief in the sanctity of human life tend to prevent both the elimination of defective infants and the sterilization of such adults as are themselves of no value to the community. 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.”

### The Black Stork

On November 12, 1915, the issue of eugenic euthanasia sprang out of the shadows and into the national headlines. It began as an unrelated medical decision on Chicago’s Near North Side. At 4 A.M. that day, a woman named Anna Bollinger gave birth at German-American Hospital. The baby was somewhat deformed and suffered from extreme intestinal and rectal abnormalities, as well as other complications. The delivering physicians awakened Dr. Harry Haiselden, the hospital’s chief of staff. Haiselden came in at once. He consulted with colleagues. There was great disagreement over whether the child could be saved. But Haiselden decided the baby was too afflicted and fundamentally not worth saving. It would be killed. The method: denial of treatment.

Catherine Walsh, probably a friend of Anna Bollinger’s, heard the news and sped to the hospital to help. She found the baby, already named Allan, naked and alone in a bare room. He had clearly been laying in one position for a long time. Walsh urgently called for Haiselden, “to beg that the child be taken to its mother,” and dramatically recalled, “It was condemned to death, and I knew its mother would be its most merciful judge.”

Walsh pleaded with Haiselden not to kill the baby by withholding treatment. “It was not a monster—that child,” Walsh later told an inquest. “It was a beautiful baby. I saw no deformities.” Walsh had patted the infant lightly. Allan’s eyes were open, and he waved his tiny fists at her. She kissed his forehead. “I knew,” she recalled, “if its mother got her eyes on it she would love it and never permit it to be left to die.” Begging the doctor once more, Walsh tried an appeal to his humanity. “If the poor little darling has one chance in a thousand,” she pleaded, “won’t you operate and save it?”

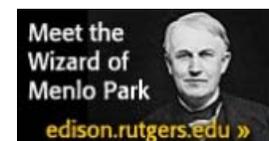
Haiselden laughed at Walsh, retorting, “I’m afraid it might get well.” He was a skilled and experienced surgeon, trained by the best doctors in Chicago, and now chief of the hospital’s medical staff. He was also an ardent eugenicist.

Chicago’s health commissioner, Dr. John Dill Robertson, learned of the deliberate euthanasia. He went to the hospital and told Haiselden he did not agree that “the child would grow up a mental defective.” He later recollected, “I thought the child was in a dying condition, and I had doubts that an operation then would save it. Yet I believed it had one chance in 100,000, and I advised Dr. Haiselden to give it this one chance.” But Haiselden refused.

Quiet euthanasia of newborns was not uncommon in Chicago. Haiselden, however, publicly defended his decision to withhold treatment as a kind of eugenic expedient, throwing the city and the nation into moral turmoil amid blaring newspaper headlines. An inquest was convened a few days later. Some of Haiselden’s most trusted colleagues were impaneled on the coroner’s jury. Health Commissioner Robertson testified, “I think it very wrong not to save life, let that life be what it may. That is the function of a physician. I believe this baby might have grown up to be an average man....I would have operated and saved this baby’s life....”

At one point Haiselden angrily interrupted the health commissioner’s testimony to question why he was being singled out when doctors throughout Chicago were routinely killing, on average, one baby every day, under similar circumstances. Haiselden defiantly declared, “I should have been guilty of a graver crime if I had saved this child’s life. My crime would have been keeping in existence one of nature’s cruelest blunders.” A juror shot back, “What do you mean by that?” Haiselden responded, “Exactly that. I do not think this child would have grown up to be a mental defective. I know it.”

After tempestuous proceedings, the inquest ruled, “We believe that a prompt operation would have prolonged and perhaps saved the life of the child. We find no evidence from the physical defects that the child would have become mentally or morally defective.” The jurors concluded that the child had at least a one-in-three



chance—some thought an “even chance”—of surviving. But they also decided that Haiselden was within his professional rights to decline treatment. No law compelled him to operate on the child. The doctor was released unpunished, and efforts by the Illinois attorney general to indict him for murder were blocked by the local prosecutor.

The medical establishment in Chicago and throughout the nation was rocked. The *Chicago Tribune* ran a giant banner headline across the width of its front page: “Baby Dies; Physician Upheld.” One reader in Washington, D.C., wrote a letter to the editor asking “Is it not strange that the whole country should be so shaken, almost hysterical, over the death of a babe never consciously alive?” But the nation was momentarily transfixed.

Haiselden considered his legal vindication a powerful victory for eugenics. “Eugenics? Of course it’s eugenics,” he told one reporter. On another occasion he remarked, “Which do you prefer—six days of Baby Bollinger or seventy years of Jukes?”—referring to a mythical family of degenerates fabricated by academicians to justify ethnic cleansing.

Emboldened, Haiselden proudly revealed that he had euthanized other such newborns in the past. He began granting high-profile media interviews to advertise his determination to continue passively euthanizing infants. Within two weeks, he had ordered his staff to withhold treatment from several more deformed or birth-defected infants. Haiselden would sometimes send instructions via cross-country telegraph while on the lecture tour that arose from his eugenic celebrity. Other times he would handle it personally, like the time he left a newly delivered infant’s umbilical cord untied and let it bleed to death. Sometimes he took a more direct approach and simply injected newborns with opiates.

The euthanasia of Allan Bollinger may have begun as one doctor’s controversial professional decision, but it immediately swirled into a national eugenic spectacle. Days after the inquest ruling, *The Independent*, a Hearst weekly devoted to pressing issues of the day, ran an editorial asking “Was the Doctor Right?” *The Independent* invited readers to sound off. In a special section, *The Independent* published supportive letters from prominent eugenicists, including Carnegie-funded eugenic kingpin Charles Davenport himself. “If the progress of surgery,” wrote Davenport, “is to be used to the detriment of the race...it may conceivably destroy the race. Shortsighted they who would unduly restrict the operation of what is one of Nature’s greatest racial blessings—death.”

#### Slaughterhouse in Lincoln Illinois

Haiselden continued to rally for eugenic euthanasia with a six-week series in the *Chicago American*. He justified his killings by claiming that public institutions for the feeble-minded, epileptic and tubercular were functioning as lethal chambers of a sort. After clandestinely visiting the Illinois Institution for the Feeble-minded at Lincoln, Illinois, Haiselden claimed that windows were deliberately left open and unscreened, allowing drafts and infecting flies to swarm over patients. He charged that Lincoln consciously permitted “flies from the toilets, garbage and from the eruptions of patients suffering from acute and chronic troubles to go at will over the entire institution. Worse still,” he proclaimed, “I found that inmates were fed with the milk from a herd of cattle reeking with tuberculosis.”

At the time, milk from cattle with tuberculosis was a well-known cause of infection and death from the disease. Lincoln maintained its own herd of seventy-two cows, which produced about 50,000 gallons of milk a year for its own consumption. Ten diseased cows had died within the previous two years. State officials admitted that their own examinations had determined that as many as half of the cows were tubercular, but there was no way to know which ones were infected because “a tubercular cow may be the fattest cow in the herd.” Lincoln officials claimed that their normal pasteurization “by an experienced employee” killed the tuberculosis bacteria. They were silent on the continuous handling of the milk by infected residents.

Medical watchdogs had often speculated that institutions for the feeble-minded were really nothing more than slow-acting lethal chambers. But Haiselden never resorted to the term lethal chamber. He called such institutions “slaughterhouses.”

In tuberculosis colonies, residents continuously infected and reinfected each other, often receiving minimal or no treatment. At Lincoln, the recently established tuberculosis unit housed just forty beds for an estimated tubercular population of hundreds. Lincoln officials asserted that only the most severely infected children were placed in that ward. They stressed that other institutions for the feeble-minded recorded much higher mortality rates, some as high as 40 percent.

Eugenicists believed that when tuberculosis was fatal, the real culprit was not bacteria, but defective genes. The Carnegie and Rockefeller-financed Eugenics Record Office, headquartered at Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, kept special files on mortality rates resulting from hereditary tuberculosis. The data was compiled by the Belgian eugenicist Albert Govaerts, among others.

Tuberculosis was an omnipresent topic in textbooks on eugenics. Typical was a chapter in Davenport’s *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* (1911). He claimed that only the “submerged tenth” was vulnerable. “The germs are ubiquitous,” he wrote. “Why do only 10 percent die from the attacks of this parasite? ...It seems perfectly plain that death from tuberculosis is the result of infection added to natural and acquired non-resistance. It is then highly undesirable that two persons with weak resistance should marry....” Popenoe and Johnson’s textbook, *Applied Eugenics*, devoted a chapter to “Lethal Selection,” which operated “through the destruction of the individual by some adverse feature of the environment, such as excessive cold, or bacteria, or by bodily deficiency.”



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Some years earlier, the president of the National Conference on Charities and Correction had told his institutional superintendents caring for the feeble-minded, "We wish the parasitic strain...to die out." Even an article in *Institution Quarterly*, Illinois's own journal, admitted, "It would be an act of kindness to them, and a protection to the state, if they could be killed."

No wonder that at one international conference on eugenics, Davenport proclaimed without explanation from the podium, "One may even view with satisfaction the high death rate in an institution for low grade feeble-minded, while one regards as a national disaster the loss of... the infant child of exceptional parents."

Haiselden himself quipped, "Death is the Great and Lasting Disinfectant."

Haiselden's accusations of deliberate passive euthanasia by neglect and abuse could neither be verified nor dismissed. Lincoln's understaffed, overcrowded and decrepit facility consistently reported staggering death rates, often as high as 12 percent per year. In 1904, for example, 109 of its epileptic children died, constituting at least 10 percent and probably far more of its youth population; cause of death was usually listed as "exhaustion due to epileptic seizures." Between 1914 and 1915, a bout of dysentery claimed eight patients; "heat exhaustion" was listed as the cause. During the same period, four individuals died shortly after admission before any preliminary examination at all; their deaths were categorized as "undetermined."

For some of its most vulnerable groups, Lincoln's death rate was particularly high. As many as 30 percent of newly admitted epileptic children died within eighteen months of admission. Moreover, in 1915, the overall death rate among patients in their first two years of residence jumped from 4.2 percent to 10 percent.

Tuberculosis was a major factor. In 1915, Lincoln reported that nearly all of its incoming patients were designated feeble-minded; roughly 20 percent were classified as epileptics; and some 27 percent of its overall population was "in various stages of tubercular involvement." No isolation was provided for infected patients until the forty-bed tuberculosis unit opened. Lincoln officials worried that the statistics were "likely to leave the impression that the institution is a 'hot-bed' for the spread of tuberculosis." Officials denied this, explaining that many of the children came from filthy environments, and "the fact that feeble-minded children have less resistance, account[s] for the high percentage of tuberculosis found among them."

Lincoln officials clearly accepted the eugenic approach to feeble-mindedness as gospel. Their reports and explanations were laced with scientific quotations on mental deficiency from Tredgold, who advocated euthanasia for severe cases, and others doctors who extolled the wisdom of castrations performed in Kansas. Lincoln officials also made clear that they received many of their patients as court-ordered institutionalizations from the Municipal Court of Chicago; as such, they received regular guidance from the court's supervising judge, Harry Olson. *Eugenical News* praised Olson for operating the court's psychopathic laboratory, which employed Laughlin as a special consultant on sterilization. Olson was vital to the movement and hailed by *Eugenical News* as "one of its most advanced representatives." In 1922, Olson became president of the Eugenics Research Association.

Moreover, staff members at Lincoln were some of the leading eugenicists in Illinois. Lincoln psychologist Clara Town chaired the Eugenics Committee of the Illinois State Commission of Charities and Corrections. Town had helped compile a series of articles on eugenics and feeble-mindedness, including one by her friend, Henry H. Goddard, who had invented the original classifications of feeble-mindedness. One reviewer described Town's articles as arguments that there was little use in caring for the institutionalized feeble-minded, who would die anyway if left in the community; caring for them was little more than "unnatural selection."

For decades, medical investigators would question how the death rates at asylums, including the one in Lincoln, Illinois, could be so high. In the 1990s, the average life expectancy for individuals with mental retardation was 66.2 years. In the 1930s, the average life expectancy for those classified as feeble-minded was approximately 18.5 years. Records suggest that a disproportionate percentage of the feeble-minded at Lincoln died before the age of ten.

Haiselden became an overnight eugenic celebrity, known to the average person because of his many newspaper articles, speaking tours, and his outrageous diatribes. In 1917, the film industry came calling. The film was called *The Black Stork*. Written by *Chicago American* reporter Jack Lait, it was given a massive national distribution and promotion campaign. Haiselden played himself in a fictionalized account of a eugenically mismatched couple who are counseled by Haiselden against having children because they are likely to be defective. Eventually the woman does give birth to a defective child, whom she then allows to die. The dead child levitates into the waiting arms of Jesus Christ. It was unbridled cinematic propaganda for the eugenics movement.

In many theaters, such as the LaSalle in Chicago, the movie played continuously from 9 A.M. until 11 P.M. National publicity advertised it as a "eugenic love story." Sensational movie posters called it a "eugenic photoplay." One advertisement quoted Swiss eugenicist Auguste Forel's warning: "The law of heredity winds like a red thread through the family history of every criminal, of every epileptic, eccentric and insane person. Shall we sit still...without applying the remedy?" Another poster depicted Haiselden's office door with a notice: "BABIES NOT TREATED." In 1917, a display advertisement for the film encouraged: "Kill Defectives, Save the Nation and See '*The Black Stork*.'"

The *Black Stork* played at movie theaters around the nation for more than a decade.

Gassing the unwanted, the lethal chamber and other methods of euthanasia became a part of everyday

American parlance and ethical debate some two decades before President Woodrow Wilson, in General Order 62, directed that the “Gas Service” become the “Chemical Warfare Service,” instructing them to develop toxic gas weapons for world war. The lethal chamber was a eugenic concept more than two decades before Nevada approved the first such chamber for criminal executions in 1921, and then gassed with cyanide a Chinese-born murderer, the first such execution in the world. Davenport declared that capital punishment was a eugenic necessity. Popenoe’s textbook, *Applied Eugenics*, listed execution as one of nine suggested remedies for defectives—without specifying criminals.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, America’s eugenics movement inspired and spawned a world of look-alikes, act-alikes and think-alikes. The U.S. movement also rendered scientific aid and legitimacy to undisguised racists everywhere, from race-tracking bureaucrat Walter Plecker in Virginia right across Europe. American theory, practice and legislation, were the models. In France, Belgium, Sweden, England and elsewhere in Europe, each clique of raceological eugenicists did their best to introduce eugenic principles into their national life; perhaps more importantly, they could always point to the recent precedents established in the United States.

Germany was no exception. German eugenicists had formed academic and personal relationships with Davenport and the American eugenic establishment from the turn of the century. Even after World War I, when Germany would not cooperate with the International Federation of Eugenic Organizations because of French, English and Belgian involvement, its bonds with Davenport and the rest of the U.S. movement remained strong. American foundations such as the Carnegie Institution and the Rockefeller Foundation generously funded German race biology with hundreds of thousands of dollars, even as Americans stood in breadlines.

Germany had certainly developed its own body of eugenic knowledge and library of publications. Yet German readers still closely followed American eugenic accomplishments as the model: a biological court, forcible sterilizations, detention for the socially inadequate, euthanasia debates. As America’s elite were describing the socially worthless and the ancestrally unfit as “bacteria,” “vermin,” “mongrels,” and “subhuman,” a superior race of Nordics was increasingly seen as the final solution to the globe’s eugenic problems.

#### Fan Mail from Germany

America had established the value of race and blood. In Germany, the concept was known as Rasse und Blut. Yet the catch phrase was developed by David Starr Jordan, the racist president of Stanford University. U.S. proposals, laws, eugenic investigations and ideology were not undertaken quietly out of sight of German activists. They became inspirational blueprints for Germany’s rising tide of race biologists and race-based hatemongers, be they white-coated doctors studying *Eugenical News* and attending congresses in New York, or brown-shirted agitators waving banners and screaming for social upheaval in the streets of Munich.

One such agitator was a disgruntled corporal in the German army. He was an extreme nationalist who also considered himself a race biologist and an advocate of a master race. He was willing to use force to achieve his nationalist racial goals. His inner circle included Germany’s most prominent eugenic publisher. In 1924, he was serving time in prison for mob action. While in prison, he spent his time poring over eugenic textbooks, which extensively quoted Davenport, Popenoe and other American raceological stalwarts. Moreover, he closely followed the writings of Leon Whitney, president of the American Eugenics Society, and Madison Grant, who extolled the Nordic race and bemoaned its corruption by Jews, Negroes, Slavs and others who did not possess blond hair and blue eyes. The young German corporal even wrote one of them a fan letter.

In *The Passing of the Great Race*, Madison Grant wrote: “Mistaken regard for what are believed to be divine laws and a sentimental belief in the sanctity of human life tend to prevent both the elimination of defective infants and the sterilization of such adults as are themselves of no value to the community. 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.”

One day in the early 1930s, AES president Whitney visited the home of Grant, who was at the time chairing a eugenic immigration committee. Whitney wanted to show off a letter he had just received from Germany, written by the corporal, now out of prison and rising in the German political scene. Grant could only smile. He pulled out his own letter. It was from the same German, thanking Grant for writing *The Passing of the Great Race*. The fan letter stated that Grant’s book was “his Bible.”

The man writing both letters to the American eugenic leaders would soon burn and gas his name into the blackest corner of history. He would duplicate the American eugenic program—both that which was legislated and that which was only brashly advocated—and his group would consistently point to the United States as setting the precedents for Germany’s actions. And then this man would go further than any American eugenicist ever dreamed, further than the world would ever tolerate, further than humanity will ever forget.

The man who sent those fan letters to America was Adolf Hitler.

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