

Eugenics Part 1

Jo: Okay, hey guys. It's been kind of a while we've had collectively and maybe nationally or even globally a fairly crazy last few months and I'm kind of excited that we're back recording after a little bit of a hiatus that we didn't necessarily plan exactly.

Erik: It's been a pandemic.

Jo: So we are going to talk today about eugenics this is something that I think we've said on this podcast what like 15 times we need to do an episode on it at some point or maybe a series. So this is our first of the series. Yay! Okay so ah eugenics. Okay, so here's the thing though when I've taught about eugenics in the past and I have I have students who are sometimes ah.

Erik: Yay eugenics.

Jim: Woo.

Jo: Ah, puzzled even by that term and what it means So this episode I feel like what we ought to do is sort of just lay the groundwork Define What that term means talk about the history of the eugenics movement and then hopefully poke some holes in that received wisdom and learn some new stuff about eugenics in future episodes.

Jim: Well yeah, you know I I got all the way through graduate school and well into my teaching career before I would be would have been able to define the term I didn't know anything about it until I read Stephen J Gould's book in 1981 that was my introduction to eugenics (Gould, 1981). So, I learned the evolutionary biologist canon on what eugenics was and who the bad guys were and who the good guys were and all that. So yeah, we definitely need to do this? yeah.

Jo: So let's do it. I'm Jo.

Erik: And I'm Eric.

Jim: And I'm Jim and this is speaking of race and we're going to tell you more than you ever wanted to know about eugenics over the next several episodes.

Jo: Yay! Okay, so first let's define the term what is eugenics actually mean.

Erik: Why don't you start Jo and say what you say in the classroom.

Jo: Um, eugenics is the sort of ah practice and movement that was important in the early late nineteenth early twentieth century around the attempt to refine the genetic stock of human populations through controlled breeding. Right.

Erik: Jim what do you say in yours.

Jim: I say it means well born.

Erik: So the word itself just means well born or good birth or something like that. Do you say anything other than that?

Jim: Sure? Yeah I give the canon, I taught the canon. You know that it started with Galton and that that Darwin's cousin had this epiphany after reading the ah on the origin of species. So I just you know I teach what I read in Gould.

Jo: Um, okay Eric what's your definition.

Erik: So yes, well Stephen Jay Gould's mismeasure of man I think was a really important book when it came out in the early 80s and then was republished again in the mid 90s I think a lot of people do. Use that as kind of the keystone text for even thinking about the whole eugenics movement I was really surprised because as you guys know my first set of degrees was in the sciences before moving into doing history and philosophy of science and when I started taking history classes I was kind of shocked that all the historians knew all this stuff. But in the sciences nobody ever spoke the word and yet and yet eugenics came from scientists. It was part of science in the early part of the Twentieth century. Um I think what historians like to do because we have to contextualize everything is to say that. Eugenics is part of a whole suite of packages of ways of controlling immigrant populations especially in the United States in the early part of the twentieth century and potentially the most important moment of the eugenics movement in the early twentieth century which we can talk about more later today. Was the passage of the Johnson Reed act in 25 which almost effectively ended immigration into the United States from any place that wasn't great Britain or France and to a certain degree Mexico but pretty much everywhere in Southern Eastern Europe but Russia. Were totally shut out and yet we don't think of immigration policy as necessarily being part of the mainstream eugenics movement even though it totally was.

Jo: Okay, so can we bring together these 3 comments and let's reach consensus. So is it fair to say that eugenics is a term that means well-bred and it is. It's got a long history of being applied to control. The influx of what are perceived as sort of outsider genetics into mostly white United States populations through immigration but also through interracial marriage and that it is the man this is not concise.

Jim: Um, this is why we script.

Jo: That it is that it's the attempt to ah to keep racial and international maybe mixing from happening in order to sort of preserve good genetic stock which in the in the parlance of or in the sort of worldview of the genetic eugenics. Folks was good sort of Aryan European stock is that fair.

Erik: Yes, but that's really long what if we just say what if we just say that Eugenics is when the dominant population tries to control the reproduction of subordinate populations.

Jo: Even better.

Erik: And the sad thing is that the eugenics movement wasn't just American that you know Francis Galton was British but ironically the UK was one of the few places that didn't have much of a eugenics movement instead. It spread through the United States Brazil Japan France Belgium Italy. And eventually and most tragically in Germany and became the cornerstone of the holocaust eventually.

Jo: Okay, so ah, let's get into that history a little bit now we keep talking about Galton. Is that a place to start. That's usually where it starts.

Erik: Jim.

Jim: Stephen Jay Gould starts with Galton's 1883 definition use of the term eugenics and slight definition of it sometimes (Galton, 1883). Other biologists go back to 1869 or the early 1860s publications of Galton as foreshadowing eugenics (Galton, 1865, 1869). But basically they grab on to Galton as the founder of the science of eugenics and. Show that as a starting point.

Erik: Yeah, as ah, an example, um, Adam Rutherford who is a science writer now and was a geneticist earlier recently wrote a book and he has this great phrase. He says um, all this bad stuff of eugenics started with this Victorian racist Francis Galton and then. Immediately mentions. What I think is always mentioned in every single time that Francis Galton has mentioned which is that he is the cousin of Charles Darwin people love that little juicy detail.

Jo: Yeah, what? What's that about? Why do they like that so much?

Erik: Well, it's true that Galton and Darwin were part of a 3 family can we call them inbred there. I probably shouldn't say that but the Wedgwood family as Wedgwood china and the Darwin family and the Galton family were.

Jo: We could ironically.

Erik: Very much inbred and so Frances Galton and Charles Darwin shared a grandfather Erasmus Darwin who was the first Darwin to write about evolution and for whatever reason people love that. Little fact that they were related and. And Galton himself would say years later that reading the origin of species did put some things into place for him. But if you actually look at his work. Um, it seems like it was a little bit later Jim mentioned the eighteen sixty nine book on heredity. And he wrote just a couple of articles before that they were popularly published where Galton was basically trying to say genius travels and families and of course he liked to use his own family as an example exactly and the Darwins right?

Jim: My family me me me!

Erik: In 83 is where he finally does coin that word eugenics the irony is and we can talk about this in a later episode that other people would actually criticize Galton for stealing the idea but we don't have to talk about that right now.

Jo: Okay, so he came up with the term itself being a cousin of Charles Darwin there's a delicious irony there perhaps because Darwin is usually thought of as this sort of like anti racist guy which is something we need to get into in a future episode 2 right? we will and we will um and.

Erik: Yeah.

Jo: And yet these ideas ah will we'll talk more about how Eric's cool innovative right now research is finding that these ideas were all over the place long before Galton but okay Galton so if he's the guy who coins the term who else are sort of important players in this in the development of this movement and what's happening. Post Galton.

Erik: Do you guys talk about anybody in particular in your courses when talking about eugenics. Okay.

Jim: We don't talk about Carl Pearson we usually skip to Davenport and that you know, Davenport and Laughlin and ah Grant. Yeah.

Erik: Um, so you jump right to the Americans.

Jo: Yeah.

Jim: So that gets us to the German American ah transition. So you get through it. It's not a semester course. It's a lecture you know a single lecture and so you go bang Galton-Davenport-Eichmann

Erik: Yeah, that's true.

Erik: I think that Jim is pointing out something. That's really important which is that the very first historical treatments of the entire eugenics movement started in the 1960s and the holocaust overshadows all of them and so Mark Haller's book.

Jim: Um, yeah.

Erik: And Donald Pickering's book both sort of see the entire eugenics movement through the lens of the holocaust and so they really are just trying to race through all the individuals that lead to that moment in the 1940s and so we do leave out tons and tons and tons of people. All on both sides of the Atlantic but usually it is after Galton we do get to Carl Pearson in part because Galton makes these statistical innovations but he himself is not a very accomplished mathematician Carl Pearson on the other hand who really loves Francis Galton is and is a really accomplished statistician comes up with the sky the iquad test and then Carl Pearson's star student is Ronald a fisher who comes up with the p-value test that we still use in social sciences to this day.

Jo: Yeah.

Erik: So we like to talk about at least those three English statisticians but then it really is Charles Davenport in America who makes eugenics like a real movement. So Galton lives to an old age and so has lots of influence simply because of that Charles Davenport is an American who's interested in horse breeding among other things and becomes interested in Galton's Statistics Pearson's additional innovations to those statistics.

Jo: Tell us tell us about Davenport.

Erik: And very early on really before the word eugenics is tossed around a great deal has already adopted this notion that talent travels through human families and therefore bad things also travels through human families and so. Very early on Davenport like we're talking nineteen hundred Nineteen One Davenport is already thinking hey wouldn't it be nice if we could identify the traits that are really great and amplify those in humans and the traits that are not so great and really diminish those in humans and. Part of the American breeders association in the first decade of the Twentieth century Davenport Gathers like a whole cabal of these people who first call themselves Mendelians because Mendel's work has just been rediscovered and then you know quite soon after call themselves geneticists. And they see

their entire job as giving 1 explanation for how heredity works from plants through animals through humans and that there shouldn't be any break between all those things mentality wise what that means is that they definitely believe that the way that we breed corn. And Cotton and pigs and horses should also be applied to humans and that there's no reason why we shouldn't directly apply the methods of agriculture now better understood because of genetics to humans. So that's what Davenport sees as the ultimate goal. Ah, eugenics. But I think the real reason why he's important is because of all these other people that he knows and the amount of money that he's able to raise from his position in the American breeders association.

Jo: Okay, and now not to be obvious here, but it might be worth at this moment pausing to point out that the reason why we're talking about eugenics at all in a podcast about race and history and science is that these ideas though seemingly kind of. Ah, values neutral on the surface these ideas about sort of increasing the good things in human genetics and decreasing those that aren't so good. Get unfairly applied by the people in power to those in less power which I think he's sort of um, hinted at in your concise definition of eugenics at the beginning Eric. But there's all kinds of disastrous consequences that come out of this very very slippery slope that we'll get into later on.

Jim: We're going to talk about masturbation in a later episode right? okay.

Erik: And go ahead. Jim great I'm glad that that's on the table. Ah come back for more folks. We'll talk about masturbation. No Jim's right. Jim's right that's actually an important part of story.

Jo: Um, wait what. Um, ah okay, you're right you're right. Eric has done amazing research on this topic.

Jim: See I've done some of my homework.

Erik: It gets left out of most stories yes, that's we shouldn't put that in a podcast. Um, so I think Joe you're exactly right. The interlacing of race in eugenics is always a really problematic thing I've been in conferences where people who are very good scholars will come up and just say you know eugenics was just applied to people of color and that frankly is not true at all.

Jim: No yeah.

Erik: In fact, eugenics was only applied to people who were considered to be white at first. So is it appropriate for a podcast about race to be talking about something like eugenics I think it still is and I think we could tease future episodes by merely saying that from the very beginning.

Jo: Yeah, yeah.

Erik: Francis Galton made it really clear in his early writings that he saw Caucasians and specifically Anglo-Saxons and he would use that phrase as being the holders of all good traits and some bad ones too. But definitely the good traits. And so if we're going to have anybody reproduce more. It should be Anglo-Saxons and if we're going to have anybody reproduce less. It should be anyone who's not Anglo-Saxon and I think in the major canonical retellings of the eugenics story I think people do pick up on another really important feature. Which is that it really accelerates after world war one and one of the reasons why it accelerates so much is

because of the work of a guy named Lothrop Stoddard who is a historian at Harvard and another guy named Madison Grant who was ah kind of a gadfly but had been trained at Yale.

Jo: Oh yeah, sure. So yeah, when I teach about this I do what Jim did because I sort of teach this version still that Jim taught and I have very little time to do it so when I teach you about eugenics I start with Galton I say the irony that he's Darwin's cousin blah blah. And then we jump right from him I talk very briefly about Carl Pearson and Ernst Haeckel. Yes, that's right who we haven't mentioned and then I usually just fast forward right into Um Loughlin and Madison Grant who are about.

Jim: And Ernst Haeckel.

Jo: To talk about and then right into world war two and we're done right? like I don't have a lot of the intermediary science especially in the early twentieth century between Galton and like the eugenics records office guys I don't have a lot of that stuff and I think a lot of people are kind of moving along in this March towards World War II and sort of skip over that part. Yeah.

Erik: Yeah, that's I think that's really typical honestly I would say that's definitely the canonical story.

Jim: I did I took it from Gould and then Kevles you know those were my 2 sources and they both do exactly that Kevles in more detail of course. Yeah.

Jo: Um, and.

Erik: Yeah, and Dan Kevles is so Dan Kevles's book *In the Name of Eugenics* really is the book that follows from Gould (Kevles, 1995). It's a super important book those 2 books together really do give a pretty complete understanding of the eugenics movement in its main brushstrokes.

Jim: Um, yeah.

Erik: One of the things I think that both of them do and it's true because both of them were trained as scientists first before they went in and started to look at history is what they kind of leave out is the stuff that's just going on in the United States at the time. So if you look at the broader context. Um. In that those the years right before world war one so 1912, 1913, 1914 what you get is this otherwise inexplicable increase in things like lynchings and the rise of confederate monuments which is weird because it's you know 30 years after the end of the civil war the daughters of the confederacy racing around the country throwing up monuments to everybody in even in northern cities that fought against the confederacy. It's in that backdrop.

Jim: Yeah.

Jo: Ah.

Erik: Madison Grant writes his book *The Passing of the Great Race* (Grant, 1916). Now every idea in that entire book is stolen from at least 2 other historians before him but his book gets a lot of attention because he basically says there isn't 1 thing called the white race. There's really 3 things. There's the Nordics and those are the most superior those are where all the good ideas in world history have come from and then there's the Alpine group which is a kind of

transitional group that's hardy and works really hard. But then there's the Mediterranean group people that live around the Mediterranean Greeks Italians southern French Spanish. And they're basically barely any better than non-whites and that book gets translated and translated and translated and translated all the ideas already appear in the work of Joseph Arthur de Gobineau who we've mentioned a couple of times in this podcast (Gobineau, 1853-1855). Grant is repackaging them for a twentieth century audience and he drops a little bit of Mendelism in there. But for the most part. It's just a hundred year old book that gets republished but it's such an influential book it inspires this other guy Lothrop Stoddard who is a member of the kkk secretly who is also he's harvard trained. He has a huge audience in 1920 he writes this book *The Rising Tide of Color against White World-Supremacy* (Stoddard, 1920). I mean it's a pretty telling title right?

Jo: It is subtle very subtle.

Erik: And then he and then in 1922 he writes *The Revolt Against Civilization: The Menace of the Under-man* the Untermensch. Those 2 books fall directly into the hands of people like Goebbels and Goering and even Hitler in Germany so those the 3 books together are signals of this huge attitudinal change.

Jo: The funnel.

Erik: Actually maybe it wasn't that big of a change but at least it was making its way into the public consciousness. So important were those 2 authors that if you read the great Gatsby Tom one of the characters in the great Gatsby keeps mentioning this Goddard fellow Goddard is just a portmanteau of Stoddard and Grant. And so it's that smooshing together of this real white supremacist stuff that is gaining intellectual currency in the teens in the early 20s at the very same moment that people like Charles Davenport and Harry Loughlin are getting support for eugenics. So the race stuff.

Jo: Um, yeah.

Erik: And the eugenics stuff get twisted together right? there in World War one Absolutely which we've talked about extensively right? Yeah so the Iq tests the notion that Heredity is this really powerful force that really governs everything.

Jim: Um, and of course IQ is coming up right?

Erik: And it should govern society not just scientific understandings of the world. All of those things are really coming about in that right after world one world war 1 period um and then what you see is and you were mentioning this a second ago. Joe is the rise of the eugenic.

Jo: So yeah, okay.

Erik: Records office in Cold Spring Harbor New York

Jo: Yes, let's talk about that that that always makes its way into the canonical story as well. So.

Erik: So Charles Davenport again with the American breeders association begins to catch some flak from fellow geneticists that he's gone too hard after this eugenics stuff and he's published this book *Race Crossing in Jamaica*.

Jim: The funding for cold spring harbor comes in 1913 right

Erik: Yeah, so the first funding is yep, the Harriman railroad money Davenport and Loughlin convince Harriman's wife to give some of this massive massive railroad fortune a good chunk of it.

Erik: Is given to them to build a whole office in long long island just outside New York city and then they get the bright idea of basically collecting statistical measures on everything that you could possibly measure from this broader population as you could measure. But of course iq is the thing that they're really after they do facial measurements and all the cranometric stuff that we've talked about on this podcast before but they're really interested in iq and they help develop not by themselves but they help develop a standardized test a standardized aptitude test.

Jo: And what you mean the SAT.

Erik: Which they hope to give to every high I mean the sat which they hope to give to every graduating high school student in America in order to get a baseline of intelligence to see whether the population is getting smarter or dumber is degenerating or progressing. Gives them a baseline to work their eugenic principles on.

Jo: And it's also a matter of intergroup comparison is it not well.

Erik: Absolutely Although for them they're committed to already a kind of white supremacy. So by intergroup All they're really trying to sort out are the best whites from the not quite as good whites. They've already believed that only whites are worth.

Jim: Yeah, yeah.

Erik: Really measuring so they've all that's already built into the whole system which is why it's so hard in the metric of college admissions in the 1930s and 40s to begin to figure out. How do you measure people that are coming from other populations because everything has been oriented. Towards just this implicit white supremacy. They're not alone although the eugenics records office is probably the biggest and most influential organization in the entire United States they're definitely not alone I like to talk sometimes about a eugenic triangle in the northern part of the United States the in cold spring harbor in New York is 1 point of the triangle the opposite coast the human betterment foundation run by a guy named Paul Popenoe in Stanford California is the other point of that triangle David Starr Jordan who's the president of Stanford University friends with Popenoe gives him all kinds of power and stature to measure stuff on the west coast and when the eugenics movement really takes off California is the leading eugenic state. It sterilizes more than any other state in the country by a long margin. The top point of the triangle is an idiosyncratic one and it's a. Group that often doesn't get mentioned at all. But it's the point at Battle Creek Michigan run by John Harvey Kellogg of cornflake fame the Kellogg serial family. So again, massive amounts of money because of all that cereal money.

Jo: Okay, okay, what's he doing.

Erik: So Kellogg's idiosyncratic because he's just trying to make a sort of better living country but in the beginning of the twentieth century his foundation which has already existed for almost twenty years at that point really switches to ah what he calls race hygiene the cleaning

of the white race. And so for Kellogg it's again, really important to identify the high performing whites from the lower performing whites and to figure out how to make the high performing whites have more babies and the low performing whites have less babies and of course the non-whites forget about them from Kellogg's point of view. 1 of the reasons why Kellogg is so important is because he's a loved individual. His company is so influential and there's just this steady strip steady strip. There's like a steady drip of funding coming from serial money coming from railroad money. Rockefellers get involved so oil money the Carnegies get involved so steal money just constant money from some of the most wealthy families in the entire country is being poured into this eugenics movement and in that little eugenics triangle which covers basically the northern half of the United States before world war two they count about 33000 individuals sterilized. So this.

Jo: Which is something that students almost never know right? There's this shock and horror that always comes about when I teach students about especially the sterilization involuntary sterilization campaign in California where what we're talking over 10 or 12000 people sterilized.

Erik: Um, yeah.

Jo: In this period involuntarily and my students have no idea and it gets them talking and thinking about how close the Us might have actually come to its own form of holocaust which is again something that tends to sort of blow their minds. So.

Erik: Um, yeah.

Erik: That's a great point. It's true California um will sterilize the most people Virginia is second Most Indiana is third Most Indiana is the first exactly Indiana is the first state to pass eugenic.

Jo: And my home state.

Erik: Legislation in 1907 which just means that if 2 doctors sign off on it. No additional. Um I don't know no one else has to give consent as long as the doctors are okay with it now that's challenged in court quite a bit but it holds up in a bunch of different court cases.

Jo: So who are the people being sterilized under these laws like what are the criteria. So two doctors have to sign off. Okay, but what kind of populations are we looking at here.

Erik: So for the it's really hard to answer that question in part because of the way that statistics are kept what we know is that the vast majority of the populations that are sterilized are already institutionalized. Most of them are at mental institutions though not all some are just at regular prisons or jails sometimes just county jails. Um, most of the people who are sterilized at first are men who are suspected of somehow being involved in crime but over time. More and more women are sterilized and the reason for women being sterilized especially in California is just for promiscuity but promiscuity sometimes will be labeled under the heading of feeble mindedness. So the feeble minded and there is no definition for what we mean by feeble minded the feeble minded are the primary targets of being sterilized in the case of men. It's a vasectomies and in the case of women its salpingectomy or fallopian tubes being tied.

Jo: Okay, so the feeble minded could be people who are deemed to be sort of morally deviant promiscuous criminal. It could be people who are deemed to be intellectually deficient in some way.

Erik: And there's no real way to separate those two things I mean this is the really confounding thing about the eugenics movement is that the label feeble minded might be applied to a person because they do bad things even though intellectually they're fine. But that same label feeble minded might be applied to somebody who is mentally a little slow but has done nothing else wrong. It's a catchall term that gets supplied to lots of people.

Jo: And yeah, again, it's ah a very slippery slope that is perhaps conveniently extremely ill-defined. So.

Erik: Exactly so it is challenged a lot and the slipperiness of the term is challenged in court a lot and very often in fact, more than half the time the courts strike down early eugenics legislation until the mid 1920s and in the mid 1920s the eugenicists again spearheaded by Davenport but also Harry Loughlin who we should talk more about in just a second Paul Popenoe, David Starr Jordan and a few other folks. They realize if you want the stuff to stay on the books these laws to stay on the books. You have to have a kind of medical board that is approving these things and you have to get at least tacit permission from the patient or the patient's caregivers and so they very often will ask the parents of people can we sterilize your kid. It's gonna be for Society's best, but it's also going to be therapeutic for them. They're not going to be mentally handicapped anymore. They're not going to cause you any more pain if we can just do this small surgery that won't really hurt them very much and it is just a small surgery for men. Especially. So by and large you get consent. But of course the consent isn't what we would consider conform informed consent because it just doesn't they don't give them all the details. So again, it's challenged and challenge and challenged and then finally a guy named um Albert Priddy in Virginia decides he wants to get a test case through the supreme court which will stop the individual case by case nitpicking of eugenics laws so he engineers a case essentially where he picks a girl named Carrie Buck. Carrie Buck is pregnant at the time. Her mother is already in the Virginia home for the feeble minded and they recommend that Carrie also be put there. Why well because she's pregnant and doesn't have a husband she hasn't shown any other characteristics to make it so she should be singled out but that's the one that they use now pretty dies. In the middle of the court case after it gets to the state level but it does eventually make it up to the national level and the person that takes over for pretty is a man named bell another physician named bell and so that case gets called Buck versus Bell

Jo: And that's something that probably most people who've done any study of eugenics will have heard of because it's another one of these things that becomes part of the canonical story typically right.

Erik: Totally, that's the most famous of all of the cases because it does make it to the supreme court even though both sides the plaintiff and the defense or whatever the prosecution the defense I don't know what the 2 sides be called, but the both of the sides are engineered by the same team of medical men. Who want to see the eugenics laws passed I don't know whether the supreme court knew that but when it does get to the supreme court. There's frankly, not a lot of deliberation and in ah, an 8 to 1 decision. So an overwhelming decision. They famously say according to. Oliver Wendell Holmes the supposedly left-leaning justice although I don't think he was really left-leaning the famous line 3 generations of imbeciles is enough which is the 3 generations would be Emma Buck that's Carrie's mom Carrie buck and then Vivian who is the baby who's just been born. And couldn't have had any tests to figure out whether she's fee-minded sadly Vivian who doesn't really ever get to know her mom only lives to about eight years old and then dies of an infection but she was actually on the honor roll in school before that moment. So not really showing any signs of. Mental feeble mindedness or

anything like that. So still after that case makes it through the supreme court in 1927. It's really open season in the United States and the eugenics stuff just really takes off after 1927.

Jo: Yeah, yeah.

Erik: What do you guys talk about in your classes when you periodize it. Do you talk about what happens in the 1930s or do you just jump to the second world war.

Jo: Well, what do you do? Jim.

Jim: Um, I'm trying to remember it's been so long since I covered that that material in class.

Jo: I typically jump right in? I do mention Buck v Bell um, so I didn't say that a bit earlier when I was talking about my my sort of way of teaching this but that's it up until world war 2 pretty much I talk about. The California sterilizations I talk about the model eugenic sterilization law. Um, and I talk about buck v bell and then I go right into Boom World War II basically

Erik: That makes a lot of sense. Um, what ends up happening according to Dan Kevles who wrote in the name of eugenics is that eugenics kind of switches form and the stuff that we were talking about before where it's tightly connected with white supremacists and it's about race. According to Dan Kevles its switches in the 1930s where it's mostly medical men pursuing these eugenic operations and it's mostly women who are getting the eugenic operations and it's almost 100% of the people are in mental institutions and they're put there again theoretically anyway.

Jim: Yeah, feeble mind feeble mindedness. Yeah.

Erik: Because of some sort of yeah some sort of mental something right? Yeah, people might deserve any anything Really by that point So that's the way that it changes its scene very much more as therapeutic and less punitive and certainly less oriented toward race than it was before.

Jo: It's even sometimes described as a humane option isn't it.

Erik: Absolutely but that's because we're just worried about the eugenic triangle we're so enamored with that notion of these 3 major facilities that were spending all this money and driving eugenic legislation. That we forget about what happens in the rest of the United States in the rest of the like in the south in the rest of the United States there was almost no eugenics before 1935. There's almost no reason for it because there were these kind of penal colonies farms in some cases.

Jo: Um, like in the south. Yeah.

Erik: Where African Americans primarily were used as basically slave labor all over again for 50 years after the civil war and so any new population that came out was just going to end up probably being imprisoned and was going to work.

Jo: Yeah.

Erik: Again in kind of slave conditions again. So though there were asylums like Partlow and Bryce Hospital here in Tuscaloosa Alabama they primarily saw white patients inside of the

rooms where any actual medical treatment was done. Black patients were put in these cabins outside of the main buildings and just put into menial labor either taking care of the grounds or washing dishes or cleaning the sheets or something like that and so it was still this very segregated mental institution until about one thirty five.

Jo: Um. Okay, I've heard you mention 1935 a couple times. So what's going on there.

Erik: And 1930 I can't pin it on any particular piece of legislation or court decision. But after 1935 you see a significant number of people who are not white begin to be admitted to mental asylums across the United States especially in the south. And then eugenics begins in the south in Florida in Texas in Arizona and it's then it's mostly populations of non-white women who are sterilized now a lot of times the sterilizations are just as a condition of release. So it's.

Jo: Um.

Erik: We don't want to keep you in our asylum we want you to be out in the working world. We just don't want you to have any more of your kind. So we're going to sterilize you and then we're going to let you go and that's what really changes in the United States in the mid 1930s but then of course the.

Jim: You have kids? yeah.

Jo: Um.

Erik: Big elephant in the room by the time we get to 1937 and 1938 is that Nazi Germany is now beginning to do the exact same practices that were going on in the United States

Jo: But when I do is I talk about the model eugenic sterilization law as a key piece of legislation that had that was related to all of these us-based um for sterilization kind of legal issues. We've been talking about but that also was a really clear example of a way in which the. Eugenics movement in the United States got picked up and used in this case this piece of legislation I believe was translated and implemented in the early parts of the holocaust is that right.

Erik: Exactly Harry Laughlin who I've mentioned a couple of times was kind of the right hand man of Charles Davenport Laughlin had all these connections even on Capitol Hill and so both the anti immigrant stuff and the. Model sterilization law were both the brain children of Harry Laughlin who because of his connections again was able to get the anti-immigration bill passed in 1921 and then again in 1924 that the Johnson Reed act again, it was such an incredible. Staunching of immigration. The United States it changed the entire idea of what the United States is Locke and himself wrote an article basically talking about the fallacy of the melting pot and how the United States isn't a melting pot and we don't want it to be a melting pot. It's supposed to be for whites. You know. But then from there he kind of offhandedly almost wrote this model sterilization bill that he he gave to Walter pretty that kind of started the Buck V Bell thing going but then also using his connections Loughlin travels to Germany and. In Germany there was already eugenics movement that had been going on since the early part of the twentieth century but it was pretty flimsy. It was primarily led by people like Eugen Fisher and Alfred Ploetz who were both anthropologists at the the Kaiser Wilhelm institute in Berlin and when they meet. Loughlin just sort of hands over everything and says here's what we're doing and the Germans are just blowing away and they're like wow we have a problem with the unfits in our country too and so they just sort of pick up all of this stuff and of course the.

Jo: Oh.

Erik: The most direct place where you see it is in the Nuremberg code that that infamous document that tries to identify the ranking of people based on their degree of Jewishness which is based on their heredity that becomes that sort of key thing that gets the holocaust really off the ground. But less talked about is what happens before all of that in one 38 in Austria really? but also in Berlin and in Munich the action t 4 tier goddons toss of 4 which is the name of ah an asylum where um. Physicians take their unfit patients and they bring them down into the basement and they try all kinds of ways to euthanize them. Um, one of the early attempts is that they back up the bus.

Jo: Um.

Erik: And they just put a pipe coming out of the exhaust of the bus into the basement until it fills up with carbon monoxide. But it's very slow, Very brutal people scream and so then they try out different kinds of pesticides Herbicide gases.

Jo: Oh god.

Erik: Finally landing on infamously Zykon which is the gas that is then used in the showers at all the death camps across Europe and during the holocaust proper so action t four t four just being an abbreviation of the place where it started was signed in. 39 but it had already been going on for a couple of years before that point and that was a not just sterilization that was just we're gonna out and out kill the unfed. The most gruesome part of that beginning part of the holocaust was actually the mercy killings that happened on buses themselves so they would send school buses to neighborhoods and parents could just take their children who were mentally disabled or physically handicapped or even their own parents who were aged. And mentally handicapped or senile and put them on these buses and first the buses took them to the facility. But so many people gave up their own children and parents that they begin to essentially armor the sides of the buses. They began to cover the windows up so you couldn't see what was going on. And they actually began to euthanize people on the buses themselves and then just throw their bodies Mass graves I know right? We don't talk about this stuff at all.

Jo: Oh my God Okay, that's not yeah, we don't talk. Okay, how does that relate to the model eugenic sterilization law though. And yes that is freaking horrible. Oh my god.

Erik: It's good. So this was in in Germany anyway, it was a kind of ad hoc um adaptation from what they were already doing where they were sort of after the fact saying we'll use this justification of trying to clean the race. And hygiene in order to say that we need to do these sterilizations but sterilization is not enough we need to in fact, do euthanasia we need to actually eliminate the unfit and they weirdly adopted language that appeared much early in the United States

Jo: Ah.

Erik: For Nazi propaganda in and the late 30s where they would take an image of a mentally handicapped man and basically say 40000 reichsmarks is what it costs you? Oh faithful German citizen to keep this immensely disabled man alive isn't your gold worth more than that or something like that right like are you sure you want to spend your tax dollars keeping this mentally handicapped person alive. Um again, the United States had already done.

Jo: Wow wow.

Erik: Versions of that in the early twentieth century but it had kind of passed out of us in the 1920s and 1930s it was the Nazis who brought that kind of thinking back to justify first sterilizing and then eventually euthanizing the mentally handicapped and then. And so all of that stuff is the really the lead into what we consider the holocaust proper even though the death has already started before even world War two itself begins.

Jo: Okay, and this is the point where I think we usually sort of call the end of eugenics right? like with the revelation of what's going on with the holocaust and the multinational Multilateral. Ah, rejection of that. Horrifying set of laws and murders. That's it right is eugenics done now.

Erik: Have you guys seen. Um the Spencer Tracy movie judgment at Nuremberg in 1961 it's black and white but it was shot in 61 either have you seen it. So it's the most. It's a you know it's a it's Hollywood but it's a.

Jo: No.

Jim: I don't remember it.

Erik: Ah, relatively faithful version of what's called the doctor's trial. The doctor's trial is the 1946 Nuremberg trial. Not the big one with Goebbels and the other dudes there. The political trial. This is just the physicians and most prominently Carl Bronte who is Hitler's personal physician and famously on the stand basically reads from the model sterilization law by Loughlin saying hey we're just doing what you're doing like it were you. We learned it from watching you? um.

Jim: Better. We're doing it better. Yeah.

Erik: And of course the three judges are all a Americans only 3 so they kind of pass over but traditionally what we say is that people are so shocked with the liberation of the camps and to learn about eugenics to attach this word eugenics. What happened in the death camps that there's such a revulsion to it that in 1948, 1949, 1950 the number of sterilizations the United States really drops off and you really get it a death of. That old eugenics movement that we bury it in the first half of the twentieth century and then it doesn't really continue. That's the story that we most often tell is that also what you guys talk about in your courses.

Jim: Yeah, and of course that's what happens. I mean I was going to school shortly after that time period and nothing was ever mentioned of anything except the holocaust and that was bad but nothing about how it was tied to eugenics or American science and scientists.

Jo: Yeah.

Erik: Yeah, so it's true. A lot is left out but traditionally that's when we say the world came to its senses the declaration of human rights the notion that we need IRBs all those sorts of things we're not going to go back to that. We conveniently. Neglect to add all the way through the 1960s and into the 1970s there's plenty of lawsuits about continued sterilization of people in miztl asylums in the United States but we sort of read that out of the record until we get to the to Nazi trials. Which on its face have nothing at all to do with eugenics nothing at all. So we get states repealing their old eugenx laws from the beginning of the twentieth century that have

just kind of been forgotten and the assumption is that they were forgotten because they were not used. They didn't they weren't part of the story but hopefully what we'll get to talk about in a future episode is that. In fact, we say that sixty six roughly thousand people were sterilized in the United States but what we don't account for is that at least half of that number was before World War II. Which means the other half was after World War II.

Jo: Yeah, yeah I think there's um, a lot to be said that we'll hopefully get to and a number of arguments to be made that would suggest that eugenics actually never really went away much like racism that it is kind of built into.

Erik: Um, we have.

Jo: The way that people think about I mean even like every day people a people these days think about their own genetic profiles as compared with other groups. Um, and that there are policies and laws that are still being put in place or have been put in place that have effects similar to. Outright eugenic laws. Even if they are not themselves you know on the surface of it eugenic is that fair like maybe it never really went away at all.

Erik: Um. Maybe we need to test that question on a future episode. Okay.

Jo: Okay, okay, so ah, do we want to do a quick wrap up. Can we do a quick wrap up. Okay, so if we were going to tell the canonical story again. We're going to poke holes in this later on right? but eugenics begins. The term is coined by Francis Galton cousin of Charles Darwin it means good breeding and the idea is to apply principles. Have been developed in agriculture to improve stock of plants and livestock to human populations with an explicit focus on white supremacy and like a particular upper crust of white supremacy in and other words with a goal to improve the white race. Okay, great.

Erik: Um, yep, yes.

Jo: Okay, some statisticians get involved then we come over to the United States Galden is British and there's people like Davenport Loughlin Grant who are working around the eugenics records office in this eugenic triangle that you outline for us Eric right? along with others like Popenoe and the west then what we get the forced sterilization of thousands upon thousands of Americans um, Buck v Bell is a key landmark case. All of that legislation and practice percolates its way over to Germany. We get the holocaust then we assume that it all went away but actually it didn't is that a fair wrap up. Yes, all right, stay tuned folks for more in the future. In the meantime, I am Joe the cultural anthropologist.

Jim: I'm Jim the physical anthropologist.

Erik: And I'm Eric the historian of science and today I guess I'm your your guests on your podcast and you've been listening to speaking of race. Thank you so much for listening Joe where are we on social media.

Jo: We're everywhere where you download or upload or load or just listen to fine podcasts but you can also find us on Facebook at speaking of race on Twitter and Instagram ats Or Podcast and wherever you load your podcast podcasts where load isn't the word wherever you.

References

- Galton, F. (1865). Hereditary talent and character. *Macmillan's magazine*, 12(157-166), 318-327.
- Galton, F. (1869). *Hereditary Genius*. London: Macmillan and Co.
- Galton, F. (1883). *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development*. New York: Macmillan and Co.
- Gobineau, A. (1853-1855). *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*. Paris: Librairie de Firmin Didot Freres.
- Gould, S. J. (1981). *The mismeasure of man*. New York: WW Norton.
- Grant, M. (1916). *The Passing of the Great Race; or The Racial Basis of European History*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Kevles, D. J. (1995). *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Stoddard, L. (1920). *The Rising Tide of Color against White World-Supremacy*. New York: Scribner.