

Issue Snapshot:

Tax-Payer Supported Genetic Counseling Programs Embody Eugenic Aims

Take away: Eugenics organizations were driven to 'crypto-eugenics'¹ following the bad 'publicity' of the Holocaust. Genetics became their watch word, genetic counseling their new preferred strategy, and 'unconscious voluntary selection' their new great hope for eliminating the 'unfit' from society.



It is easy to imagine that the eugenics movement has gone away, but in fact it is very much present today, though its adherents utilize different language and offer different solutions. Sometimes they seem completely unaware of the fact that their proposals are similar, if not the same, as those put forward by the Nazis, and American progressives before them.²

Hitler was urged on by countless American eugenicists, including the founder of the Minnesota Eugenics Society, CF Dight. In 1933, he forwarded to Hitler a clipping of a letter to the editor he had written, saying, "I trust you will accept my sincere wish that your efforts [to stamp out mental inferiority among the German people] will advance the eugenics movement in other nations as well as in Germany."

When Dight died, he left his wealth to the University of Minnesota with instructions to form the Dight Institute for the Promotion of Human Genetics.³ An early director of the institute was a man named Sheldon Clark Reed who shared Dight's passion for 'genetic counseling.' Indeed, it was Reed who coined the phrase. He eventually presented the concept at the First International Congress of Human Genetics in 1956.⁴ That same year, he became president of the American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG), today's foremost advocate of genetic testing and counseling.

Reed's proposals were well received, and for good reason: The ASHG and fellow eugenicists had already decided that it was through such counseling that they could apply the evolutionary principle of natural selection within society. Eugenicists had tried 'top down' methods, and it turned into a holocaust. They would try a new approach, but their views about humanity did not change. For many post-war eugenicists, there wasn't any difference at all between the study of genetics and eugenics. Reed himself argued:

...there is no important distinction between research in "pure" genetics and research in "applied" genetics such as eugenics. Our present day use of the term "human genetics" instead of "eugenics" may be financially and politically expedient but there is no great philosophical difference between them.⁵

Meanwhile, Frederick Osborn, one of the individuals who helped found the American Eugenics Society in 1926, delivered an address published in *The Eugenics Review* in 1956, where he argued for the formation of heredity clinics:

Already enough is known of medical genetics to make it almost obligatory that we should set up heredity clinics in connection with medical schools and marriage counselling services. Galton would, I believe, have adopted the view now generally held, that heredity counselling should not go beyond advising on the degree of risk of defective heredity, leaving it to the parents themselves to decide whether or not it is to their interest and that of society to run this risk.

¹ As CP Blacker, the chair of the British Eugenics Society, argued in 1957. He also said that 'family planning' furthered their goals.

² For example, Julian Savulescu, the editor of *The Journal of Medical Ethics* recently proposed genetic screening based on mental traits, saying "when it comes to screening out personality flaws, such as potential alcoholism, psychopathy and dispositions to violence, you could argue that people have a moral obligation to select ethically better children." The same argument was made in 1936 by Franz Kallmann, a German eugenicist who fled to America (because he was a Jew!) who became a president of the ASHG.

³ http://www.mnhs.org/library/tips/history_topics/117eugenics.html [accessed 10/24/12]

⁴ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1180572/> [accessed 10/24/12]

⁵ In *The Local Eugenics Society*. *The American Journal of Human Genetics*. Vol 9, No. 1, March 1957

Later in the same address he argues,

Let's stop telling anyone that they have a generally inferior genetic quality, for they will never agree. Let's base our proposals on the desirability of having children born in homes where they will get affectionate and responsible care, and perhaps our proposals will be accepted. [...] On such a base it is surely possible to build a system of *voluntary unconscious selection*. (emphasis added.)

It is abundantly clear today that just such a system has been built. More than 60-98%⁶ of all children diagnosed with a birth defect in the womb are aborted by their parents--voluntarily... *unconsciously* acting on principles of evolutionary selection promoted by eugenicists past and present.

The ASHG was instrumental in building this system. One of its first presidents was Lee Dice, who in an article dedicated to the topic of heredity clinics, reasoned: "Only two practical⁷ ways seem to be available for eliminating harmful genes from a modern human population. Either those persons who carry hereditary defects may be segregated or sterilized by the state, or they may voluntarily refrain from reproduction."⁸

The ASHG was instrumental in developing the genetic counseling programs that we have today and continues to emphasize the importance of theory of evolution on 'medical genetics.' For example, the ASHG has launched a program to educate the judiciary on their understanding of human genetics.⁹ In their curriculum, one of the presenters, still very much alive today, notes that "The field of genetics is nothing more really than the hand-maiden of evolutionary theory."¹⁰

On top of the grave possibility that eugenics agendas are presently at the back of genetic testing and counseling programs (perhaps unwittingly), there is the fact that these organizations receive huge amounts of our tax money.¹¹ We call that 'adding insult to injury.'

SOLUTION

There are many legitimate reasons to be involved in the study of human genetics. Even the field of genetic counseling can be redeemed. However, questions must be asked, such as to what end is genetic testing directed and what services do the counselors *really* provide? Since there are rarely any cures available, doesn't it boil down whether or not to abort the child? The founders of genetic counseling in the US knew that it did, and counted on it. Next question: "Should the American tax-payer be subsidizing eugenic agendas?"

This document has shown that some early 'medical geneticists' were quite prepared to advance their agenda deceitfully. We cannot take the statements of organizations such as the ASHG about their agenda at face value. But never mind their intent, look at the results: huge numbers of 'defective' children are being aborted. Are eugenic policies of the United States government tolerable, just because they are unintentional?

The government should force a re-orienting of these organizations, demanding that they uphold the dignity of *all* human life, throughout *all* stages of development. Better yet, withdraw all government funding for programs outside the parameters laid out for the Federal government by the US Constitution. If people and organizations care deeply about something, let them spend their own dollars. As it stands, they have masterfully concealed their work in layers of bureaucracies and agencies, and it is impossible to hold them accountable. This was, and is, their design.

⁶ Statistics vary by diagnosis and are hampered by the nature of the thing being measured. Estimates of Down Syndrome abortion rates in the US range from 87% to 98%.

⁷ The word 'practical' is important. He eliminates the Nazi's 'top down' approach and then the segregation approach, though he does not deny that both approaches work well. The remaining options is to convince people to 'voluntarily' refrain from reproducing.

⁸ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1716385/pdf/ajhg00420-0007.pdf> [accessed 10/24/12]

⁹ Their ASTAR project was financed by a Department of Justice grant totaling \$500,000 in 2009.

¹⁰ Presentation created by ASHG member Dr. James Evans.

¹¹ The amount of money funneled into ASHG and its members' projects stretch into the billions and billions of dollars.