

Script: Genetic Legacy

Content Warning page:

"This documentary contains imagery and terminology that can be considered to offensive or inappropriate to some viewers, and may not be suitable for children. Viewer discretion is advised."

Image 01 Fade-in with black frame

V.O.

On May 2nd, 2002, the state of Virginia erected this marker near the town of Charlottesville to memorialize it's historical connection to the infamous Supreme Court Ruling of 1927, Buck vs. Bell and the horrifying results of the American eugenics movement that inspired the Holocaust.

Image 01 still on screen, static. Image 02 fades in and translates vertically downwards.

V.O.

The sign explicitly refers to Carrie Buck, a Charlottesville native who was forcibly committed to a mental institution in 1924 after the birth of her daughter. Buck became the scapegoat of the State of Virginia, and living proof that the state needed to act in protecting society in the way it deemed fit; the forced sterilization of 21 year-old Carrie.

Image 01 fades to black, Image 02 translates and scales to center.

V.O.

The reason for all this? The state thought that Carrie, along with her mother, her sister, and her daughter all had too many negative qualities to be allowed to procreate and pass on into society's future.

Image 02 fades. Overlapping image tiles appear randomly in different sizes, featuring Images 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 08, and 09.

V.O.

Carrie's story was one of many. In the United States, by 1930, 24 states had passed laws allowing them to forcibly correct the procreational ability of those deemed mentally-inept, physically or cosmetically deficient, or economically incompetent. These laws targeted the physically and mentally disabled, ethnic minorities, incarcerated felons, and the poor.

Images 03-09 fade-off in staggered process. Image 10 fades on and slowly scales larger from center screen.

V.O.

This was all the result of the eugenics movement that had become popular in the United States only a few years prior after the public became interested in protecting social welfare and the quality of society from unscrupulous qualities passed from parents to children. Most eugenicists were middle and upper-class educated Americans, and popular influential figures of the time, including the president publicly supported the movement.

Image 10 fades out revealing Image 11. Banner A translates on screen over Image 11 to define origin and definition of the word "eugenics". Image 12 appears on screen as both Image 11 and Banner A fade. Image 13 appears next to Image 12 on verbal cue.

V.O.

The movement originated in the 1880s in Europe with a man named Sir Francis Galton, a scientist and an academic who believed that applying the principles of genetics and selective breeding would improve the human race.

V.O.

In the 1900's, two men, Charles Davenport and Harry Laughlin were inspired by Galton's practices and established the Eugenics Records Office, where they collected massive amounts of data on the genetic pedigrees of multiple families throughout the United States.

Images 12 and 13 fade together, revealing Banner B.

V.O.

The ERO started defining multiple terms that would infiltrate the medical and legal communities in order to influence the American psyche that were particularly geared towards the ostracization of negative traits or activities and would later become official justifications for the sterilizations that would come later.

Word by word Banner B fades, emphasizing words that are still used in modern language. Sequence of Images 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18 appear, showing the visual shift towards modern events.

V.O.

We don't actually know today how many people were sterilized, but we have on record at least 60,000 reports of involuntary surgical reproductive intervention in the United States by 1930, and many more were still being carried out after, even to this day. The crucial ruling that justified all of this, that is now honored by the marker shown earlier still hasn't been overturned by our legal system.

Images 14-18 fade sequentially, and Images 19 and 20 appear side by side.

V.O.

The drastic measure that is the sterilization of society's outcasts is still being put into action today. In 2010, it was reported that over 140 female prisoners in the state of California were sterilized without informed consent, and last year allegations of the US government coercively sterilizing women in immigration detention centers also came to light.

Images 19 and 20 fade off and Banners C, D, E, and F appear. Banner F scales and translates on verbal cue, Image 21 appears in sync, and Banners C-E disappear at same time.

V.O.

Years of these practices being socially acceptable heavily inspired other means of discouraging marginalized groups from reproducing that, while less extreme, continue to dehumanize and limit the voices of those communities. Resources are frequently denied to these people by both legal and medical systems, and those characteristics are often used as hurdles to deny equal treatment in both spheres. In the case of those with diagnosed mental disabilities, up to 80% of diagnosed people can have their diagnosis used as justification for the legal removal of their child from their custody.

V.O.

In the case of Amy Fabbrini, a woman with an intellectual disability, the state of Oregon removed her second son from the hospital in which he was just born, and they had done the same with her first three years prior. The state forced both Fabbrini and her partner to take multiple classes to prove their fitness as parents, despite lack of evidence that they were unfit in the first place. It took ten months after the seizure of her second child for the state to return both children to her custody, by which point her oldest child had spent the first four years of his life being raised by someone else.

Image 21 fades off showing Banner G which then animates to reveal Image 22

V.O.

Medical procedures such as IVF genetic screenings and fetal anomaly abortions today are just the latest example of how the movement has influenced the medical community, especially with the large impact it has had on the births of children with Down's Syndrome.

V.O.

The eugenics movement as a whole in it's attempt to create the perfect generation of people was largely considered a failure after being labeled a brand of genocide following World War II. But the roots of the movement dug deep within American history and culture, linked to the crucial systems that continue to define the lives of these groups that were targeted throughout the events of the 1920's and the aftermath. This pseudoscience destroyed the lives and legacies of thousands of people, and will continue to do so, because if there is one thing the movement was successful at, was convincing people that the idea of a perfect society was worth the cost of destroying everyone who disagreed with that idea.

#	Image	Description	Source
0 1		Buck vs. Bell marker color	https://alchetron.com/Buck-v.-Bell
0 2		Image of Carrie Buck	https://evolutionnews.org/2007/05/darwin_day_in_may_buck_vs_bell/
0 3		Native Americans targeted by sterilization 1971 poster	https://www.shondaland.com/act/news-politics/a34497969/ice-forced-sterilizations-american-history/
0 4		Black people sterilized	https://indyweek.com/news/american-eugenics-movement-world-war-ii-part-1-3/
0 5		Mental asylum patients	https://inmatesofwillard.com/2013/01/03/1922-eugenics-new-york-state/
0 6		Psychiatric hospital procedure room	https://theconversation.com/forced-sterilization-policies-in-the-us-targeted-minorities-and-those-with-disabilities-and-lived-into-the-21st-century-143144
0 7		Supporters with signs 1915	https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugenics_in_the_United_States
0 8		Miscegenation ball	https://medium.com/@editors_91459/virginia-ran-a-secret-eugenics-program-that-didnt-end-until-1979-e9fcbfd23c64
0 9		Hospital staff 1930	http://cantonasylumforinsaneindians.com/history_blog/tag/insane-asylum-attendants/
1 0		Group photo outside eugenics building	https://courses.lumenlearning.com/culturalanthropology/chapter/eugenics-in-the-united-states/
1 1		Map of qualities defining what warranted sterilization	https://thesheaf.com/2020/01/17/reviving-eugenics-the-historical-practice-of-selective-breeding-may-have-made-a-comeback/
1 2		Portrait of Francis Galton	https://www.britannica.com/biography/Francis-Galton
1 3		Photo of Charles Davenport and Harry Laughlin	https://dnalc.cshl.edu/view/15723-Harry-Laughlin-and-Charles-Davenport.html
1 4		Sterilization map 1935	https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/blog/unwanted-sterilization-and-eugenics-programs-in-the-united-states/
1 5		Little girl protest	https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/blog/unwanted-sterilization-and-eugenics-programs-in-the-united-states/
1 6		Downs syndrome banner	https://medium.com/@robchapman_90047/resisting-the-new-downs-syndrome-eugenics-7f4440a957c6
1 7		Mexican woman with child	https://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/ucla-professor-s-film-documents-forced-sterilization-of-mexican-women-in-late-60s-1-a
1 8		Better baby contest poster	https://lewiscar.sites.grinnell.edu/HistoryofMedicine/spring2018/the-adapting-eugenics-movement-after-wwii/
1 9		Women's prison in California	https://talkpoverty.org/2017/08/23/u-s-still-forcibly-sterilizing-prisoners/
2 0		Immigration detention center	https://www.leftvoice.org/ice-forced-hysterectomies-history-of-state-sterilization
2 1		Amy Fabbrini and her partner	https://medium.com/iron-ladies/the-right-to-parenthood-645793418e2d

2		IVF Screening	https://www.statnews.com/2017/10/23/ivf-embryo-genetic-testing/
2			

#	Description	Source
A	Definition and origin of word "eugenics"	
B	Word map of eugenics medical terms/diagnoses/factors	
C	Headline of children being quickly removed from low income homes	
D	Headline on discrepancies between black and white children being removed from families	https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/fostercare/caseworker/roberts.html https://www.timesonline.com/story/news/2021/04/26/philadelphia-reform-broken-child-welfare-system-department-of-human-services-dhs/7238022002/
E	Headline of disabled people facing recommendations to abort disabled children	https://slate.com/human-interest/2018/05/how-down-syndrome-is-redefining-the-abortion-debate.html
F	Headline of Disabled parents lose custody of two children	https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/paloma/the-health-202/2019/12/04/the-health-202-oregon-seized-kids-from-low-iq-parents-the-federal-government-wants-to-avoid-future-discrimination/5de6cb0b88e0fa652bbdb85/
G	Timeline scroll from 1915 to 2021	

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