

# Eugenics in the United States, 1880 - 1978

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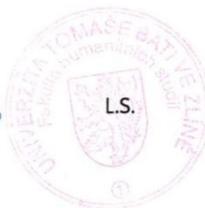
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## **ABSTRAKT**

Táto bakalárska práca opisuje Eugeniku v Spojených Štátoch v rokoch 1880 až 1978. Cieľ tohto hnutia bol jasný; vylepšiť ľudskú rasu. Pôvodne to začalo pozitívne, a to podporou vzťahov medzi vhodnými ľuďmi. Avšak, po čase sa to vyvinulo do rasistickej vojny proti mentálne slabším a žiadaný výsledok bol prevážený sterilizovaním tisícok ľudí. Táto práca obsahuje objasnenie hnutia, jeho začiatky a hlavných predstaviteľov, popisuje inštitúcie, v ktorých boli obeť väznené, hlavné udalosti hnutia, a taktiež sa sústreďuje na dôvody prečo hnutie nemohlo byť dlhodobo úspešné.

Kľúčová slova: Eugenika, Spojené Štáty, antikoncepcia, sterilizácia, mentálna retardácia, inštitucionalizácia

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis focuses on the Eugenics movement in the United States from 1880 to 1978. The movement's aim was simple; to improve the human race. It originally started in a positive way, by supporting the breeding of the desirable ones. However, it eventually turned into a racial war against the feeble-minded and the desired outcome of making a better population was overridden by sterilizing thousands of people. This work contains a brief clarification of the movement, its origins and main leaders, it describes the institutions in which the victims were held in, the main events of the movement, and it also explains the reasons why the movement could not be successful in the long run.

Keywords: Eugenics, United States, birth control, sterilization, feeble-minded, institutionalization

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I hereby declare that the print version of my bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Eugenics movement in the United States began in the 1880s, when one doctor in prison got annoyed by an inmate's masturbation and wanted to prevent it. During the following years, over sixty thousand Americans were sterilized, most often without consent. The victims were often those deemed as "feeble-minded," and they were a risk to society by reproducing and passing along the undesirable trait. Other criteria for being institutionalized and then sterilized included race, religion, ancestry or nationality. Most of those sterilizations took place within state institutions, such as homes for the feeble-minded, state hospitals and prisons.<sup>1</sup>

In the early years, scientific research showed that feeble-minded people produced children at a high rate, and to prevent a decline in racial intelligence, professionals such as doctors, psychologists and health superintendents decided to take preventative steps. It was a war, but without guns and armies. To make sure the campaign to create a master superior race would take off, wealthy and respected individuals partnered with elite universities and government officials, and together, giving the Eugenics movement a strong foundation.<sup>2</sup>

Sterilization laws and laws preventing marriages within some races were enacted in more than thirty states with aims to prevent the reproduction of the unfit and to prevent race mixing. The real aim was to make sure that only the pure Nordic race would remain, which would ultimately be achieved by sterilizing millions. The victims were "white trash", immigrants, epileptics, criminals, alcoholics, the mentally ill or anyone who did not fall under the blond with blue eyes ideal category.<sup>3</sup>

Even though the Eugenics movement is a dark chapter in the United States history, its goals were not originally evil, and the idea of Eugenics was the betterment of the human race by supporting the breeding of those in upper social classes. However, negative Eugenics soon took over. The Eugenics movement was nationwide. It was also closely associated with the birth control movement, and it was a huge inspiration for Hitler's Nazi

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<sup>1</sup> Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America's Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2004), xv; Randall Hansen and Desmond King, *Sterilized by the State: Eugenics, Race, and the Population Scare in Twentieth-Century North America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3 – 4.

<sup>2</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, xv, 7; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 4; "What is Eugenics?" Personal Genetics Education Project, accessed April 2, 2018, <https://pged.org/history-Eugenics-and-genetics/>.

<sup>3</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, xvi.

regime during the Second World War, which then led to Eugenics' downfall.<sup>4</sup> After a few years, this "experiment" was clear to be inhuman and this work proves that the Eugenics movement was impossible to maintain in the long run.

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<sup>4</sup> "Birth Control," Eugenics Archive, accessed April 2, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/encyclopedia/535eeaba7095aa0000000211>; "Eugenics," Eugenics Archive, accessed April 2, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/encyclopedia/5233ce485c2ec500000000a9>; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 163.

## 1 WHAT IS EUGENICS

The official definition of Eugenics, as stated in the dictionary, is, “the study of or belief in the possibility of improving the qualities of the human species or a human population, especially by such means as discouraging reproduction by persons having genetic defects or presumed to have inheritable undesirable traits (negative Eugenics) or encouraging reproduction by persons presumed to have inheritable desirable traits (positive Eugenics)”.<sup>5</sup>

Eugenics was the term widely used in the United States in the twentieth century, when it was believed that the human race could be improved. It can be divided into positive Eugenics, which means the reproduction of the people with desirable character traits (also known as good stock) was highly encouraged, and the term negative Eugenics was classified as the disapproval of reproduction of the people with undesirable character traits (inferior stock), also deemed as unfit, feebleminded, imbecile or defective, now just known as people with development disabilities.<sup>6</sup>

The Eugenics movement started in the United States in the 1880s and got bigger in the early years of the twentieth century, and its goal was to improve the human race, and to get rid of the menace to the society, also known as “purifying the race” and creating a master, superior race. Eugenics was characterized as a science, however, it was also considered as a social movement supported and encouraged by people with status back then; such as politicians, scientists, businessmen and leaders.<sup>7</sup>

Wanting to reduce the society’s burden, people who were poor, with intelligence below average, and people of color were target of the most common tool of the movement; sterilization. It was believed that the “undesirable traits” such as criminality or poverty were hereditary, and that people possessing those should not further reproduce. It resulted in laws prohibiting race mixing marriage, segregation, sterilization and in some cases, euthanasia. Even though this theory lacked evidence and scientific proof, the eugenicists still found a way to gain the support of prestigious institutions and universities, eventually

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<sup>5</sup> “Eugenics,” Dictionary, accessed April 2, 2018, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/Eugenics>.

<sup>6</sup> “Eugenics,”; “Eugenic Traits,” Eugenics Archive, accessed April 2, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/encyclopedia/535eeb757095aa0000000221>; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 3; Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), 19; “What is Eugenics?”.

<sup>7</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, xv, 7; “Eugenics”; “What is Eugenics?”.

legitimizing all of the above.<sup>8</sup> Francis Galton supported his belief in Eugenics by giving a rhetorical question: “Could not the race of men be improved? Could not the undesirables be got rid of and the desirables multiplied?”<sup>9</sup>

To put it simply, Eugenics is a doctrine, permitting the sterilization of people with bad genes in order to improve the white race. In other words, Eugenics can be explained as America’s legalized project to fight against the helpless and vulnerable ones, wanting to cleanse America of the “unfit”.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Franz Boas, "Eugenics." *The Scientific Monthly* 3, no. 5 (1916): 471-78.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/6055>; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 77; Traditional Wisdom, “History of the Eugenics Movement” (video), May 8, 2011, accessed April 3, 2018,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9xDJuwmoj0>; “What is Eugenics?”.

<sup>9</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 8.

<sup>10</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, xv, 7; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 4.

## 2 ORIGINS OF EUGENICS

The term Eugenics was first used in 1883 by Francis Galton and it derives from the Greek, meaning “good in birth.” Galton was convinced that not only physical features, but also mental and emotional qualities were hereditary. He had several families write down their characteristics, even offering money for the information. After calculating the data, Galton concluded that every person is predictable based on his ancestors, whether it involves eye or hair color, or talent and personality. In Galton’s opinion, Eugenics was a way to improve and evolve the human race by encouraging the breeding of the fit, which later became known as positive Eugenics.<sup>11</sup>

After Galton’s passing, his principles about improving the quality of mankind disappeared, and the Eugenics movement took a turn in the opposite direction, also known as negative Eugenics.<sup>12</sup> Those who were deemed as “abnormal” were prohibited from reproducing, ensuring that the undesirable characteristics would eventually die out.<sup>13</sup> People identified as “socially unfit” were put into ten groups for elimination; feeble-minded, paupers, alcoholics, criminals, epileptics, insane, weak, diseased, deformed, and those with defective sense organs.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.1 Social Darwinism

Darwin’s theory of natural selection, when applied to humans, came to be known as social Darwinism. Social Darwinism and its enthusiasts believed that problems formed in society could be biologically explained, which results in heredity once again. The term social Darwinism is often associated with the phrase “survival of the fittest,” because in his *On the Origins of Species*, Darwin wrote that only individuals with favorable potential will survive and reproduce.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 15 – 17; Daniel Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), Preface; “Eugenics”; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 49; Kline, *Building a Better Race*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 19.

<sup>13</sup> Kline, *Building a Better Race*, 27.

<sup>14</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 58.

<sup>15</sup> Frank P. Besag, "Social Darwinism, Race, and Research," *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 3, no. 1 (1981): 55-69, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1163643>; Gloria Mc Connaughey, "Darwin and Social Darwinism," *Osiris* 9 (1950): 397-412, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/301854>; Mike Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860 – 1945* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 24, 31; “Social Darwinism,” Eugenics Archive, accessed April 2, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/encyclopedia/535eee377095aa0000000259>.

The idea of social Darwinism set the grounds for the Eugenics movement, considering that both focused on finding the solutions for dealing with the “unfit”, which eventually led to involuntary sterilization and segregation of the poor, feeble-minded or immigrants.<sup>16</sup>

## 2.2 Founding Fathers

### 2.2.1 Francis Galton

Galton was born in 1822 to an intellectually-driven family; his cousin was Charles Darwin, and Galton learned how to read and write and how to speak Latin, Greek and French before he reached his teenage years. He studied medicine and mathematics, however he found enthusiasm for travelling. After having read Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*, Galton was fascinated, and the idea of improving the human race gave his life a purpose.<sup>17</sup> He published his findings in various magazines and did extensive research on human heredity, publishing books on the topic as well. In his *Hereditary Genius*, he argued that an environment in which a person grows up has nothing to do with how the person turns out; and that success ran in the families, and that intelligence and other characteristic traits were hereditary.<sup>18</sup> Galton believed that Eugenics was the way to improve the human race to the extent of each individual being able to lead a perfect and successful life, and he intended to do it by marriages between the elites and then having them reproduce. He was the one to come up with the term Eugenics, and the one to initiate the movement, eventually dedicating his life to it.<sup>19</sup>

### 2.2.2 Charles Davenport

Charles Davenport was one of the most known leaders in the Eugenics movement. He was born in 1866 and was highly educated, and a highly experienced educator. He was the one to establish the Eugenics Record Office (see chapter 3.1), along with Harry Laughlin (see chapter 2.2.3). Just like Galton, Davenport’s focus was on the study of evolution and inheritance. Davenport’s mind was set on the idea of mankind going extinct, if it was not for eugenic intervention and preventing the “unfit” from reproducing. Davenport was the

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<sup>16</sup> “Social Darwinism.”

<sup>17</sup> “Galton, Sir Francis,” Eugenics Archive, accessed April 3, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/connections/518c1ed54d7d6e0000000002>; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 28 – 29; Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 5.

<sup>18</sup> “Francis Galton,” *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 85, no. 2 (1922): 293-98, doi:10.2307/2341167; “Galton, Sir Francis,” Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 14.

<sup>19</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 15 – 17; “Galton, Sir Francis.”

main figure in so-called negative Eugenics, and his definition of the unfit was biased and oversimplified.<sup>20</sup>

### 2.2.3 Harry Laughlin

Born in 1880, Laughlin grew up to help lead the Eugenics movement. He studied science, pedigrees and inheritance as well and he worked at various positions at schools. He had multiple publications on the Eugenics movement, and his *Eugenical Sterilization in the United States* contained the model law for sterilization, which was then used as a basis for legal sterilization in over 30 states. He said that sterilization of the feeble-minded would help get rid of the burden to the society and also increase the safety of future generations.<sup>21</sup> Together with Davenport, he established the Eugenics Research Association, and together they edited the *Eugenical News*. Laughlin's work was very well known, and it served as an influence to Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime during the Second World War.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> “Davenport, Charles,” Eugenics Archive, accessed April 4, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/connections/5233ce935c2ec500000000ab>; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 35; Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 45 – 46.

<sup>21</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 36; “Harry Hamilton Laughlin (1880 – 1943),” Embryo Project, accessed April 4, 2018, <https://embryo.asu.edu/pages/harry-hamilton-laughlin-1880-1943>; “Laughlin, Harry H.,” Eugenics Archive, accessed April 4, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/connections/5233cfc65c2ec500000000ae>.

<sup>22</sup> “Harry Hamilton Laughlin,”; Nadine M. Weidman, *Race, Racism, and Science: Social Impact and Interaction* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 118.

### 3 ORGANIZATIONS

#### 3.1 Eugenics Record Office

The Eugenics Record Office was established in 1910 in Cold Spring Harbor and it was a Davenport's step to further expand his scientific research. It went to analyze the genetic backgrounds of families, which then resulted in segregating the defective and the desired. Its leaders were the most known eugenicists; Charles Davenport and Harry Laughlin (see chapter 2.2 and 2.3). The ERO served as a meeting place, a repository for records, a platform for launching campaigns and a home to eugenical publications. It was the most important center for the movement and it researched human heredity, producing pedigrees – family trees containing the characteristics. The data was obtained from charities, eugenic institutions, hospitals, prisons, and refugee homes.<sup>23</sup>

The ERO was founded based on a grant from Mary Harriman. In 1917, it became funded by the Carnegie Institution and the Carnegie Institution provided the main source of funding until the Office's closing. Another donors were wealthy philanthropists such as John D. Rockefeller and John H. Kellogg.<sup>24</sup>

Publishing the journal of the movement, *Eugenical News*, was one of the Office's main activities. The other two ones included doing the pedigree work, and it also served as a training institute for Eugenics field workers. During fourteen years, 258 field workers were trained there and most of them were educated in biology. Many of the trainees then worked at hospitals, asylums and other eugenic institutions as specialists; being a field worker was one of the very few job possibilities back then. It officially closed by the Carnegie Institution in 1939 and it started the downfall of the Eugenics movement.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 45; "Eugenics Record Office," Archives at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, accessed April 11, 2018, <http://library.cshl.edu/special-collections/Eugenics>; "Eugenics Record Office (ERO)," Eugenics Archive, accessed April 11, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/connections/5233cf7b5c2ec500000000ac>; "The Eugenics Record Office at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory," Embryo Project, accessed April 11, 2018, <https://embryo.asu.edu/pages/Eugenics-record-office-cold-spring-harbor-laboratory-1910-1939>.

<sup>24</sup> "The Eugenics Record Office at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory".

<sup>25</sup> "Eugenics Record Office (ERO)," Garland E. Allen, "The Eugenics Record Office at Cold Spring Harbor, 1910-1940: An Essay in Institutional History," *Osiris* 2 (1986): 225-64, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/301835>; Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 199; "The Eugenics Record Office at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory".

## 3.2 Eugenics Board

The Boards of Eugenics were set up and established in the individual states that enacted the sterilization law. The Boards usually leaned towards the negative Eugenics and they consisted of a few members whose job was to approve or to decline the recommendation to sterilize someone. The members highlighted the positive impacts of the sterilization and they believed that being sterilized was going to improve the lives of the sterilized, and that it was not a punishment.<sup>26</sup>

According to Eugenics Board, the sterilizations were done for the public good. They were initiated when a petition to sterilize someone was filed. The patient then went in front of the Board and it took the members about ten minutes to decide whether an order for sterilization was in place.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.2.1 The Eugenics Board of North Carolina

The Eugenics Board of North Carolina opened in 1933, years after the sterilization law was passed in the state. It was established to mainly ensure the constitutionality of the sterilization law. At all times, the members of the board consisted of the Commissioner of Public Welfare, the Attorney General or the Staff Attorney, the Secretary of State Board of Health, the Superintendent of the Raleigh State Hospital and the Superintendent of a State Hospital outside Raleigh. The Board of North Carolina was considered as one of the most active, and it closed down in 1977.<sup>28</sup>

### 3.2.2 The Idaho Eugenics Board

In 1925, passing the sterilization law in Idaho created the Idaho Eugenics Board, and its members were the superintendents of the state institutions for the feeble-minded. The role of the Board was to decide on the sterilization of the residents, and the law insisted of those decisions being based on certain criteria; whether their reproducing would bring more undesirable traits, whether they were a menace or a burden to the state and society. To authorize someone's sterilization, consent from either the patient or his legal guardian was required. If the consent was not given, the case would be presented to the district court

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<sup>26</sup> "Eugenics Board," North Carolina History, accessed April 13, 2018, <http://northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/Eugenics-board/>.

<sup>27</sup> "Eugenics Board."

<sup>28</sup> "Eugenics Board," "Eugenics Board," NC Pedia, accessed April 13, 2018, <https://www.ncpedia.org/Eugenics-board>.

along with the Board's decision, and the court would then decide if the sterilization should happen.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.3 American Eugenics Society

The Second International Congress of Eugenics in 1921 had an enormous success, that led to the establishment of the Eugenics Committee of the United States. In 1926, it eventually became the American Eugenics Society, with founding members being Madison Grant, Harry Laughlin, Irving Fisher, Henry Fairfield Osborn and Henry Crampton. It was originally established to emphasize Eugenics education.<sup>30</sup>

AES's campaigns were successfully presented at exhibitions, state fairs and local expositions, one of the most known being Fitter Family contest (see chapter 7). AES was quite a prominent supporter of the birth control (see chapter 6) and planned parenthood movement. In 1928, monthly journal *Eugenics* was first published, however, it fell under the Galton Publishing Company in 1930 and when the company closed in 1931, the publishing of the journal stopped. During Ellsworth Huntington's presidency of AES, the goals of the AES were shifted into negative Eugenics.<sup>31</sup>

In 1930s, the AES had 1 260 members, with at least one member from each state and with the majority from New York, California and Massachusetts. However, after the Second World War, the number of members began to decrease rapidly. By 1960, the membership dropped under 400 members. After that, AES changed its focus on genetic analysis and on human evolution. In 1972, AES renamed to the Society for the Study of Social Biology and has been distanced from the AES.<sup>32</sup>

### 3.4 Human Betterment Foundation

The HBF was founded in 1928 in California by Ezra Seymour Gosney and it was established to support the research and publication of the sterilization and its effects, throughout the legislation of sterilization in California that was enacted in 1909. Through

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<sup>29</sup> "Idaho Legislature Passes "An Act to Create a State Board of Eugenics"," Eugenics Archive, accessed April 14, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/database/documents/53233cfd132156674b00023e>.

<sup>30</sup> "American Eugenics Society," Embryo Project, accessed April 13, 2018, <https://embryo.asu.edu/pages/american-eugenics-society-1926-1972>; "American Eugenics Society," Controlling Heredity, accessed April 13, 2018, <https://library.missouri.edu/exhibits/Eugenics/aes.htm>; "American Eugenics Society (AES)," Eugenics Archive, accessed April 13, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/connections/5233e53d5c2ec500000000e2>.

<sup>31</sup> "American Eugenics Society,"; Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics*, 113.

<sup>32</sup> "American Eugenics Society (AES)," ; "American Eugenics Society."

the HBF's active years, numerous publications showed the believed benefits of sterilization, both for the victims and the society. The director, Gosney and the secretary Paul Popenoe travelled through California's institutions and collected stories and information about the patients. The HBF believed that sterilization should be understood not as a punishment, but as a prevention. In 1942, Gosney died and his holdings were liquidated.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> "Human Betterment Foundation (1928-1942)," Embryo Project, accessed April 12, 2018, <https://embryo.asu.edu/pages/human-betterment-foundation-1928-1942>; "Human Betterment Foundation," Eugenics Archive, accessed April 12, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/connections/52337e635c2ec50000000053>.

## 4 INSTITUTIONALIZATION

The majority of sterilizations took place in homes for the feeble-minded. The term institutionalization has been used since the eighteenth century, long before the Eugenics movement. Ever since then, it has been debated whether these institutions were made to help people with disorders, or if they were just simply made to segregate them from society. At the start, the staff working at those institutions was optimistic; the capacity was just right and the ability to care for the patients was high. The professionals were convinced that the purpose of such institutions was educational, and they were supported by state funding.<sup>34</sup>

Kirkbride (a physician and an advocate for the mentally ill) designed the institutions as following: buildings were attractive, and all institutions were located on spacious grounds. The main building housed the superintendent, his family and administrative offices, while extended wings housed the patients. The limit for admissions was 250. For the first decades, the hopes and aims of the institutions were fulfilled.<sup>35</sup>

However eventually, it all changed. State funding was cut and medical experts became skeptical on the patients' ability to be cured, which resulted in admitting more patients for a longer period of time with hopes for public funding. That is what started the mass institutionalization and the means to deal with the feeble-minded. Soon enough, the limit of 250 was passed, and there were more than 1,000 patients at one institution. The institutions became overcrowded and the staff was demoralized and untrained. The educational ability of those institutions became inconsistent, and patients were instead taught to take care of the institution's grounds. What started as educational and temporary, soon became a permanent placement.<sup>36</sup> During the Eugenics movement's peak between the 1920s and 1950s, dozens of mental health institutions and training schools nationwide were performing operations to sterilize.<sup>37</sup>

People were institutionalized based on recommendations from family, police, state officials, or doctors. The superintendents had many duties: managing the institutions & the staff, coming up with the daily routine, and deciding which people would go to the

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<sup>34</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 63 – 64; “What is Institutionalization?,” Eugenics Archive, accessed April 5, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/institutions/history>.

<sup>35</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 67, 69, 71.

<sup>36</sup> Eugenics Archive, “Surviving Eugenics” (documentary video), 2015, accessed April 3, 2018, <https://player.vimeo.com/video/231116550>; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 64, 70 – 71.

<sup>37</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 63.

Eugenics Board. The majority of the cases were recommended for sterilization.<sup>38</sup> Survivors such as Judy Lytton, Leilani Muir (see chapter 10.1.4), Ken Nelson (see chapter 10.1.2), Glenn Sinclair and Roy Skoreyko explain in detail their stays at the institutions. The fences were high, and the experiences were chilling. Patients were taught to care for other patients and to maintain the building and its grounds. They had to feed, change diapers, mop up urine from floors, etc. And they were even put naked into isolation rooms for a month. The toilettes did not have doors, and to take a shower, one had to go all the way to the bathroom, through the halls, unclothed.<sup>39</sup>

They learned not to ask questions, because they would not get an answer, and they also learned not to fight back, because they would be punished. Bullying and abuse often occurred behind closed doors; some of the staff were slapping patients, twisting their limbs, and it was all denied by the rest of the staff. Much of what was actually happening within the institution's walls was kept from the public, and many institutions records, containing information about the staff, the residents and their admissions and discharges, along with their medical files, have been lost.<sup>40</sup>

#### 4.1 Fairview Training Center

Opened in 1908, the institution was created by Oregon to house and educate the feeble-minded. It was originally called the Oregon State Institution for the Feeble-Minded, then it was renamed to Oregon Fairview Home and in 1965, the facility's name was changed to Fairview Hospital and Training Center. In 1917, a law insuring that no one younger than five years old was admitted to the institution was passed, however in 1921, the age limit was removed.<sup>41</sup>

Almost 3,000 sterilizations took place at Fairview, and it was one of the conditions for discharge. Patients admitted that the regime was very strict, and that they felt like prisoners. Patients who fought were punished by being tied to a bed and covered with wet

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<sup>38</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 68; "What is Institutionalization?"

<sup>39</sup> Eugenics Archive, "Surviving Eugenics,"; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 71; "What is Institutionalization?"

<sup>40</sup> Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2005), 109; "Archives and Institutions," Eugenics Archive, accessed April 2, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/connections/559c4555c56e364d0d000002>; Eugenics Archive, "Surviving Eugenics,"

<sup>41</sup> "Fairview Training Center: Agency History," Oregon Blue Book, accessed April 6, 2018, [https://web.archive.org/web/20120131193928/http://bluebook.state.or.us/state/executive/Mental\\_Health/fairview.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20120131193928/http://bluebook.state.or.us/state/executive/Mental_Health/fairview.htm).

sheets, or they would have hot water thrown on them. An employee stated that treatment of the patients, who were called inmates, was horrible. They were tied to heavy blocks and they had to push them up and down the hall, and inhuman devices were used in order to control them. Research has shown that patients at Fairview were more likely to die from unnatural causes than the ones not institutionalized. Before its closing in 2000, the institution was administrated as a part of Oregon Department of Human Services. In 2002, Governor John Kitzhaber issued a formal apology to the survivors (see chapter 10.2).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> MV Advancements Trainer, “Voices From Fairview” (video), November 19, 2014, accessed April 6, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GP85pIcBQQ8>; “The Fairview Training Center May Have the Darkest History in Oregon,” Oregon Life, accessed April 6, 2018, <http://thatoregonlife.com/2015/07/the-fairview-training-center-may-have-the-darkest-history-in-oregon/#>.

## 5 STERILIZATION LAWS

During the twentieth century, over sixty thousand people have been sterilized in 32 states over the United States under the Eugenics movement. The picture below shows the states, when the sterilization law was enacted, and the number of people sterilized in each state.<sup>43</sup>

*The Eugenics' First Throw*

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TABLE 5.2 *Enacted Sterilization Laws by State*

State	Year of enactment	Year of major subsequent measures (if any)	Number sterilized
Alabama	1919	—	224
Arizona	1929	—	30
California	1909	1913, 1917, 1951	20,108
Connecticut	1909	1919, 1965	557
Delaware	1923	1929	945
Georgia	1937	—	3,284
Idaho	1925	1929	38
Indiana	1907	1927, 1931	2,500
Iowa	1911	1913, 1915	1,910
Kansas	1913	1917	3,032
Maine	1925	1929, 1931	326
Michigan	1913	1923, 1925, 1929	3,786
Minnesota	1925	—	2,350
Mississippi	1928	—	683
Montana	1923	—	256
Nebraska	1915	1929, 1957	902
New Hampshire	1917	1929	679
New York	1912	—	42
North Carolina	1919	1929	7,600
North Dakota	1913	1927, 1961	1,049
Oklahoma	1931	1933, 1935	556
Oregon	1913	1917, 1923, 1925	2,341
South Carolina	1935	—	277
South Dakota	1917	1925	789
Utah	1925	1929	772
Vermont	1931	—	253
Virginia	1924	—	7,325
Washington	1909	1921	685
West Virginia	1929	—	98
Wisconsin	1913	1955	1,823

Number of sterilizations (scan) 1

### 5.1 Indiana

In 1907, the law of sterilization was enacted in Indiana by the governor James Franklin Hanly, after Harry Sharp provided testimonials by the patients who underwent vasectomy, to prove that sterilization did not always have to be cruel. The law enacted sterilization of the instituted, such as criminals, rapists, imbeciles and idiots. Indiana was the first state to pass the compulsory eugenic law of sterilization. Before the sterilization

<sup>43</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 77.

could happen, the patient had to be examined by two expert surgeons, and it had to be decided that there was no possibility for the patient's improvement.<sup>44</sup>

The law was remade in 1927, due to the original law being attacked by the Indiana Supreme Court in 1926, stating that it was unconstitutional. The revised law had very straight targets for sterilization; criminals and rapists were taken off the list, and epileptics were added. This law also contained a thirty-day notice period for the case observation, believing it would help make better decisions after the case observation. Another changes to the law were made in 1931, 1935 and in 1937.<sup>45</sup>

## 5.2 California

The sterilization law of California was fought for by the physician Dr. Frederick W. Hatch, who saw sterilization as the opportunity to stop the growing population of the ones classified as mentally defective, and who thought that insanity was hereditary. The law was enacted in 1909 by the governor James Gillett, and it was meant for people in prisons, and for the institutionalized.<sup>46</sup>

In 1913, an addition to the law has been made; any person admitted to the institution could be sterilized, even without the patient's consent, entitling the law as the Asexualization Act. This law's legislation had some trouble, but eventually made further sterilization possible. Commission in Lunacy, which was in charge of the sterilization approval, has been replaced by State Department of Institutions in 1920, and a document listing all the illnesses that were legally allowing sterilization was drafted by the Department for sterilization requests.<sup>47</sup> California was the third state to pass the

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<sup>44</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 78, "Indiana Passes First Eugenic Sterilization Statute in the United States," Eugenics Archive, accessed April 1, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/database/documents/53234888132156674b00024e>; Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 100.

<sup>45</sup> "1907 Indiana Eugenics Law," Clio, accessed April 1, 2018, <https://www.theclio.com/web/entry?id=17464>; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 77 – 78; "Indiana Passes First Eugenic Sterilization Statute in the United States".

<sup>46</sup> "California Passes its First Sterilization Law," Eugenics Archive, accessed April 1, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/database/documents/51714747eed5c60000000008>; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 80.

<sup>47</sup> "Forced Sterilization Programs in California Once Harmed Thousands – particularly Latinas," The Conversation, accessed April 1, 2018, <http://theconversation.com/forced-sterilization-programs-in-california-once-harmed-thousands-particularly-latinas-92324>; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 81.

sterilization law, and between 1909 and 1964, more than twenty thousand people have been sterilized; one third of all sterilizations all over the U.S.<sup>48</sup>

### 5.3 Virginia

The first draft of the Virginia Sterilization Act was struck down by the courts, because the public had negative opinions about the laws differently targeting the institutionalized and other citizens. The men behind the law's campaign then focused on changing the public's point of view. A report declaring that the state was in a critical financial condition has been released, saying that the state's spending was growing rapidly, due to institutionalizing the defectives and taking care of them. Their goal was to convince the public that legalizing sterilization of the unfit would allow them to leave the institutions.<sup>49</sup>

The campaign was based on the Model Sterilization Law by Laughlin, where the term Eugenics is omitted. The law was made to look like it was to benefit both the state, and the society. In 1924, the Virginia Sterilization Act was passed, and the test case for this law is the case of Carrie Buck (see chapter 5.5). The case of Carrie Buck made this law the model law for sterilization.<sup>50</sup>

### 5.4 Racial Integrity Act

The same day as the Virginia Sterilization Law was enacted, the Racial Integrity Act was passed as well. It required all citizens of Virginia to have their race filled on their birth certificates and also on the marriage certificates. This act was the state's attempt to protect the white race, and it made marriage of whites with non-whites illegal. White person was only a person with no other blood than Caucasian, or only with one-sixteenth or less blood of the American Indian, with no other non-Caucasian blood. The argument for this act to protect the whiteness was, "One race will absorb the other ... it will sound the death knell

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<sup>48</sup> "A Long-Lost Data Trove Uncovers California's Sterilization Program," *The Atlantic*, accessed April 1, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2017/01/california-sterilization-records/511718/>; "California Passes its First Sterilization Law".

<sup>49</sup> "A Shameful History: Eugenics in Virginia," ACLU of Virginia, accessed April 1, 2018, <https://acluva.org/en/news/shameful-history-Eugenics-virginia>; "Eugenics Sterilization Laws," Eugenics Archive, accessed April 1, 2018, <http://www.Eugenicsarchive.org/html/Eugenics/essay8text.html>; Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 110; "Sterilization Act of 1924," Embryo Project, accessed April 1, 2018, <https://embryo.asu.edu/pages/sterilization-act-1924>.

<sup>50</sup> "A Shameful History: Eugenics in Virginia"; "Eugenics Sterilization Laws"; Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 110; "Sterilization Act of 1924".

of the white man. Once a drop of inferior blood gets in his veins, he descends lower and lower in the mongrel scale.”<sup>51</sup>

Lying on the certificates was prohibited, and anyone who tried to register themselves under different race than they were, was liable to spend a year in prison. However, prohibited marriage was not enough, and the segregation also took place in schools and public places; everyone who was not certified as white was kept from attending school and from using public transport.<sup>52</sup>

After the act was enacted, letters were sent to the parents of the mixed children, stating the following: “This is a mulatto child and you cannot pass it off as white. A new law passed by the last legislature says that if a child has one drop of negro blood in it, it cannot be counted as white. You will have to do something about this matter and see that this child is not allowed to mix with white children. It cannot go to white schools and can never marry a white person in Virginia. It is an awful thing.”<sup>53</sup>

## 5.5 Buck v. Bell

In 1924, Virginia’s Eugenic Sterilization Act was passed, which legalized the compulsory sterilization of people who were thought and declared to be feeble-minded. Carrie Buck was deemed a menace to society and a threat to the future of mankind, and she was chosen as the perfect test case for this law, which authorized the sterilization of the “socially inadequate.” Buck’s problems began when her mother, Emma, was called before the Commission on Feeble-mindedness in 1920. During the hearing, she admitted that she had been convicted of prostitution and that she had contracted syphilis. On such grounds, she was officially declared feeble-minded. She was then driven to the Colony of Epileptics and Feeble-minded, where she would remain for the rest of her life. She died there in 1944, at the age of seventy-one.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 167; “Eugenic Laws Against Race Mixing,” Eugenics Archive, accessed April 1, 2018, <http://www.Eugenicsarchive.org/html/Eugenics/essay7text.html>; “Racial Integrity Laws (1924 – 1930),” Encyclopedia Virginia, accessed April 2, 2018, [https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Racial\\_Integrity\\_Laws\\_of\\_the\\_1920s#start\\_entry](https://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Racial_Integrity_Laws_of_the_1920s#start_entry); “Virginia Passes the ‘Racial Integrity Act,’” Eugenics Archive, accessed April 1, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/connections/54f744e4e90b97152f000002>.

<sup>52</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 168, 172.

<sup>53</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 169.

<sup>54</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 108 – 109; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 102; Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 110.

Earlier, Emma had given birth to Carrie, but Carrie had been taken away from her at age three and placed with the Dobbs, a foster family. In such a supportive environment, Carrie thrived, but when she got pregnant, the Dobbs family asked to be rid of her, on the grounds that she was feeble-minded and epileptic, or both, and they also claimed that they could no longer afford her.<sup>55</sup>

In January 1924, Carrie was declared as feeble-minded, however, she was not taken to an institution right away, because pregnant girls were not permitted there. Carrie gave birth to her daughter in March 1924, and named her Vivian. The Dobbs family then took Vivian, and Carrie was taken to the State Colony for Epileptics and Feeble-minded upon her arrival to Lynchburg with her social worker, Caroline Wilhelm. The physicians agreed with the Dobbs family that the girl was feeble-minded and declared her so. At the institution, Carrie reconciled with her mother Emma.<sup>56</sup> Carrie was given an IQ test, the results of which showed that her mental age was nine years, which fell under the classification of moron in Henry Goddard's definition. Her mother's test results showed the mental age under eight years, which proved that the mental deficiency was in two generations, and it was believed that if Vivian could undergo the test, she would be proven as feeble-minded as well. In September 1924, a meeting of the colony review board was held, during which it was officially decided that Carrie should be sexually sterilized. Sterilization would permit Carrie to leave the institution, which would give her a chance at life, however, without being able to get pregnant again, and it would also save the state a lot of money.<sup>57</sup>

During the subsequent court case, which began in November 1924 and came to be known as *Buck v. Bell*,<sup>58</sup> attention also fell on little Vivian, for if Vivian could be proven mentally ill, it would mean the third generation of the Bucks to be considered as imbeciles – a threat to the state, and it would make the argument of Carrie being a biological menace, even stronger. A social worker examined the child, and even though she was only a few months old, declared her unfit on the grounds that Vivian had a look that was not quite normal, and that there were differences in her development, compared to another baby. Those claims were more than enough for the judge, and just like her mother and her

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<sup>55</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 109.

<sup>56</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 109, 113; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 102.

<sup>57</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 113; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 105; Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 110.

<sup>58</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 114; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 105; Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 111.

grandmother, Vivian was declared as defective.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, the judge concluded that Carrie should be sterilized, on the grounds that “three generations of imbeciles are enough.” Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., concurred, stating that “it is better for the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind.”<sup>60</sup>

Carrie’s lawyer appealed the verdict, and the case wound its way up to the United States Supreme Court, which, if upholding Carrie’s sterilization, would open the gates for eugenic cleansing nationwide. One of the witnesses for the case was Dr. Arthur H. Estabrook, who travelled to the colony to examine all three women, giving him everything he needed to provide a three generation pedigree analysis. Based on this analysis, he told the court that Carrie was indeed feeble-minded, as was Vivian. Witnesses from Carrie’s hometown were also called in to testify at the trial, however, they only reported hearsay, and some of them did not even know Carrie directly.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, Carrie’s attorney was biased against her, as he was hired by the institution that wanted to sterilize her. And another expert, Harry Laughlin, testified against Carrie without having met her, but relying on notes from others.<sup>62</sup> Laughlin analyzed the heredity in the Buck family, and his testimony stated the following: “The family history record and the individual case histories, if true, demonstrate the hereditary nature of the feeble-mindedness and moral delinquency described in Carrie Buck. She is therefore a potential parent of socially inadequate or defective offspring.” This testimony was accepted as true by the majority of the court’s justices.<sup>63</sup>

In May 1927, the case of *Buck v. Bell* was decided, with the court ruling that Carrie was feeble-minded and should be sterilized to “avoid the multiplication of socially inadequate defectives.” Sterilization occurred on October 19, 1927. The case of *Buck v. Bell* became a landmark for the Eugenics movement. Based on its results, Carrie’s sister, Doris, was also sterilized, however, she was told it was an appendix removal, and she only found out about the sterilization years later.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 114 – 115; Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 110.

<sup>60</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 117, 121 – 122; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 106.

<sup>61</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 108 – 109.

<sup>62</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 109, 114; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 109 – 112.

<sup>63</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 121; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 112.

<sup>64</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 119, 122; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 105, 109.

## 6 BIRTH CONTROL

October 1916 was the unofficial start of the birth control movement (also known as planned parenthood), when a birth control clinic was opened in Brooklyn. However, it only caught the attention of the public in 1921, when nurse Margaret Sanger formed the American Birth Control league (ABCL).<sup>65</sup> Sanger claimed, she knew many women who had been victims of unwanted pregnancies, who wished they did not have to get pregnant again.<sup>66</sup> Motherhood was believed to be the most sacred role, and Sanger wanted this sacred role to be controlled by women. She wanted the if, when and how often of the pregnancy to be a choice, and she became the most dominant figure in helping women have the option of making pregnancy a choice. She considered herself a feminist, and she gained satisfaction from helping women avoid the pain and danger of child bearing.<sup>67</sup>

This birth control movement resulted in quite a scandal, because many people thought of its negative effects or feared that it would support women's sexual freedom, and that separating sex from reproduction would change the perspectives on public morality. The possible decline of birthrate and change in socially acceptable sexual behavior were also the concerns of physicians.<sup>68</sup> The fear of the eugenicists was that birth control would mostly be practiced by educated families from good social classes – the “fit”, that were wanted to reproduce the most. Birth control was thought to be unnatural, and Charles Davenport stated that he was “not convinced that, despite their high motives, the movement will not do more harm than good.”<sup>69</sup> Another fear that resurfaced was the possible misuse of birth control, such as single women using birth control to support promiscuity, or healthy and wealthy couples using birth control so as not to have any children.<sup>70</sup>

Nor were Catholics keen on the idea of birth control. They used arguments such as the natural, divine law of marriage and the sanctity of procreation, family and human life. The Eugenics and birth control movements overlapped, and they were a threat to natural law,

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<sup>65</sup> Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 154.

<sup>66</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 126; Margaret Sanger, “Mike Wallace Interviews Margaret Sanger,” interview by Mike Wallace, YouTube, February 11, 2013, video, 25:07, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CrkrkSiFApA>.

<sup>67</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 125; Sanger, interview.

<sup>68</sup> Kline, *Building a Better Race*, 63; Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics*, 154.

<sup>69</sup> Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics*, 154 – 155.

<sup>70</sup> Sanger, interview.

and that started the debates of the methods and aims of the eugenicists.<sup>71</sup> However, some of the Catholics were engaging in the Eugenics movement, and therefore, the topic of birth control remained on the table.<sup>72</sup> The Catholics' attitude towards the birth control movement was clear; it was unsupported. Fr. Bruehl said that "if birth control is to be made an essential feature of the program of the eugenicists, we can have nothing at all to do with it." Catholic priests, who were members of the Eugenics organization, were long against the artificial contraception. They viewed it as something that "constitutes the immoral perversion of a human," and they thought it was a "symbol of the growing selfishness and decadence of modern existence." The Pope expressed his disapproval as well: "Any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of a grave sin." Thus, in the eyes of Catholics, birth control was a sin and against the laws of nature. However, Sanger argued that this was just their celibacy speaking, and she did not agree with the Catholics.<sup>73</sup>

Sanger did not take no for an answer. She insisted that it was more of a health movement, that was supposed to benefit the society, by making women free. She associated herself with the biologists and other scientists and recruited them to her cause, and the eugenic features of birth control were promoted. She argued that "the most urgent problem today is how to limit and discourage the overfertility of the mentally and physically defective."<sup>74</sup> In the early 1920s, Sanger got the public support of eugenicists and biologists and geneticists, such as Clarence Cook Little, Edward M. East and Leon J. Cole. However, the support from Davenport was still nonexistent, even though Sanger was desperately trying to get him on her side. Davenport rejected her numerous attempts, saying that he was not sure that birth control was based on sufficient knowledge.<sup>75</sup>

The motto of the birth control movement was, "more children from the fit, less from the unfit." In Sanger's clinic, she used the following as advertising posters: "Mothers: Can you afford to have a large family? Do you want any more children? If not, why do you have them? Do not kill, do not take life, but prevent." In Sanger's point of view, the best and the highest form of the Eugenics movement, was, in fact, birth control. Even though

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<sup>71</sup> Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics*, 139 – 140.

<sup>72</sup> Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics*, 149.

<sup>73</sup> Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics*, 153, 159; Sanger, interview.

<sup>74</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 127; Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics*, 155.

<sup>75</sup> Kline, *Building a Better Race*, 65; Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics*, 157.

the idea of birth control started as widely criticized, eventually, it became accepted, and was thought of as the necessary means to racial health and purity. Programs supporting birth control were accepted by 1928, which gave the physicians the right to prescribe the means to married couples, and then, making the sales of those means legal.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 129; Caroline E Katzive, "Margaret Sanger: Demonstrating Leadership and Legacy through Her Crusade For Women's Reproductive Rights," *History Teacher* 49, no. 1 (2015): 127-38. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24810505>; Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics*, 157.

## 7 BETTER BABIES & FITTER FAMILIES CONTESTS

The first Better Baby Contest was held in 1908 at the Louisiana State Fair, and it was initiated by Mary Degarmo, who combined the idea of health and intelligence and made a competition out of it. Its roots began with concerns about high birth mortality in the states, when about 20% of infants died before age one, and it was meant to be a campaign for regulating child mortality. Within a few years, such contests were taking place throughout the United States, usually at exhibitions or fairs, where they received support from public. Contest judges examined children, and based on criteria such as shape of head, width between the eyes, length of their limbs, ability to walk or crawl and mental and physical development, they chose a winner.<sup>77</sup>

In the 1920s, those contests became more linked to the Eugenics movement, when Better Baby Contests morphed into Fitter Family Contests, where the whole family was examined. The change in rules was initiated by Charles Davenport, who stated that a child who won at the age of two, could become epileptic by the age of ten. That was then supported by Better Baby co-founder, Florence Sherbon, who said that the winning babies might have come from families of alcoholics, the insane or diseased.<sup>78</sup>

Instead of just examining the child from then on, the judges would look at family records as well. However, experts worried that heredity tests would have a negative impact on the public success of the contests. Mary T. Watts and Florence Sherbon consulted with Charles Davenport to come up with a plan to promote the better breeding idea to support their campaign for the Fitter Family Contest, which was first held in 1920 at the Kansas State Fair. This type of contest was considered as the most popular campaign for positive Eugenics.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> "Louisiana Hosts First Better Babies Contest at State Fair," Eugenics Archive, accessed April 7, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/connections/51714673eed5c60000000006>; Steven Selden, "Transforming Better Babies into Fitter Families: Archival Resources and the History of the American Eugenics Movement, 1908-1930", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* vol. 149, issue 2 (June 2005), 199-225; <https://search.proquest.com/docview/220898723?accountid=15518>;

<sup>78</sup> "Fitter Family Contests," Eugenics Archive, accessed April 7, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/encyclopedia/535eebf7095aa0000000228>; Laura L. Lovett, "Fitter Families for Future Firesides: Florence Sherbon and Popular Eugenics", *Public Historian* 29, no. 3 (2007), 69-85, doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/tph.2007.29.3.69>; Selden, "Transforming Better Babies into Fitter Families";

<sup>79</sup> "Fitter Family Contests"; "Forgotten Stories of the Eugenic Age #1: How "Better Babies" Became "Fitter Families"," Center for Genetics and Society, accessed April 7, 2018, <https://www.geneticsandsociety.org/biopolitical-times/forgotten-stories-eugenic-age-1-how-better-babies-became-fitter-families>; Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 61 – 62;

## 8 CATHOLIC OPPOSITION TO EUGENICS

When it comes to Church and Eugenics, the opinions go into a few directions. Some Catholics believed that it could actually make the world a better place and thought the idea of improving the human race was intriguing and they were even apart of the eugenic organizations. However, many Catholics thought that Eugenics was evil and were against it, because it went against the natural law, and they thought that eugenical theory lacked scientific proof.<sup>80</sup>

The Superintendent at the Boys Industrial School Hastings and other state administrators developed the opposition to Eugenics and it gained support from other religious personas and activist groups and together, they defended and fought for the rights of children and people with disabilities. The opposition to eugenic started with the sterilization of Carrie Buck (see chapter 5.5) and it was set in Ohio, where people wanted to thwart the bill for eugenic sterilization. Upon the bill's introduction, *Information Bulletin* was spread out to inform Catholics on what was happening. Organizations fought against the law in various forms of protests and in 1927, the sterilization bill crashed and the sterilization law was never enacted, even though there were many other attempts that were overcome by the Catholic Opposition.<sup>81</sup>

Sterilization laws were slowly enacted, or not enacted at all in the states where the Catholic population was large; for example Massachusetts, Illinois or Louisiana. The argument for Catholic opposition was put together by Julius P. Hebert, who said that "God created these poor unfortunates just the same as he did legislators." Even though many states passed the sterilization laws and did enormous amount of sterilization, Catholic Opposition was successful in preventing the laws being enacted in other states, because they made multiple bills for sterilization fail and die in its legislation.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics*, 146 – 147, 151.

<sup>81</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 125 – 128.

<sup>82</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 129 – 135.

## 9 EUGENIC DOWNFALL

After the Second World War, popularity of Eugenics seemed to have decreased. Genetics made new discoveries in the 1920s and 1930 and those discoveries challenged the arguments of heredity and new ways of treating mental illnesses were found, which meant that eugenicists could not claim their ways to be legitimate science anymore. The biggest impact on having the Eugenics days numbered was surely made by the Nazis, who put Eugenics into bad reputation all over the world.<sup>83</sup>

The Nazis justified their abuse towards some people and their policy by Eugenics, which led the Eugenics in the United States being associated with the Nazis. Slowly, the eugenic foundations and organizations began to pull back, when they noticed how rapidly the public's opinion changed.<sup>84</sup>

The word "Eugenics" became quite taboo and organizations started renaming themselves. ERO was referred to as the Genetics Record Office or just Record Office, omitting any use of the word Eugenics. Eugenics got replaced by the word genetics. After the word of Hitler's eugenicide got to the United States, the Carnegie Institution got rid of its records of the ERO.<sup>85</sup>

Even though the ERO shut down in 1939, the sterilization laws were still active and Americans still continued to be sterilized and prevented from getting married, because some eugenicists thought of the Eugenics as their lifetime work and they still supported the project. In later years, people started fighting back, writing letters to institutions. After their victory, racial integrity laws became inactive. Within the following years, mostly between the 1970s – 1980s, sterilization laws were slowly repealed as well.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> "Genetics," Eugenics Archive, accessed April 14, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/encyclopedia/535eec197095aa000000022c>; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 163.

<sup>84</sup> "Genetics," Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 251.

<sup>85</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 396; Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 251.

<sup>86</sup> Black, *War Against the Weak*, 398 – 401; "The Right to Self-Determination: Freedom from Involuntary Sterilization," Disability Justice, accessed April 15, 2018, <https://disabilityjustice.org/right-to-self-determination-freedom-from-involuntary-sterilization/>.

## 10 THE STERILIZED

During the Eugenics movement, many people were involuntarily institutionalized, because they were classified as mentally defective, or they were thought to be unfit for reproducing. In those institutions, the majority were sterilized. Some were then released; some not. Some children were taken away from their parents (the Throckhorns), some children were institutionalized by their parents, who were either not willing to take care of them (Ken Nelson) or did not want them (Velma Hayes, Leilani Muir), and some children were loved by their parents but were still institutionalized because their parents thought it was in their best interest to do so (Ruth Morris).<sup>87</sup>

### 10.1.1 THE THROCKHORNS

Laverne Throckhorn was born to a family in Oregon in 1920, one of four children. Her family was poor, her mother suffered from a mental illness and all four children suffered from developmental disabilities. Even though social services were aware of the situation and wanted to take the children away, the attempts were unsuccessful for several years, because the family kept moving. However, the state eventually got them, when someone saw Alvin, one of the children, who had a problem with speech, walking by himself, and reported him to social services. Alvin was forced by social services to reveal the place his family was staying, and so all four children were removed to the State Institution for the Feebleminded, in 1933 renamed the Fairview Hospital and Training Center.<sup>88</sup>

The Throckhorn parents fought for their children, they visited them on a regular basis and were keen on their release. Even though all of the Throckhorn children were placed in the same institution, they were not allowed to see each other, except for during their parents' visits. Twelve-year-old Laverne was the only one released quickly, but she had been sterilized. Following some delays, the other three children, Alvin, Sydney and Harry, were sterilized as well.<sup>89</sup> But whereas Laverne was able to return home, her brothers remained at the institution for over fifty years, until the 1970s, when a huge

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<sup>87</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 219.

<sup>88</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 211.

<sup>89</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 212.

deinstitutionalization took place. Only then were they reunited with their sister, who took them into her humble home.<sup>90</sup>

### 10.1.2 KEN NELSON

Soon after Ken was born, his mother decided to put him up for adoption. His adoptive family, the Nelsons, then sent him to the Provincial Training School in Red Deer, because Ken was apparently nervous in school.<sup>91</sup> Although Ken apparently had the highest IQ at that institution, he was still sterilized in 1957. Everyone at the school was told that they were going to have their appendix removed. When Ken woke up after the operation and saw his scar and asked the staff why this happened to him, he received a straight answer: “That is none of your business. We are in charge here. We run the place... And you are not human.” Ken only learned the real purpose of the surgery a week later.<sup>92</sup> Even though Ken had been sterilized, he remained at the school until his thirtieth birthday. Ken remembers his stay at the institution as horrible; stating that all rights were taken away from the people staying there, and that even though they had not committed any crime, they all felt like prisoners.<sup>93</sup>

### 10.1.3 VELMA HAYES

Velma and her twin, Thelma Hayes, were born in May 1934. Her mother found Velma as a very irritating child, and at the age of two, Velma was put to the Fairview institution, while her mother told the family that she sent Velma to get her legs straightened.<sup>94</sup> From that moment, Thelma had it all, and Velma struggled to get through. Velma did not have any family, Thelma grew up in a loving environment. Velma did not have any education, Thelma went through various schools. Velma only knew Fairview regime while growing up, Thelma had fun at playgrounds. Velma was sterilized, Thelma got married and had children.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 212 – 213.

<sup>91</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 216.

<sup>92</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 216 – 217; University of Alberta Living Archives Project, “Ken Nelson” (video), November 8, 2015, accessed March 27, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=syP1RkXIE9c>.

<sup>93</sup> Erika Dyck, *Facing Eugenics: Reproduction, Sterilization, and the Politics of Choice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 112; Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 217; Robert A. Wilson, *The Eugenic Mind Project* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017), 171.

<sup>94</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 213; Velma Hayes, “Misjudged and Sterilized, Velma Hayes Remains Haunted by All She Lost,” People1.org, November 8, 2002, accessed March 27, 2018, [http://www.people1.org/Eugenics/Eugenics\\_article\\_8.htm](http://www.people1.org/Eugenics/Eugenics_article_8.htm).

<sup>95</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 213-214.

On November 1, 1948, Board of Eugenics had their quarterly meeting. At the meeting, Velma's case was discussed and despite Velma's protests and begging, the board decided to sterilize her. "I knew what the operation was and I refused, but they said I had no right," Velma says. Her mother signed the consent. "I am sure I was capable of having children, of being a good mother, but I did not get to prove it. I never got the chance.", she added. The date for the sterilization was scheduled for two years later. By then, Velma worked as a babysitter of Irvin B. Hill's children; which was quite ironic, because he was one of those who ordered her sterilization.<sup>96</sup>

The operation took place on January 12, 1950 and it lasted 72 minutes. Velma was then placed into foster homes, however, she was sexually harassed in all of them. Eventually, she came back home to her family, but the place was full of strangers. Velma wanted to go to school, but her mother made her pay rent, so instead of educating herself, Velma had to go to work. At the age of 19, she ran away from home and got married. However, the marriage was short, and unhappy. After her first marriage, Velma married two more times, and both marriages were happy, but both ended by her husband's death.<sup>97</sup>

Her second husband, Myron, taught Velma how to read and write, and she has been able to make a living. During this marriage, she also underwent two surgeries, that she hoped would repair the damage the sterilization had done. Even though she was able to get pregnant, the damage was too big and the childbirth was impossible, and she miscarried.<sup>98</sup>

Despite the sad life Velma lived for about twenty years, she eventually got close to her sister, Bobbi, and she took care of her children when it was necessary. "She would have been a great mother because she gives out so much love," said her niece, Debra. She started working at a Holladay Park Plaza kitchen, and among the employees, she is very appreciated and loved. "Velma is always the first one to help, whether you need a ride, a loan, a friend, anything. We need 10 more of Velma," said Julie Larson, Velma's co-worker.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 214; Hayes, "Misjudged and Sterilized."

<sup>97</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 214; Hayes, "Misjudged and Sterilized."

<sup>98</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 214; Hayes, "Misjudged and Sterilized."

<sup>99</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 214; Hayes, "Misjudged and Sterilized."

#### 10.1.4 LEILANI MUIR

Born in 1944, to an alcoholic mother who abused her, Leilani's life has never been easy. At the age of ten, her mother dropped her off at the Provincial Training School, where she was a target of sexual harassment of the staff. She was fourteen when she went before the Eugenics Board, where the decision about the sterilization would be made. Leilani says, that it took them only a few minutes to decide about every patient's fate, even though everyone already knew that the decision had been already made, even before the board meeting. Leilani was classified as a moron, because her IQ tests at the age of twelve scored below 70. However, in her adulthood, her IQ was shown to be average and normal.<sup>100</sup>

As everyone else sterilized at the PTS, Leilani was told that she was going to have her appendix removed. The operation of making her sterilized took place when she was fourteen years old, at the Medical Clinic, which was the very own building of the PTS, built on the same grounds. At the age of twenty, Leilani was released from the institution and began to live her life. Having trouble getting pregnant during her marriage, she decided to visit a doctor, only to find out that her scar was not from having her appendix removed, but from being in fact, sterilized, and unable to bear a child. With her husband, they turned to the possibility of adoption. Unfortunately, the adoption fell through at the last minute, and Leilani learned that it was because of her time at the institution. After that, her marriage started to fall apart as well, and Leilani thought that she had nothing to live for, and she thought that that was it.<sup>101</sup>

She sought professional help and talked about what happened; first time in proper detail. Together, with the doctors and the lawyers, she filed a lawsuit against the Alberta government, where she fought not just for herself, but also for other victims or wrongful sterilization. She was the first person to ever have won a case like this, and it led to a proper apology and compensation, where hundreds of victims were paid.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 215; University of Alberta Living Archives Project, "Leilani Muir" (video), November 8, 2015, accessed March 27, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5Lp9Ga3HY4>; "Muir, Leilani – Our Stories," Eugenics Archive, accessed March 30, 2018, <http://Eugenicsarchive.ca/discover/our-stories/leilani>.

<sup>101</sup> "Leilani's Story," Leilani Muir, accessed March 30, 2018, <http://leilanimuir.ca/about-leilani>; "Muir, Leilani – Our Stories," University of Alberta Living Archives Project, "Leilani Muir".

<sup>102</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 216; "Muir, Leilani – Our Stories," "Leilani's Story"; University of Alberta Living Archives Project, "Leilani Muir".

Unfortunately, Leilani passed away in March, 2016, but her work and bravery stayed within everyone, and her words and her story passed on to more people and generations.<sup>103</sup>

### 10.1.5 RUTH MORRIS

Ruth Morris was born to a loving family in Oregon, in April 1942. Her family wanted the best for her, and her parents thought that sending her off to an institution would give her the education that they could not afford. She travelled with her mother to Fairview with hopes to get a spot there, but she only landed a spot on the wait list.<sup>104</sup>

When Ruth was thirteen years old, her mother passed away and then her father got a message that there was a place for Ruth at Fairview. Thinking it was a boarding school, he took her. Ruth felt like a prisoner right after her father's departure, and she suffered a lot during her stay at the Fairview.<sup>105</sup>

In 1969, she went before the Board of Social Protection, with her father's company. They were asked to sign some papers, and both of them, not understanding the document or knowing what the text was about, they signed them. She was then operated on, and eventually released from Fairview, and let into the world, she began working almost instantly.<sup>106</sup>

A few years after her deinstitutionalization, her father confessed to her, and told her the truth; she was not able to have children. Her father did not say he was sorry, and even though Ruth's plans and goals for life never included children, she still felt disrespected, and she felt as if a part of her life had been taken away from her.<sup>107</sup>

## 10.2 THE APOLOGY AND COMPENSATION

In the beginning of the twenty first century, with the help of Leilani Muir's attempts, the effects of Eugenics movement were finally spoken about, and a few of the states that were involved in the sterilization act, said their apology and tried to make amends by giving the victims money. States such as Oregon and Virginia made official statements,

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<sup>103</sup> "Leilani's Story."

<sup>104</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 217.

<sup>105</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 217.

<sup>106</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 218.

<sup>107</sup> Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 218.

and they were held on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landmark in the movement; the decision to sterilize Carrie Buck (see chapter 5.5) <sup>108</sup>

Mark R. Warner, the Virginia Governor said in the official statement that “The Eugenics movement was a shameful effort in which state government never should have been involved.”<sup>109</sup> “The time has come to apologize for misdeeds that resulted from widespread misconceptions, ignorance and bigotry. The time has come to apologize for public policies that labeled people as defective simply because they were ill, and declared them unworthy to have children of their own. To those who suffered, I say the people of Oregon are sorry. Our hearts are heavy for the pain you endured,” said the Governor of Oregon, John Kitzhaber. He also made December 10 the Human Rights Day in Oregon.<sup>110</sup>

Many of the sterilized victims were present at the statement. Rose Brooks considered the governor’s apology “pretty good”, Velma Hayes said that the apology “is long overdue, but nice”, and added that “although it can never take the pain away, the apology is gratefully appreciated and accepted.”<sup>111</sup>

Dale Hymes was sterilized soon after she gave birth to her daughter, Frances, who had something to say as well: “I am glad that she is going to be compensated in some way, but that is not enough. That cannot replace life”.<sup>112</sup>

Don East, republican state senator, was not very keen on the idea either. “You just cannot rewrite history. I am so sorry it happened, but throwing money does not change it, does not make it go away. It still happened”, he said, presenting his point of view.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> “Governor Plans Sterilization Apology For State”, Northwest News, published November 16, 2002, accessed March 30, 2018, [http://tdn.com/news/state-and-regional/governor-plans-sterilization-apology-for-state/article\\_4985250a-bcea-5d8b-94f4-d833ae3f0741.html](http://tdn.com/news/state-and-regional/governor-plans-sterilization-apology-for-state/article_4985250a-bcea-5d8b-94f4-d833ae3f0741.html); Hansen and King, *Sterilized by the State*, 217; “Kitzhaber Apologizes for Forced Sterilities,” The Bulletin, published December 3, 2002, accessed March 30, 2018, <http://www.bendbulletin.com/news/1589856-151/kitzhaber-apologizes-for-forced-sterilities>; “Warner Apologizes To Victims Of Eugenics”, The Washington Post, published May 3, 2002, accessed March 30, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2002/05/03/warner-apologizes-to-victims-of-Eugenics/87a14c82-da36-4551-9c28-98d001131bfc/?utm\\_term=.4e022f533a75](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/2002/05/03/warner-apologizes-to-victims-of-Eugenics/87a14c82-da36-4551-9c28-98d001131bfc/?utm_term=.4e022f533a75).

<sup>109</sup> “Governor Plans Sterilization Apology For State.”

<sup>110</sup> “Apology for Oregon Forced Sterilizations”, Los Angeles Times, published December 3, 2002, accessed March 30, 2018, <http://articles.latimes.com/2002/dec/03/nation/na-sterile3>; “Kitzhaber Apologizes for Forced Sterilities”; “Virginia apologises for Eugenics policy,” BBC News, published May 3, 2002, accessed March 30, 2018, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/1965811.stm>.

<sup>111</sup> “Apology for Oregon Forced Sterilizations,”; “Kitzhaber apologizes for forced sterilities,”; “Virginia apologises for Eugenics policy”.

<sup>112</sup> “For Eugenic Sterilization Victims, Belated Justice,” MSNBC, published June 27, 2014, accessed March 30, 2018, <http://www.msnbc.com/all/eugenic-sterilization-victims-belated-justice>.

<sup>113</sup> “For Eugenic Sterilization Victims, Belated Justice”.

The worry of the state was, that admitting the government was wrong and compensating the victims would open the door for them to file lawsuits against the state. “They've lost a lot, and they have a right to do that,” said Kitzhaber.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> “Kitzhaber Apologizes for Forced Sterilities”.

## CONCLUSION

People who were considered as eugenicists saw the Eugenics movement from a public-health perspective, trying to protect the purity of the race by attacking the threats posed to it, which meant eliminating the diseases and undesirable characteristic traits that were believed to be hereditary. That unfortunately meant, that anyone who posed any threat to a nation's health and to making society better, had to be sterilized, or gotten rid of.

As mentioned throughout the thesis, Eugenics took place in the United States mainly in the first half of the twentieth century, building state institutions and homes for the feeble-minded and trying to prevent them from reproducing – however, nowadays it is considered as a huge violation of the human rights, especially the abuse that went on behind the closed doors at the institutions. People were treated like animals and they were stripped of their lives, their chances for future and most of all, their dignity.

The possible improvement of people was a thought the Eugenics policy was based on, and when we look at that concept of the movement, we see that it was not fully evil. Even though one part of the Eugenics movement was considered as positive and was focused on breeding the desirable ones, however it was still very racist in the long run.

Eugenics went against morality principles, against natural laws, and against everyone's rights to live their life to the fullest. Even though the system of dealing with the "unfit" is still not perfect and is still underfunded with workers who are underpaid and inadequately trained, people with disabilities at least have something that they did not back then: they are free, they have their dignity and they have a sense of belonging.<sup>115</sup>

Eugenics survivor, Roy Skoreyko said that after he was released from the institution, he was committed to helping people who were disabled, he urged them to speak out and fight for their rights, reminding them that even they had some. He said, "You do not label people. You label jars, you label cans. We have to look at people with disabilities, look at them for who they are. They are a person first. Their disability comes second," and that is the exact reason why Eugenics, especially negative Eugenics, was absolutely wrong and could have never worked – because we are all human beings and we have to value each individual.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> "Erasing Fairview's Horrors," Oregon Live, accessed April 2, 2018, [http://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/index.ssf/2010/01/erasing\\_fairviews\\_horror.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/index.ssf/2010/01/erasing_fairviews_horror.html).

<sup>116</sup> Eugenics Archive, "Surviving Eugenics."

This thesis described the Eugenics movement from its origins, through the sterilization laws and institutions, to the words of the sterilized ones. The Eugenics movement is a very dark part in the United States history and it is not talked about enough. People who do not know, society, young people need to be educated on this topic, to ensure that it will not happen again. People with disabilities should be helped, not isolated, because just like everyone else, they are ordinary.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ABCL	American Birth Control League
AES	American Eugenic Society
ERO	Eugenics Record Office
HBF	Human Betterment Foundation
PTS	Provincial Training School

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Number of sterilizations (scan) 1 ..... 23