

Curated Resources: Eugenics

1

Eugenics

exhibits.hsl.virginia.edu/eugenics/2-origins/
University of Virginia

This resource has multiple pages detailing the origins of eugenics, the case of Buck v. Bell, and the relationship between American eugenics and the work of the Nazis. These can easily be navigated via the left hand side of the browser. In addition, there are numerous images throughout of noteworthy individuals, family pedigrees, propaganda, and key documents. While providing significant detail on the eugenics movement, this resource also details the motivations for and collaboration amongst key individuals that propelled the case Buck v. Bell, therefore legalizing forced sterilizations in America.

2

Eugenics

history.com/topics/germany/eugenics#section_7 History
Channel

This source is important because it traces the increasing acceptance of the idea of eugenics from marriage laws in Connecticut in 1896 to forced sterilizations starting in the early 1900s. It links eugenics in America backwards even to Plato and forward to Nazis in Germany and current trends in genetic engineering. It references the Supreme Court but does not directly talk about the Buck v. Bell case. Rather than 60,000 individuals sterilized throughout the US, it focuses on the 20,000 forced sterilizations in California.

3

Chronicle

dnai.org/e/DNA
Learning Center

This resource has four different modules: 1. Threat of the Unfit, 2. Trial of Carrie Buck, 3. In the Third Reich, and 4. Living with Eugenics. Students can navigate through each module by choosing larger subcategories across the top of the page. Arrows at the bottom flip from page to page within the subcategory chosen from across the top. Subcategories includes text, images, and videos. Within “Threat of the Unfit” students learn about the founders of the movement and the link to a shared interest in chicken breeding, the use of pedigrees to categorize the fit and unfit, and the fear of mental illness and immigrants. In “The Third Reich” the subcategory of “taking the torch” discusses how the eugenic ideas from the United States gained popularity in Germany. The other subcategories of this section discuss how efforts switched from sterilization to extermination starting first with the mentally disabled and then to others. Finally “Living with Eugenics” introduces Dr. Jamison who has manic depression and her experience hearing eugenic advice from her doctor.

4

Eugenics Archive

eugenicsarchive.org/eugenics/
Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory

There are numerous exhibits within this resource that focus on different elements addressed in the Comparison Matrix. Follow this link and select “Enter the Archive” in order to explore the online exhibits created from resources from Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, the founding research center for eugenics. Virtual Exhibits include: 1. Social Origins, 2. Scientific Facts 3. Research Methods, 4. Traits Studied, 5. Research Flaws, 6. Eugenics Popularization, 7. Marriage Laws, 8. Sterilization Laws, and 9. Immigration Restriction. The first exhibit, Social Origins of Eugenics, does a great job highlighting the complex factors (economic, social, scientific) that contributed to create a society in which eugenics was able to thrive.

5

For the Public Good: The Shameful History of Forced Sterilization in the U.S. - Belle Boggs

longreads.com/2014/11/19/for-the-public-good/
LongReads

This resource details the eugenics movement, mostly within the state of North Carolina. It details some of the more current efforts to bring this atrocity to light and obtain some measure of apology and compensation for the victims. As a story of the North Carolina victims, this resource gives accounts of particular victims, including a video interview with Willis Lynch who was sterilized at 14. Boggs explains that influential progressivists, philanthropists and activists along with racist and anti-Semites were all involved in the movement. Those behind the movement were able to reach and convince the wider population through family competitions, lectures and other means of propaganda. They preyed on fears of social dependency, claiming that sterilization was to protect the State, defenseless future children, and even the victims themselves; it was a kindness, a simple procedure that had no effect other than to prevent parenthood. Though her writing and personal experience with infertility, Boggs is able to show, to the contrary, that there are multiple layers of suffering and pain that the victims of sterilization have experienced.