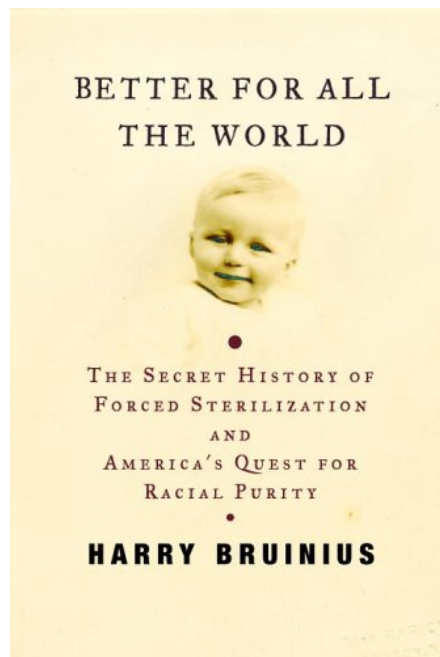




Better for All the World: The Secret History of Forced Sterilization and America's Quest for Racial Purity

Harry Bruinius

Download now

Read Online ➔

Better for All the World: The Secret History of Forced Sterilization and America's Quest for Racial Purity

Harry Bruinius

Better for All the World: The Secret History of Forced Sterilization and America's Quest for Racial Purity Harry Bruinius

A timely and gripping history of the controversial eugenics movement in America—and the scientists, social reformers and progressives who supported it. In *Better for All the World*, Harry Bruinius charts the little known history of eugenics in America—a movement that began in the early twentieth century and resulted in the forced sterilization of more than 65,000 people. Bruinius tells the stories of Emma and Carrie Buck, two women trapped in poverty who became the test case in the 1927 supreme court decision allowing forced sterilization for those deemed unfit to procreate. From the reformers who turned local charities into government-run welfare systems promoting social and moral purity, to the influence the American policies had on Nazi Germany's development of "racial hygiene," Bruinius masterfully exposes the players and legislation behind one of America's darkest secrets.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

Better for All the World: The Secret History of Forced Sterilization and America's Quest for Racial Purity Details

Date : Published December 18th 2007 by Knopf (first published 2006)

ISBN : 9780375413711

Author : Harry Bruinius

Format : Hardcover 416 pages

Genre : History, Nonfiction, Science, North American Hi..., American History, Politics, Health, Medicine

 [Download Better for All the World: The Secret History of Forced ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Better for All the World: The Secret History of Force ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Better for All the World: The Secret History of Forced Sterilization and America's Quest for Racial Purity Harry Bruinius

From Reader Review Better for All the World: The Secret History of Forced Sterilization and America's Quest for Racial Purity for online ebook

Heather Anderson says

Want to get really, really angry? I sure was when I read this. Learn how American eugenicists set the precedents in law that were followed in early Nazi Germany. How well-meaning scientists thought they could make society better. How the US Congress was advised to make immigration quotas, as well as to deny any kind of amnesty to people fleeing the Nazis. How people in the US were sterilized against their will and sometimes without their knowledge or consent. It is a stern warning for the future... Weird History!

Willy C says

A history of the Eugenics movement in the US, England, and Germany, from the publication of Francis Galton's "Hereditary Genius" to its post WWII decline in influence.

The subject itself is very interesting, and to many, it might come as a surprise that Hitler's program of 'racial hygiene' was influenced tremendously by the forced sterilization that American had engaged in during the early 1900's. The alliance between feminism, Progressives, and Eugenics in the US and England would also be surprising to the modern reader, since most associate the right-wing with Eugenics. In fact, it was the more secular and statist Progressives who pushed for sterilization and birth control against the forces of evangelical Christianity and Catholicism in the US.

But the book is long and not very compellingly written, so it's a 3/5.

Raquel Casilla-Reynoso says

Yet another book that has inspired me to work on my thesis on eugenics. Bruinius focuses on the eugenics movement in the United States, which is relatively (as he states in his title, "secret") an unknown history of sterilization and oppression. Great read.

Andrea says

This was a tough book for me to rate/review as it is one of the few books I didn't finish this year. The subject matter is so important and part of American/First World history that is rarely taught, but I found the prose very dry and hard to get through. We get pretty complete bios of a number of the key thinkers and writers working with eugenics, but sometimes that was very confusing at the men sort of got mixed up in my mind and a lot of them worked together at various points. I was also a little disappointed that the history of various forced sterilization laws are presented but I didn't get any sense about when ideas about reproductive rights began being discussed. I read a lot of history but I still found it difficult sometimes to fully understand the time period and context in which these ideas were being discussed as rational and needed. So, very mixed bag and I sort of gave up a chapter into the period where the Nazis were expanding US laws about race

preservation. It's got to be a tough read if even Nazis do nothing to get the text moving again.

Bookwarrior says

A very interesting history that they are not teaching in schools. Easy to read and understand.

Valerie says

The timeline jumped around a bit too much, and I found it odd that in the context of the discussion of humans deliberately breeding in order to encourage desirable traits, slavery wasn't mentioned at all. We know that masters wanted their female slaves to have a lot of children so they could get more money out of a single purchase, and that although it was rare, some masters did force their slaves to have children with each other to encourage them to be taller, stronger, or what have you. For a book about racial purity, it didn't really talk about POC as much as I'd thought it would. It mostly focused on white mentally ill women, even though I know forced sterilization must have affected black and Latina women as well. I'd have liked an exploration of that. Anyway, it was a decent starting point to learning the history of this movement, and an important reminder of our past.

Melodie says

I was only seeking to learn a bit more about the Eugenics movement in general; instead I learned more about the beginnings of social work in the United States and how "well-meaning" "scientifically based knowledge" can be used to create policy that guides us today, a century later

Edward Sullivan says

State-sanctioned eugenics programs. We inspired the Nazis.

Jennn says

I kept thinking, "My God, why didn't I know this? Why wasn't I taught this in high school?" It's a humbling, horrifying read. I was angered and felt betrayed in some ways. I was taught (and I focused on WW2 in high school, studying it for a year) that Nazis were bad and the U.S. were heroes - we fought the big, bad Nazis and came out shining (albeit the Great Depression). Now I discover what part we played in creating that monster. I've taken several notes from the book and will own it some day, and there are far too many to add in this review. My head is still reeling from that hard, sudden slap to my face. I will carry its weight for a long time.

I will say that when it DID get to Nazi Germany, it lulled a bit, but then when interviewing a woman whom was sterilized as a teenager pulled it back up and gave it a human face.

Very good. Very sad. Very powerful. Very terrifying.

Congratulations, Mr. Bruinius. One hell of a book.

Sophia says

I want to rate this book higher than I am going to.

The subject matter, I think, warrants a read. I thoroughly enjoyed reading about this subject (and by "enjoyed" I really mean I was alarmed that this happened and nobody knows about it!), and would recommend reading on it to EVERYONE. The eugenics movement is something that needs to be remembered. Not because I think it is something to be particularly proud of, but because an uneducated mass risks repeating the past. This is something that needs to be avoided.

I have given this book three stars because I have all sorts of complaints about the writing style of the author. I felt that he talked in circles and repeated himself quite a bit. Because of that, I had trouble keeping my attention on what he was saying and found myself turning pages without actually retaining what had been said. Additionally, I feel the author's thesis wasn't clear until the end. For the majority of the book, I wasn't sure what he was driving at. Moreover, Bruinius jumps around in time quite a bit and I found myself getting lost as I wasn't aware that we'd gone backward or forward in time. With each new "character" (real person from history) he introduces, Bruinius feels the need to jump back and give the backstory of the character--including of the character's parents! While I appreciate understanding where each person comes from, and felt that ultimately it was important to understand each person's backstory, I feel it could have been done better.

Despite the shortcomings of the author and his writing, I would still highly recommend this book.

Meg says

An enjoyable read. Better For All the World is a history of eugenics in America. It makes the argument that eugenics as a philosophy is the result of our sense of American exceptionalism and our theological background. It further traces how Galton, Laughlin, and Davenport's work informed Nazi eugenic philosophy (the Nazis basically copied our eugenics propaganda and laws in their anti-Jewish policies and programs).

In the end it is a call to remember our history in order to prevent its repetition re: advancements in technology and medicine. It ends with an interesting analysis of the end of natural rights/law as it has been replaced by liberal democracy's concept of human rights. The problem being, of course, that liberal democracies are run by human beings who are inherently fallible, and if human rights are to be determined by the people and not held to a higher immutable power - i.e. God/natural rights, that it is entirely possible to fall prey to prejudice concerning who is fit to have human rights.

I would recommend this book to anyone who likes non-fiction.

Jennifer says

It's funny how the U.S. belatedly entering into a war we did everything to avoid until Japan literally dropped bombs on our doorstep somehow managed to convince an entire country, and much of the world, that we

were the good guys - never mind a couple hundred years of history showing we're just as morally ambiguous (and occasionally outright evil) as the next nation. The next time your flag-splattered uncle starts shouting at you about American exceptionalism over the holiday dinner table, I suggest chucking a copy of Bruinius's *Better for All the World* at his head as a pointed reminder that we've worn our share of black hats. (And then chuck it at your hyper-liberal cousin as a reminder that progressivism doesn't automatically equate to ethical superiority.)

Bruinius brackets his history of the American eugenics movement with the legal struggles of two women. Carrie Buck, the twenty-one year old pawn of pro-sterilization doctors seeking to mock up a case they could get to SCOTUS, lent her name to the 8-1 ruling in 1927 that found forced sterilization to be constitutionally valid and which memorably inspired Chief Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes to declare "three generations of imbeciles are enough." Lucille Zimmerman, sterilized without her knowledge in 1942 while residing at a Colorado state mental institution, sued the doctors who operated on her without her consent, but lived into the 2000s with her shame of having been "spayed like a dog."

Between these stories the author traces the birth and development of a movement that claimed to be building a better world, one sterilized undesirable at a time, from Darwin's creepy fucking cousin who coined the term "eugenics" (and spent his time obsessing over the measurements of African women) to the Fitter Families contests run at state fairs in the 1920s which awarded prizes to the most genetically superior clan, to that time in 1935 the Nazis decided to adapt California's eugenics program into their Nuremberg Racial Hygiene Laws. Along the way at least 60,000 people - funnily enough, mostly African-American, immigrants, the mentally ill, or women who made trouble - were sterilized, all while people like Theodore Roosevelt and Margaret Sanger cheered the movement on.

If Bruinius's work is hard to read - *and it is* - it has nothing to do with the author's style, which manages to present what's clearly meticulous research in easy-to-absorb narrative arcs. I'd suggest taking your time with this one, unless you're the kind of person who just likes banging your head against a racist brick wall repeatedly; Bruinius is careful to reiterate at the beginning of each chapter just enough context about previously mentioned incidents and individuals that you won't suffer for taking a break to sit quietly, drink, and think about America's bad life choices. (It should be noted, however, that the chapters should be read chronologically; skipping around would likely give you a headache as well as a heartache.)

As the old saying goes, those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it - and those nations who don't know themselves, and all their less-than-stellar ethical moments, are likely to sail into every situation with a potentially-disastrous sense of self-righteousness. *Better for All the World* reminds us that we're not the heroes we like to think we are, which is the first step in becoming the heroes we'd like to be.

stephanie says

[update 11/14: picked up from the library, starting again. need some good nonfiction.]

good god, this is eye-opening. i love it. love love love. please don't fail me now, harry, i am invested in you and your story. don't start telling the tale from the perspective of carrie buck's fallopian tube, or anything.

also, why is there not more out there about mental health law? mental health rights? this whole law basically says women don't have reproductive rights - the state has control over them - why is this not brought up with abortion law??

(i can only read this book in short spurts, because i get too passionate about it. it's kind of hilarious. and

totally genius.)

i don't have enough energy to read this right now, but dear lord, i will definitely be picking it up again.

Gremrien says

Well, it took me forever to read it, because the book is very fat and ~~dry~~ detailed, but a thought about quitting it almost never came to my mind, and eventually it was a very useful and unusual reading. I discovered the most amazing part of our recent history I had no idea about, and it was just like finding a missing puzzle in the whole picture.

What did I know about eugenics before? I was full of absolute crap about it. I think that most people (only those of them, of course, who actually know what the word "eugenics" means) are full of absolute crap about it, too. And you know what? It turned out to be the thing you actually should know very, very well.

At least, those are the main misconceptions I had before reading this book:

- eugenics is some marginal stuff that only Mad Scientists (like in cartoons), racists, and other jerks care about;
- it has nothing to do with science: I mean -- real science;
- it is a very insignificant and crazy thing, like black magic, or voodoo, or astrology;
- it somehow related to those crazy-marginal-bigotry things like nazism/fascism, but it has nothing common with real society and lives of real people.

You know what? Yeah, exactly. Just the opposite.

Eugenics not only was born as a powerful and flowering branch of real science (genetics, ideas of evolution, darwinism), but also was considered for some period of time as one of the most modern and progressive area of it. It was a massive and very influential movement, which involved not only scientists, but all the society, from presidents to housewives. There were times when eugenics was a common word and common idea, without which society could not imagine itself from now on, like computers now.

Moreover, eugenics, with all the bad stuff it brought to people's minds, was a base for some very good changes and achievements in the long run; for example,

- (1) it popularized the ideas of genetics and evolution in society (a dirty game, but nevertheless);
- (2) it was the most important foundation for development of statistics (and if you read carefully not about the mathematical side of it, you'll discover that almost all the most prominent figures and concepts of statistics were somehow related to eugenics, sometimes very directly);
- (3) it was the reason to start studying people's heredity seriously (eugenics did it in a wrong way, of course, but the questions it raised and the methods it used stirred many useful things for the future);
- (4) it was the reason for developing IQ tests and the similar various scoring systems;
- (5) it was a very important social weapon for era of liberation from religious dominance, of dawning feminism, of sexual revolutions, and of an active fight against social inequality; very different people who wanted to change something in society had found something useful and promising in concepts of eugenics, and although they did not get it right there, it empowered them to make a difference.

"Eugenicists were the first to delve into family histories, seeking the hereditary causes of diseases such as cancer, alcoholism, and Huntington's chorea. Galton himself was the first to study twins and compare the relative influence of "nature versus nurture." His methods of statistical analysis — especially his use of what would later come to be known as the bell curve — revolutionized research in a host of sciences. And it was eugenic thinkers who first developed the idea of the "IQ," or intelligence quotient, and the mental tests used

to measure this elusive human trait."

Because, you see: eugenics was considered a progressive, state-of-art, and epoch-changing scientific area, which key aim was to fight diseases and poverty in a "humane" way. In particular, through massive selection and sterilization of "unfit" citizens. And yes, this WAS a "humane" way for those times: when, I remind you, such "unfit" citizens, as epileptics and mentally ill people, were kept in huge hospitals/colonies/other "institutions" for their whole lives, and poor people often literally die starving and freezing to death. Eugenics was seen as a mild, easy, and progressive way to eliminate some of the most daunting diseases and to put under restraint poverty and shameful conditions of living. Again, I remind you that this was the era when people, especially poor and uneducated people, knew nothing about decent birth control and/or they were under strong religious influences in terms of sex and bearing children and/or the woman was a thing which was fucked and raped on an everyday basis, so eugenics with its "humane" selection and sterilization of the most vulnerable and "unfit for future" citizens seemed then like one of the most bright and genius idea about "betterment" for all the humanity. "Better for all the world" -- that's was a real slogan of all this movement. So, eugenists were not all cartoonish "Mad Scientists." *"It was progressive thinkers, intellectuals interested in a sweeping, scientific reorganization of society and its morals, who first embraced the eugenics creed."* They were very important and respectable people who sincerely believed that they are fighting evil and making one of the biggest difference in the world. They believed that they do a great scientific work, they received grants, they organized large conferences, they made speeches, they published articles in peer-reviewed journals, they wrote monographs -- all this stuff. You can compare them to people who propagated first massive vaccinations, for example, -- although, of course, the science soon revealed that vaccination is a scientific stuff, and eugenics is not so much. However, it was very hard to tell in that time, when, I will remind you another very important thing, the whole genetics was developed without actual knowledge about chromosomes and DNA (I still cannot understand how they did it! but whatever -- in that time, genetics was mostly "descriptive," so it is no wonder that we got also such her illegitimate step-daughters, as eugenics).

Even Charles Darwin himself was fascinated about the preliminary ideas of eugenics initially! Look what he wrote in a letter to his cousin Francis Galton, who (Galton) was one of the founder of eugenics, after publication of his (Galton's) book "Hereditary Genius" with first ideas of eugenics:

"My dear Galton, — I have only read about 50 pages of your book (to Judges), but I must exhale myself, else something will go wrong with my inside. I do not think I have ever in all my life read anything more interesting and original — George [Darwin's son], who has finished the book, and who expressed himself in just the same terms, tells me that the earlier chapters are nothing in interest to the later ones! It will take me some time to get to these later chapters, as it is read aloud to me by my wife, who is also much interested. You have made a convert of an opponent in one sense, for I have always maintained that, excepting fools, men did not differ much in intellect, only in zeal and hard work. I look forward with intense interest to each reading, but it sets me thinking so much that I find it very hard work; but that is wholly the fault of my brain and not of your beautifully clear style — Yours most sincerely, Ch. Darwin."

In the First International Eugenics Congress, which was held in 1912 in London, such famous people took part as, for example, Major Leonard Darwin (Charles Darwin's son and the president of the Congress), Winston Churchill (First Lord of the British Admiralty), Lord Alverstone (Lord Chief Justice of England), bishops of Birmingham and Ripon, the Lord Mayor of London, the foreign ministers of Norway, Greece, France, and others. Moreover, *"It was one of the largest gatherings of illustrious scientists ever assembled, and in the next few days, many of them would be presenting a series of papers on genetics, eugenics, and the possibility of better breeding"* and *"Many of the participants felt this was a historic event, and that humanity was on the cusp of a great era of progress."*

The great inventor Alexander Graham Bell was a member of the Eugenics Section of the American Breeders' Association -- the first government-sponsored organizations on eugenics in the USA, and he had

stood behind eugenics for over a decade (although later, after expanding critique and negative press about eugenics, he resigned and ceased his support in this area).

In 1913, the Station for Experimental Evolution and the Eugenics Record Office were recognized as two of the most prestigious scientific institutions in the USA.

For a number of years, all America participated in "Physical and Mental Perfection Contests," "Better Baby Contests," "Fitter Families for Future Firesides" (which *"were enormously popular at state fairs across the country in the 1920s"*) and was visiting traveling exhibits, sponsored by the American Eugenics Society, learning in a popularized manner that *"Some people are born to be a burden on the rest"* and *"Every 15 seconds \$100 of your money goes for the care of persons with bad heredity."*

In 1914, F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote a playful song, "Love or Eugenics," for Princeton university's annual Triangle Club Show, a vaudeville musical put on every year by one of the oldest comedy troupes in the nation.

George Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells are mentioned here too, as "eugenic sympathizers."

It is also important to quote this letter by Theodore Roosevelt to Charles Davenport (one of the most prominent figures in American eugenics):

"My dear Mr. Davenport:

I am greatly interested in the two memoirs you have sent me. They are very instructive, and from the standpoint of our country, very ominous. You say that these people are not themselves responsible, that it is society that is responsible. I agree with you if you mean, as I suppose you do, that society has no business to permit degenerates to reproduce their kind. It is really extraordinary that our people refuse to apply to human beings such elementary knowledge as every successful farmer is obliged to apply to his own stock breeding. Any group of farmers who permitted their best stock not to breed, and let all the increase come from the worst stock, would be treated as fit inmates for an asylum. Yet we fail to understand that such conduct is rational compared to the conduct of a nation which permits unlimited breeding from the worst stocks, physically and morally, while it encourages or connives at the cold selfishness or the twisted sentimentality as a result of which the men and women who ought to marry, and if married have large families, remain celibates [sic] or have no children or only one or two.

Some day we will realize that the prime duty, the inescapable duty, of the good citizen of the right type is to leave his or her blood behind him in the world; and that we have no business to permit the perpetuation of citizens of the wrong type.

Faithfully yours,

Theodore Roosevelt"

That's on the issue of popularity and pervasiveness of ideas of eugenics in that time.

What was the most obvious result of it in dry figures?

"By 1927 (...) almost 8,500 American citizens had been forcibly sterilized. This "official" figure, taken from informal surveys by proponents of the procedure and representing only what surgeons chose to report, would reach well over 65,000 in the decades to come."

A less obvious but much more striking result was the practice of genocide initiated by Germany on the basis of "works of American colleagues."

"Hitler had officially announced the legalized practice of eugenic sterilization in the July 25, 1933"

"Indeed, in the first official proclamation of the sterilization statute, Officer Gutt cited the example of the United States as justification: "Of interest in this connection is the fact that in the United States of North America, according to the statistics of the Human Betterment Foundation, 16,000 persons have been sterilized — about 7,000 men, and more than 9,000 women, up to January 1, 1933."

And "American colleagues" were fascinated by Hitler!

"And the Nazi proclamation indicated that the Human Betterment Foundation was doing important, internationally recognized work. Their study, it seemed, had helped shape this new German program, which would be the first to be applied to an entire nation. Indeed, Germany could now be the first country in the world to institute a systematic program for bona fide genetic engineering."

"I think the reference to the California work, and the work of the Foundation is a very significant thing. The matter has given me a better opinion of Mr. Hitler than I had before. He may be too impulsive in some matters, but he is sound on the theory and practice of eugenic sterilization."

That's about this puzzle in the whole picture: one might wonder why fascism and genocide were not recognized and stopped at the very beginning... Sometimes it is much more difficult and complicated than it seems.

The role of the USA in eugenics was an absolutely unexpected discovery for me. America was (and is) a cutting edge for science and genetics in particular. America became a cradle for eugenics, too. It was developed and implemented on a big scale in America, and it was ADOPTED by Nazi Germany (not developed by it, mind you, but completely accepted and adopted, with all the proper references and tributes to great achievements of American scientists).

"...eugenic sterilization of those deemed "a shiftless, ignorant, and worthless class of people" became a legal practice in at least thirty American states, and a surreptitious practice in many others."

"After 1927, this American technique of social engineering became the model for laws in Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, and Sweden. In 1933, in one of the first acts of the newly elected government of Reichschancellor Adolf Hitler, the National Socialist Party enacted a comprehensive sterilization law modeled consciously on American legislation."

"Though the United States was the pioneer in the legal, administrative, and technical aspects of eugenic sterilization, Nazi Germany borrowed its ideas and applied them in an unprecedented way. One of the first laws passed by the National Socialist government of Adolf Hitler was the "Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring," and its language and structure closely followed Laughlin's Model Law. In less than two years, over 150,000 German citizens were forced to undergo the procedure, preparing the way for the genocide to come. In 1936, when the German sterilization campaign was at its early height, the Nazi regime, through the auspices of Heidelberg University, awarded Laughlin an honorary doctorate for his many contributions to "racial hygiene."

It is very important at least to KNOW that America, as a whole society, created the background for the most

horrible atrocities of the 20th century. And try to understand why this happened in the first place.

"The sense of power engendered by revolutionary technologies may betray their creators in the end. Like a defeated virus that mutates and returns more powerful than before, nature, with its sense of irony, mocks the hubris of human strength, sometimes turning epic desire and longing to tragedy."

"...after the prosecution at the Nuremberg Trials deemed similar German eugenic practices as crimes against humanity, or aspects of the crime of genocide, most people have been content to dismiss eugenics as a "pseudo-science," an idea forever tied to Nazi barbarism."

"The heaviest burden of the story of eugenics and forced sterilization, perhaps, is this American connection to the master race theories that culminated in the Holocaust. Hovering over history is the almost unbearable fact that the horrors of the twentieth century were not an outbreak of barbarism in Western culture. They were in many ways the consequences of thoroughly modern ideas, especially the notion that society, using the tools of science and technology, could eliminate its supposed imperfections. Some have used the phrase "the banality of evil" to describe how the horrors of the modern world can be a systematic and bureaucratic phenomenon, and how a person need not have the diabolical profundity of an Iago or Macbeth to promulgate evil. The industrial bureaucracy of mass murder in Germany required a measure of calm, rational ingenuity, including careful research, efficient organization, and effective engineering."

The author describes not only eugenics itself as an area, but also those people who created and developed it - as people, personalities, usually from the very beginning, reaching deeply into their family history and their personal lives and interests. It irritated me initially, but, as I said, later I understood the purpose of it. It is very important to understand who where eugenisists and why they did what they did. It is very important to get rid of this stereotype about "Mad Scientists" and evil "Doctors Mengeles" who wanted to destroy the world and the similar crazy stuff. It is very important to learn how the most scary practices can actually be just a consequence of some very progressive and humane ideas and a heritage of quite decent people's efforts to make a difference in the world. How intelligent and kind guys make mistakes -- huge and terrible mistakes that cost lives and happiness for millions of people -- and how those guys could even never know about it, to the end of their lives believing that they did important and progressive things in the world.

Why eugenics was important for scientists?

Because it proposed a completely new level of systematic and analytical study of genetics and its practical application. *"On the one hand, questions about evolution had become questions about heredity, and younger scientists, turning away from the merely descriptive and speculative methods practiced by the great Darwin himself, were being drawn to analytical, statistical, and experimental modes of research — like eugenics."*

Why eugenics was important for society and social workers?

Because it propagated still-very-important ideas about measures of population control, fight against poverty and diseases of national level, "organized charity," importance of "intellectual heredity of population" and many other great things.

Why eugenics was important for politics?

Well, besides all the other things, it concerns a very painful even for today issue of emigration and "melting pot." Especially in the USA, you know.

Why eugenics was important for sexual revolution?

Because it *"proclaimed that sex should not have to entail the purpose of procreation — a radical notion for the time."*

Why eugenics was important for women?

Because it proposed birth control as a general idea -- also very radical and progressive for that era, with many related "liberating" issues (*"it was radical women, feminists and suffragists, who were some of the first non-scientists to be drawn to Galton's work over forty years ago"*).

Well, it was not an ode to eugenics, but just a little explanation why it was seen as a "normal" concept at that time and why it took so long for all the world to comprehend what actually Nazi Germany did on its own level with this concept...

Moreover, the direct consequences of eugenics and this practice of forced sterilization are still with us today. The people who suffered from this procedure are alive now, and many of them want justice and compensation. Right now, yes.

Nicole says

I put this on my to read a decade ago and the more time passed, the more I wondered why I'd done that. I finally decided to read it, and wow, I realized why I wanted to in the first place. It turned out to be way more interesting than I was expecting and not at all dry. It is of course disturbing and depressing, but it starts with how Darwin's theories influenced the idea of humanity and worked it's way to the darkest hours in US and German history in a very compelling way. And then there's just the revelation of the scale of eugenic-inspired sterilization in the US, which was much bigger than I ever knew and needs to be something more people know about.
