



California's Cult of Human Service: Eugenics in California from Soil to Science

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Between 1909 and 1960, 60,000 men and women were sterilized nationwide under the auspices of eugenic human betterment policies. More specifically, California accounted for at least a third of that total with an estimated 20,000 or more procedures performed in that same period, implying that during America's eugenic age, Californian policy and practice was at the vanguard. It is important to note that all of these persons were sterilized without consent, as they were victims of state programs run by the Department of Institutions (later renamed the Department of Mental Hygiene) designed to stem the flow of "defective" genes into the American nation's collective gene pool. Facilities operated by California's Department of Mental Hygiene disproportionately operated on susceptible minority populations— especially Latino/as. This is an important moment in the history of California due to the intersection between eugenic practice, racial constructions, and Californian identity (Stern, 84,86,109,111, 113; Stern, "STERILIZED in the Name of Public Health" 4; Reilly 2).

Historians studying the eugenics movements that swept the country throughout the twentieth century have created an expansive historiography that confronts many of the complexities found in the records. My project aims to add to the current discourse on the history of eugenics in America by delving deeper into the history of eugenics in California. I seek to illustrate how proponents of this eugenic culture sought to shape the human landscape of California via the promulgation of eugenic thought and practice.

Constructing Eugenics

Statistician Sir Francis Galton developed what was to be the science of eugenic thought with three primary publications between 1869 and 1883. Eugenics was a term used in a fluid and changing manner at first, and it was not until 1909 that Galton defined eugenics concisely as “the science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race; also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage.” The origins of eugenic science are found in the work of two schools of science: naturalism and genetics. Eugenic science was fundamentally linked to the work of French naturalist Jean Baptiste de Lamarck, who in the nineteenth century posited a theory of inheritance in which external factors in the environment could greatly influence inherited characteristics. Lamarck’s work was foundational to the optimism that characterized eugenic reformists in France, Romania, Argentina, and Mexico, who thought that through comprehensive public health programs that addressed heredity, hygiene, and environmental factors, racial decay could be reversed. This idea of racial decay, or race suicide as President Theodore Roosevelt dubbed it, was the *casus belli* of eugenicists and many Progressive-era reformers around the world. They would gravitate towards themes of degeneration consistently and exalt that not only was reversion to primitive states possible— it was already measurably underway in certain racial stocks (Kline 11; Stepan; Stern, 11–15; Reilly 153).

Questions and differing means of interpretation abounded from Galton’s proposition that human betterment was attainable through science. What is improvement? Who benefits? What race? What is race? And most importantly: Who decides? It is how these questions were answered, and specifically by whom, that created the eugenic landscapes that permeated the globe in the twentieth century. In general, these questions were answered by Progressive reformers around the world. Progressivism, like eugenics, was a multifaceted movement with global origins. The interconnected processes of industrialization, urbanization, and transcontinental immigration reshaped the landscapes of the planet in the latter half of the nineteenth century. From the

creation of more effective tools of empire to the birth of new sciences, the period was full of innovation and idea exchange. But as Stern notes, “the underbelly of [this] Progress (with a capital P) was riddled with perceived social ills such as sprawling urban tenements, malnourished children, disease outbreaks, environmental degradation, class conflict, and racial strife.” As assorted upper middle-class people in different countries took measurement of the world transitioning around them, and sought to make sense of it, they increasingly looked to the sciences which promised humans the power to perfect society. These Progressives constituted a diverse array of individuals whose progressive pursuits varied based on contingent regional contexts; however, what united them all was “their conviction that only... collective social action on behalf of ‘the people’... could counterbalance new accretions of private power... and protect ‘the people’ from ‘selfish interests’ or ‘antisocial’ individuals”(Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob 2–3; Headrick 11–12; Jaycox viii, 190; A. Stern, 13–15).

Eugenics in the United States

The Progressive Era in America sprouted from the many developments that changed the socio-economic, cultural, and geographical landscapes of America from 1865 to 1920. From the end of the Civil War to 1890, Americans in essence “moved into town” as the country transitioned from a small agricultural nation to a larger more industrialized and urban one. Cities ballooned as they were conceptualized as hotbeds of opportunity and haute-culture while the country experienced the largest influx of immigration it has ever seen between 1901 and 1910. So great were the numbers of immigrants entering the country that one newspaper, *The San Jose Mercury News*, saw it fitting to describe the massive amount of people as “America’s Great Horde of Imported Humanity.” While another magazine, *The World’s Work*, described the phenomenon as America’s “Immigration Peril.” The massive influx of immigrants fostered a debate regarding nationality, unity, and collective identity. Some viewed the emerging nation as a melting pot where unity did not require a singular way of life while others pushed for

“Americanization” efforts that would force immigrants to abandon their languages and customs in order to assimilate into the American whole. Broadly, the eugenics movement in America emerged from this debate as fears that “mixing America’s northern European peoples with the new immigrants... would inevitably dilute American culture and spell ruin for its institutions” (Jaycox 5,265,412–413; “America’s Great Horde of Imported Humanity: Immigrants Reach New York at the Rate of Two”; Speranza 62–68).

In the United States, eugenic science permeated society from politicians to the public precisely because it was easily assimilable into the larger ideology of the Progressive reform movement. Indiana enacted the country’s first eugenic law in 1907, which authorized the “involuntary sterilization of persons” deemed unfit for life and for procreation. California became the second state in 1909 when it enacted the “Asexualization Act [which] authorized the involuntary asexualization of inmates of state hospitals and the California Home for the Care and Training of Feeble-Minded Children, as well as prisoners committed for life and ‘showing sexual or moral perversion’, or twice committed for sexual offenses or three times for other crimes.” Most importantly, the Californian law put the power of discretion in the hands of “the medical superintendent... or resident physician of the state prison,” who could authorize asexualization whenever and wherever they deemed it to be “of benefit [to] the physical, mental, or moral condition of the inmate,” and society at large. Between 1905 and 1917, the legislatures of seventeen other states passed eugenic laws by wide margins of support. By 1932, the onus of the Great Depression had bolstered the national focus on “degenerating” and “costly” racial stocks thereby creating a landscape in which twenty-seven states enacted eugenic sterilization laws (*California’s Compulsory Sterilization Policies, 1909-1979, July 16, 2003, Informational Hearing*. v–vi; Reilly 158; Stern, 100).

Eugenic thought was not just appealing to upper middle class Americans, it was littered throughout syndicated media outlets that analyzed the national and international contours of the eugenic struggle against racial decay. Indeed, an article published in the British tabloid, *The Evening Express*,

described how an international congress of “sexual reform” had been organized and was planning on addressing the nations of the world regarding the need to address the inheritability of criminality. Another article with no discernable publication information described how eugenic thought was affecting the succession of the Spanish crown in Madrid. The *Los Angeles Times* in 1924 conflated eugenic propaganda efforts with the prophet Jeremiah whose role was to warn the masses of the impending racial apocalypse. Further, other articles also wrote about marriage bans in South Dakota and marriage “black lists” in Iowa. Ultimately, these articles show the scope of eugenic thought. Some espoused solutions involving fostering the fertility of those deemed “fit” while others espoused the segregation or sterilization of those deemed “unfit.” This range of action is reflective of the range of eugenic law and practice (“To Aid All Nations for Social Reforms”; “Spain to Bar Sons of King”; “No Title”; “Marriage of Unfit Is Banned in South Dakota”; “Iowa Compiles Black List of Unfit to Marry”).

Eugenic law and practice fell into two categories that were explicitly racialized and gendered: positive and negative. Historian Wendy Kline notes that positive eugenics was the arm of eugenic science designed to instruct the white middle class on how “to promote the prolific procreation of white middle-class women—those who were considered to be the most mentally and physically sound and who would thus most effectively lead the advancement of civilization.” Illustrative of this is an article from the *The World’s Work* magazine, published in 1912 and entitled “Women: Building a Better Race,” which claimed that the “American woman is the leader of the awakened social conscience in a country-wide crusade that is cooperating to build a better race.” Though the article’s author, Mabel Potter Daggett, was likely writing to eugenically inclined white middle-class families, it is not clear whether her usage of “American” had racial connotations. However, her article nonetheless illustrates the primacy of the female body to positive eugenic thought by placing it at the center of a “country-wide” crusade to build a better race. Further, this archetypal “Mother of Tomorrow” was reified in extravagant spectacle at the Panama Pacific

International Exposition of 1915 in San Francisco. The exposition featured several towering statues depicting archetypal Western and virile stocks but at the center of these monolithic men stood a pioneer woman called the “Mother of Tomorrow” whose accompanying description urged her viewers to “take up the pioneer spirit” and concern themselves with future generations. The statue of the “Mother of Tomorrow” tangibly put the female body at the center of the national struggle for progress and racial betterment (Daggett; Kline 7–8, 18–19).

Conversely, negative eugenics was targeted at those whose fertility was considered unrefined and nearly uncontrollable through conventional means. These groups, characterized as “morons,” the “feebleminded,” the “unfit,” and chiefly, “the moronic mother” were thought to be “breeders.” Wendy Kline notes that, circa 1910, fears of the supposedly negative influences of these groups came to take on “mythic proportions” which in a substantive way fostered the spread of the eugenics movement. The “problem” was again, explicitly racial and gendered. Both male and female progressive reformers constructed the issue as one of space. The expanding geographies increasingly open to working-class women, and the associated opening of their sexual frontiers that became available to them as they were empowered through wages, work, and the ability to travel outside of the domestic sphere created fear of an ongoing moral degradation. Indeed, social workers, psychiatrists, sociologists, educators, and progressive reformers all ascribed the “lax sexual etiquette” of the time to the female body, its sexuality, and her degeneration stemming from her empowerment in society. Origins of this degeneration were discussed *ad nauseam*, but the science of eugenics posited that these “moronic” women were not just sick or temporarily depraved, but rather, genetically flawed in irreversible ways. Thus, the eugenic solution was a surgical solution (Kline 19–20; Lunbeck).

By 1917, segregation of women and sterilization of men deemed “unfit” was no longer feasible if the goal of eugenics, human betterment, was to be achieved. It is at this juncture, the realization that female sexuality and her ability to reproduce held the ability to create a master race or destroy one in the

making that the hour of eugenics truly began in America. Between 1920 and 1940, negative eugenics would become eugenics, and this is no more evident than in the state of California

California's Cult of Human Service

The Californian case study of eugenics is unique in how a “very forceful contingent of [eugenic] champions from the early 1910s into the 1950s” was able to influence the racial landscape of California through their efforts to endorse, finance, and direct eugenic projects. This cadre was primarily composed of prominent white men who had migrated to California in search of soil and salubrity in similar patterns to the prophet pioneers who came before them. Men such as Luther Burbank, Ezra Gosney, Paul Popenoe, David Jordan Starr, and Lewis Terman, were to be what layman eugenicist Fred Hogue dubbed the “cult of human service” in California. They would seek the “perfection and preservation of organized society” through eugenic human betterment. Their works and writings would synergistically interact with fears of racial degeneration, female sexuality, and overpopulation that had been fostered by California’s rapid industrial and agricultural rise to power. All of these men were attracted to the conceptualization of Californian Eden, they all came to California in search of better health or agricultural splendor during the state’s rapid development, and all were key figures in California’s eugenic brotherhood; however, two in particular sought to create a Californian Eden through eugenic science specifically (Stern, 100,113; Kline 100; Hogue, “Social Eugenics”; *California’s Compulsory Sterilization Policies, Background Paper* iv).

Horticulturist, Luther Burbank migrated to California in 1875 because he thought it was “the chosen spot of all this earth as far as nature is concerned.” As he prepped for his journey from Massachusetts, he thought only to bring ten of his “Burbank potatoes” with him according to lore. Whatever the truth, the myth nonetheless speaks to his overall reputation as one of the herculean figures of California’s history. Dubbed the “plant wizard” for his ability to selectively breed desirable traits into plants, Burbank’s role was pivotal in

fostering eugenic culture in California (Sackman 57–60; Burbank and Hall 26, 32).

Burbank envisioned that his work would contribute to the “imperial dominion” of Californian agribusiness, but he also envisioned another version of his dominion—one that was racial. Burbank was a man of history it is said that “his plants lived in history” because his primary breeding ethos was one that linked heredity to “the sum of past environments.” However, humans lived in this history as well. Beginning in the 1900s, Burbank connected himself with prominent eugenicists in California such as David Jordan Starr and began promulgating his own eugenic ideas in pamphlets, papers, and speeches. In his speech at the Second Congress for Race Betterment held at the Panama Pacific Exposition of 1915, Burbank claimed that two distinct modes of operation could improve any race: First, create an “environment which brings individuals up to their best possibilities.” The second mode was “ten thousand times more important and effective.” It was the “selection of the best individuals through a series of generations,” because this was truly the only means that could “permanently or radically” improve a race. Ultimately, Burbank’s ethos was one in which controlling the environment and heredity were intersecting pathways to the development of a eugenically superior race. His speech put forward a plan to achieve California’s “imperial dominion” via eugenics. According to Sackman, the formula was simple— “place an enterprising people in a natural Eden, watch them make improvements, and then allow them to apply their ingenuity to human beings themselves. Both plants and people would be burbanked toward perfection”(Sackman 57, 58, 59, 61, 62, 63; Dreyer 13, 259; Whitson, John, and Williams 7–34).

David Starr Jordan moved from western New York to Stanford California after having been offered a position as Stanford University’s first president. He was an ichthyologist (researcher of fish) by training and had experience with California’s environs as he partook in scientific expeditions along the Pacific Coast and its waterways in search of fish. Apart from identifying approximately four hundred species of coastal fish, Jordan’s transformation into what he

called a “Californiac” brought him to eugenic science and culture. Already “having fallen under the spell” of the Californian landscape, he wished to spread the salubrious effects with others. His writings for the *Atlantic Monthly* column *California and the Californians*, reinforced the conceptualization of California as an Eden that would bring good health. He wrote that “men lived longer [in California], and, if unwasted by dissipation, strength of body is better conserved.” Further, he posited that California’s landscapes could improve the human race as he noted that California’s children were “larger, stronger, and better formed than their Eastern cousins of the same age.” Ultimately, to Jordan, the Californiac loved his state “because his state first loved him” (Stern, 131,132; Jordan, 236,434; Jordan, *California and the Californians* 13).

Eugenically, Jordan was of like mind with Burbank in that he viewed heredity as being of primary importance to California’s future: “In my judgment,” Jordan opined for the *Sunset* newspaper of San Francisco in 1908, “the essential source of Californianism lies in heredity.” He went on to say that “the Californian of to-day is of the type of his father of fifty years ago... buoyant, self-reliant, adequate, reckless, thoroughly individualistic, capable of all adjustments... and eager to enjoy life and action. And we, their sons... are still made in their image.” The way in which Jordan altered his identity as a migrant into one in which he was a blood descendent of America’s first pioneers that ventured to California speaks to the power of the prophetic patterns which the travel literature of the mid-nineteenth century had created. Further, his belief in how the diverse Californian landscape made racial stocks fitter speaks to the environmental influences that permeated eugenic thought in the state. However, while Burbank and Jordan did agree on much— both worked with each other in the first national eugenics society, the Eugenics Committee of the American Breeder’s Association— they differed in their visions of what a superior Californian race would constitute (Stern, 84, 132).

While Burbank’s vision was not necessarily a white utopian ideal since he viewed immigration as “the grandest opportunity ever presented of developing the finest race the world has ever known,” Jordan’s vision was

explicitly exclusionary. In his work, *Footnotes to Evolution*, Jordan explicitly outlined what he viewed to be the problem with humanity: “Nature is too kind and too indiscriminating, [and] as a result we have pauper races.” Yet, despite this, “strong races” had developed. Of their origins, Jordan was of the opinion that, “The strong races were born of hard times, they have fought for all they have had, and the strength of those they have conquered has entered into their wills. They have been selected by competition and sifted by the elements.” To Jordan the environmental elements that fostered “strong races” were from the Northern Hemisphere, while weaker races hailed predominantly from the tropical Southern Hemisphere where the conditions created “parasites that enfeebled society.” It was through this lens that Jordan would bitterly lash out against what he considered to be global southerners from Mediterranean Europe, Asia, and especially Mexico during the 1920s (Stern, 131–133; Jordan, 289).

Constructing Eden: A Settled and Benevolent Conviction

These men were pivotal in their attempts to define a certain type of look and behavior that defined a Californian identity. In a hearing with the California Senate Select Committee on Genetics, Genetic Technologies, and Public Policy held in 2003, historian Alexandra Minna Stern, concisely stated how eugenic science could fundamentally affect the construction of identity—of belonging: One of the main issues [of eugenic science] was how to control who reproduces in the nation and who actually constitutes what is the face of the body politic and what are the ways to control this (*California’s Compulsory Sterilization Policies, Informational Hearing 3*).

There were indeed many ways to define and control the populace—sterilization was the unfortunate pinnacle. Anti-immigration laws, anti-miscegenation laws, deportation, scare tactics, and outright segregation from public life in state institutions were all methods that were employed. However, what made sterilization so utilitarian to eugenic boosters was the issue of blood. Ultimately, previous methods only segregated blood—they did not destroy it. Scientific thought, has from the earliest years of the

Enlightenment, been wedded to a faith in humanity's ability to uplift itself on a grand scale of human progress. Eugenic science was no different as its ultimate goal, human betterment, was constructed to be a battle for a gloriously therapeutic racial betterment or utter racial destruction (*California's Compulsory Sterilization Policies, Background Paper 3*; Stern, "Buildings, Boundaries, and Blood"; Appleby, Hunt, and Jacob 15–90).

The chief architect of the first sterilization law passed in California was eugenicist Frederick Winslow Hatch Jr. who aided in drafting the first law enacted in 1909 and was then promoted to head the California State Hospital system. From there, eugenic culture in California was larger than one single man, but his voice still contributed to the expansion of the eugenic net. In 1912 he is quoted as having claimed that "the legal operations of the law" should be extended because it was a "settled conviction" that such extensions would be of benefit to society. Hatch's advice was heard and in 1913 and 1917, the law was expanded to protect physicians from legal retaliation for their work, make sterilization a condition of being released from state care, and expanded the net of who could be considered for sterilization by including "idiot" minors, those with a "disease of a syphilitic nature", and those considered perverted. These legal adjustments and the aforementioned refinements of surgical sterilization accelerated the pace of sterilization in California, and by 1921 "80 percent of all [sterilization] cases nationwide," had been performed in California (*California's Compulsory Sterilization Policies, Background Paper vi*; Stern, 100).

While the scope of these legislations do show the extent to which fears about the costs and dangers of degenerate peoples permeated Californian government and culture, they are only partially revealing because by 1921 California was just barely entering the height of its eugenic hour. Indeed, despite the fact that California accounted for 80 percent of all sterilizations nationwide by 1921, this constituted fewer than 1,000 sterilizations. However, by the year 1929, 6,250 operations had been performed, and by 1942, that number was 15,000. California's eugenic hour—loosely defined as the period from 1920-1945— was a pivotal junction in the state's history. It was at this

moment where the constructions of the “West” and California as a lush Eden were truly manifested by California’s cult of human service. In doing so, they moved towards the creation of a Californian identity structured by human evolution, race, gender, and sexuality in the name of a therapeutic human betterment that would result in the sterilizations of 20,000 people (Stern, 83,100,104, 108; *California’s Compulsory Sterilization Policies*,viii).

It is important to note that these figures are imprecise and likely to be much higher for four reasons: First, the archival evidence is incomplete. Second, operations performed in state penitentiaries are not tabulated in state reports clearly. Third, women who were sent to institutions purely for sterilization and dismissal, or others who were labeled as “volunteers” were not tabulated in official statistics. Fourth, eugenic culture permeated the Californian consciousness so thoroughly that there were likely to have been umpteen sterilizations performed in private practices or at county facilities at “Pasadena, Hollywood, Angelus, Methodists, and County General hospitals in Los Angeles as well as other facilities in Santa Barbara and Oakland.” While analysis of the limited records available at these institutions points to a consistent system of consent and approval before operation, Alexandra Stern notes that with all cases of sterilization —state sanctioned or private— there exists a “blurred spectrum between choice and coercion” that will be difficult, if not impossible, to discern from the documentation available. Despite the opacity of the records available, a pattern is still present that is unlikely to be reversed as new sources become available— that the construction of this eugenically designed Californian populace was explicitly racial, gendered, and undergirded by conceptualization of a Californian Eden (Stern, 109–110; Stern 7).

Racially, both the initial report that Gosney’s Human Betterment Foundation published in the late 1920s and the follow up, *Twenty-eight Years of Sterilization in California*, published in 1938, show that foreign-born peoples living in California were adversely affected constituting “39% of the men and 31% of the women” in the study when foreign-born peoples only constituted 21 percent of the Californian populace at the time. These figures are not surprising

when analyzed in light of the rationale for the figures put forward in the next paragraph of the HBF report stating that “one would expect to find an excess of foreign-born here because figures from all parts of the United States show an excess of insanity among the foreign-born” (Stern, 75,110–111; Popenoe and Gosney 9–10).

Further, these totals also suggest that “African Americans and Mexicans were operated on at rates that exceeded their proportion of the population.” The HBF report outlined bluntly that “Negroes exceed their quota... [as they] made up 1.5% [of the population] in 1930, but 4% in this study.” Again the justifications given for the statistical inconsistency fault the genetic make up of the victims claiming that “studies show that the rate of mental disease among Negroes is high.” Mexican men and women constituted “7 and 8 percent of those sterilized,” and it is likely that if it were not for deportation practices so prevalent during the 1920s and 1930s that these figures would have been much higher. Stern notes, from 1925 to 1929 alone, deportations of Mexican men and women increased from 1,751 to 15,000 and that these figures do not include the 8,000 to 10,000 people that chose to leave voluntarily each year after 1927 under the onus of widespread racism. Even with this widespread exodus, at the Norwalk State Hospital in Southern California, where sterilization of Mexican men and women outpaced their rate of admission most significantly, bed space was limited (Stern, 75,110–111; Popenoe and Gosney 9–10; Leonard).

Patterns regarding gendered contours of sterilization are also discernable. According to Stern, a sizable percentage of male patients were typified as “masturbators, or incest perpetrators,” and if female, “as promiscuous, even nymphomaniac, or not infrequently having borne a child out of wedlock.” Indeed as Wendy Kline notes, eugenics was intimately connected to the politics of reproduction, and that to a large extent, the eugenic struggle was one against the growing schism between sexuality and motherhood. Sterilization figures and the rationale behind them illustrate this focus on sexuality. The “moronic mother” was a racialized caricature, but she was reified

explicitly through eugenic sterilization as the national rates of female sterilization overtook those of males by the early 1930s (Stern, 112; Kline 61).

Indeed, the HBF report, *Twenty-eight Years of Sterilization in California*, labeled manic-depression “a problem of married women” who had inherited a certain “constitution” and that 37 percent of women who had been sterilized in California were sterilized for this reason. The report concluded that “no other argument than these figures is needed, to show the value of sterilization in such families.” In absence of justification from the Human Betterment Foundation, the words of prominent physician and eugenic booster, John Randolph Haynes, speak volumes about the intersection between eugenic sterilization and gender. In a letter to a school commissioner in New Jersey, Haynes castigated the laxity of their standards in paroling “morons” and “feebleminded” girls without sterilization as a standard. Haynes wrote, “I notice that you apparently do not require sterilization of these feeble-minded and moron girls... it seems to me that [this]... is a crime”(Haynes; Popenoe and Gosney 13).

Eugenics flourished in California from the 1920s to 1940s largely due to the efforts of an influential and interconnected cadre of individuals who endorsed, funded, and participated in eugenic projects. However, to a large extent, the evidence of their influence is not found in the numbers but in Californian eugenic culture which was unique in its amalgamation of environmental and racial prescriptions of the Californian landscape. The struggle eugenicists created to substantiate eugenic practice in California pinned sexuality and soil to the struggle for a racial and environmental Eden.

Indeed, Sackman notes that “California’s most imaginative boosters envisioned the perfection of both plants and people.” Retrospectively, admirers of Luther Burbank locate his crowning achievements not only in his creation of better plants, but his aspirations of creating better humans. But this ideology was not exclusive to eugenic magnates, Californian “identity and economy became fixed to plants. Each bustling enclave... vied for the title of ‘the garden spot of Earth.’” Part of doing the work of being Californian was tending to its Edenic garden in the literal sense, but in addition to this, was the work of

constructing a eugenic Eden in California. This involved reading and spreading eugenic literature that publicized the latest developments of California's cult of human service(Sackman 61,23).

From 1935 to 1941, readers of the Los Angeles Times could consistently read the latest news from the eugenics movement at a global level. Authored by prominent layman eugenicist, Fred Hogue, his work was "sensationalistic, folksy, and doctrinaire" in discussing topics of paramount importance to the eugenic consciousness. From "population, birth control, venereal disease, marital exams, [to], above all, sterilization," Hogue reflected the viewpoint of an influential cadre of elite Californians who viewed eugenic science as the panacea to California's grave socioeconomic problems. So grave were the issues in question, that Hogue saw fit to title the pilot article from April of 1935, unabashedly and in large bold text, "Shall We Halt Race Suicide?"(Stern, 82-83; Hogue, "Shall We Halt Race Suicide?")

Other *Social Eugenics* articles written by Hogue in that six-year period harken to the prophetic patterns California's earliest settlers had created. One in particular, speaks to the Eden complex present in the Californian consciousness illustrating not only that those patterns had staying power, but that eugenic science in California was tied to perceptions of the Californian landscape. In a column from June of 1941, Hogue uses Japan as his muse in putting forward an argument for eugenic science. Hogue placed both the Japanese and American nations on a level field not only in their splendor, but in their dire situation of overpopulation and degrading morals. Indeed, to Hogue, Japanese aggression in the East-Asian sphere was an issue regarding overpopulation of the unfit, not imperial desires. If it were not for the fact the Japanese had "bred so prolifically," there "would be no Japanese aggression, for the Japanese prefer their own Eden." The Japanese example Hogue put forward was meant to be a fearful lesson for the "flower garden that is the coastal plain of... California" (Hogue, "Social Eugenics").

Neither of these speaks to the fear eugenicists used to place their work at the center of the struggle against racial suicide more vividly than an article

published in the Sunday Edition of the *Los Angeles Times* in October of 1933. The author of the article, Ransome Sutton an avid eugenicist inclined to use fanatical language, starkly created a dichotomy between racial salvation and racial destruction— and worse— argued that the latter was inevitable. Titled, *A Moronic World is Only 100 Years Away!*, Sutton claimed that one-fourth of the population, a group he labeled the tenement district, would be grandparents to every single American in one hundred years time because they had “plenty of leisure” to propagate their kind. Further, the article was accompanied by a cartoon depicting the dichotomous construction of “racial stock” that had become central to eugenic discourse in America: the western European “colonial” and the homogenized immigrant of color. The cartoon could not be misinterpreted. Taking an entire page, it depicted the space prive to the “Ancestors of A Fading Race” and the “Forefathers of the Next America.” The ancestors were pictured to be the type of people who frequented Capitol Hill, city halls, universities, and banks. While, the forefathers, were pictured as being frequenters of asylums, poor farms, prisons, and reform schools (Sutton).

Several years later, at the twenty-fifth annual meeting of the Eugenics Research Association in 1937, the presidential address given by prominent eugenicist and lifelong Californian, Charles M. Goethe, was the pinnacle of eugenic propaganda. In his speech entitled, *Extinction of the Inca Highcastes*, Goethe placed both the Incan civilization and American civilization along the same course in tandem on a timeline towards a nearly inevitable destruction. Appropriating colonial history in the Americas for his purposes, Goethe, claimed that it was not so much the “guns, germs, and steel” that allowed the Spanish Conquistadors to conquer the Inca so much as it was their ability to decimate the Inca high-castes— which he claimed were “eugenically speaking, of high intellectual worth” and of limited number. In his view, the Inca were so technologically advanced because they were a eugenic culture that “was organized like a beehive” where everyone from the low caste worker, to high-caste noble was eugenically appropriate for their role in society. Ultimately, Goethe’s purpose in retelling his version of Inca history was to cite



an example of racial destruction. He warned his audience to heed the lessons other societies had given America, for the “eugenic effect of the wholesale killing of practically all of Incan highcastes... [was] felt to this day.” Goethe claimed that the death of Incan high castes constituted nothing less than the destruction of their “priceless seed stock” thereby crippling them from ever lifting themselves “out of misery.” A possibility which he claimed was all too possible for the “colonial” stock of the United States who were at danger from overpopulation of the “hyphenates” (Goethe, “Extinction of the Inca Highcastes” 54–56; Diamond).

Conclusion

For the European Americans who moved west throughout the nineteenth century, “to colonize California was to lay stake to its landscapes, through manipulation of the soil.” This remained true well into the mid-twentieth century where the quest to create a Eugenic Eden was not only substantiated through prophetic conceptualizations, gendered structures of power, and scientific racisms, but through the wealth created by a robust agricultural economy. Goethe, a titan among California’s cult of human service, claimed that he had spent nearly a million of the dollars his citrus and cattle empire had earned him on proliferating eugenic pamphlets. Goethe predicated the fulfillment of California’s Eden prophecies on the “persistence and propagation” of the “white pioneer stock” who he considered a “biological strain whose purity demanded defense (Stern, 135–148; Goethe, *Seeking to Serve* 28,184,96).

It would not be until the 1940s that California would be overtaken in terms of annual sterilizations performed by states like Delaware, North Carolina, and Virginia. At this transition into the post-World War II world, when California still accounted for 60 percent of the operations performed nationwide and other states were entering their own eugenic hours—the Californian eugenics movement would progressively shift its rhetorical focus back to the power of the white “mother of tomorrow” in their attempts to construct families according to hegemonic American norms. Eugenic sterilization laws in California would not be expunged until 1979, but even then, their legacy would



remain clear in tangible ways. Monuments and places like the Luther Burbank Grove, the C.M. Goethe Arboretum, and the David Starr Jordan High School remind us of California's cult of human service. From environmental conservancy to cictriculture, we laud them as great men who helped us progress as a people and we have commemorated their lives accordingly— this much is clear. Yet, what has never been made clear are the voices of those sterilized during California's eugenic hour (Stern, 108–109).

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NOTES

¹Phillip Reilly illustrates that from the beginning of the eugenics movement in America, proponents of involuntary sterilization were, “wedded to a faith that medical science had within its grasp a simple but humane procedure... that would benefit society.” See, Reilly, *The Surgical Solution*, x; Kline explicitly places gendered discourse at the forefront. Her work explains how the low birthrates of the white middle class were made to be the moral problems of women deemed unfit and moronic. Kline argues that the white middle-class did not seek to answer why they were having so few children, but instead, why other populations were having so many. See, Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley, Calif.; London: University of California Press, 2005), 2; Alexandra Stern moves scholarship on the eugenics movement in America towards the American West as she traces the connections between affluent Californians and the eugenics movement at the turn of the twentieth century into the 1960s and 1970s. She argues that within the global history of eugenic practice, “[eugenic thought] ran exceptionally deep in the Golden State,” of California where at least 20,000 men and women were involuntarily sterilized as part of institutionalized efforts to prevent the destruction of the American gene pool. In doing so, she successfully connects medical and popular culture to eugenic ideology thereby creating the foundations for others to delve more deeply into the connections between the ideas of prominent Californian ideologues and their role in constructing who was deemed fit to be a Californian citizen. See, Stern, *Eugenic Nation Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America*, 1–26.

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