American Eugenics
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Race, Queer Anatomy, and the Science of Nationalism

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For my parents, Rochelle and Jordan, who made everything possible for me, and in memory of my grandparents, Avrum, Yitta, Mindl, and Wolf

“my lifetime listens to yours”
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Introduction

You talk of your breed of cattle
And plan for a higher strain
You double the food of the pasture,
You heap up the measure of grain;
You draw on the wits of the nation
To better the barn and the pen,
But what are you doing, my brother,
To better the breed of men?
—Rose Trumbull, “To the Men of America”

On October 16, 1994, the cover of the New York Times Book Review sported a full-page color graphic of a DNA double helix alongside the headline, “How Much of Us Is in the Genes?” No less than five books on the subject were covered that Sunday, the most prominent being The Bell Curve by Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein: “The articulation of issues touching on group intelligence and ethnicity has been neither fashionable nor safe for the last three decades, but these scholars argue that the time has come to grasp the nettle of political heresy, to discard social myths and come to grips with statistical evidence.” 1 With this plaudit, the Times reviewer valorized a recent incarnation of a less than novel ideology: scientific racism. The Bell Curve merely restated old claims, chief among them being that intelligence can be quantified (by IQ tests), that African-Americans score an average of fifteen points lower than white Americans on these tests, and that genes are accountable for this rift.

A few pages later was a review of Dean Hamer and Peter Copeland’s The Science of Desire, which also dealt with heredity, honing in on Hamer’s
quest for a "gay gene."\textsuperscript{2} Hamer was, at that time, the latest in a long succession of theorists intent on establishing a biological or physiological basis of homosexuality. It is no accident that these books emerged at the same time or that each in turn was greeted by an on-air media blitz and splashed across the cover of every major magazine in this country.\textsuperscript{3} A renewed respectability was being lavished on eugenics, a movement perhaps more overt in its principles and purpose in the early twentieth century, but still very much with us.

Early eugenics proponents, drawn from the ranks of scientists, politicians, doctors, sexologists, policy makers, reactionaries, and reformers, held that through selective breeding humans could and should direct their own evolution. Most believed in the supremacy of Nordic and Anglo-Saxon peoples, and to this end agitated for immigration restriction and supported antimiscegenation laws. Eugenics advocated compulsory sterilization of the poor and the disabled and the "immoral." The legislation they drafted, the interventions they backed, the medical regimens they prescribed stemmed from a belief that everything from intellect to sexuality to poverty to crime was attributable to heredity.

This premise, and its attendant policy recommendations, have remained largely unchanged since Francis Galton first coined the term "eugenics" in 1883. Positive responses to The Bell Curve and The Science of Desire exemplified the way in which a retread of eugenic invective can be resuscitated, repackaged for public consumption, and hailed as brave, groundbreaking, and legitimate. There was nothing new here, save perhaps for a slightly abridged and terrifying vocabulary. "Eugenics" was avoided, but phrases such as "cognitive elite" and "cognitive disadvantage" began to gain currency in some circles, along with the resurrected "dysgenesis" (referring to the deterioration of allegedly heritable qualities from one generation to the next—in this instance the outbreeding of high IQ testers by those with lower scores).

In the interest of full disclosure, let me pause here and place myself in this tangle of social Darwinist affronts. I am Jewish and I am queer. I see my peoples among those dubiously honored as eugenic castoffs at both the entrance and exit of the twentieth century. Declarations of the limited cognitive abilities of Jewish immigrants—indeed of all immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, Latin America, and Asia—garnered
the men who made them a respectability that drew strength from and reinforced their offensive against the native poor and the racialized in the early decades of this century. Likewise, escalating attacks on lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered people seem to have coincided nicely with a flurry of scientific data proclaiming the genetic basis of homosexuality as the 1990s drew to an end. I cannot deny that a sense of my own history and my own future impelled me to embark on this project.

I began my research in the mid-nineties when eugenics enterprises were receiving rousing support from some political quarters and tepid validation from others. I was living in California at the time, where a white judge sentenced an African-American woman to Norplant, where Proposition 187, denying vital and heretofore legally guaranteed services to anyone suspected of being an undocumented immigrant, passed overwhelmingly with the help of a substantial donation from a foundation that backs race-based intelligence research. I lived then in a city where each new biology-based theory on homosexuality made the front page. I did not then, nor do I now, believe that this disinterred zeal to pin everything on biology is anything but a product of the historical moment that gave rise to it. It is no coincidence and it is not going away.

The long-lasting appeal of eugenics has rested on its protection of the status quo, on its emphasis on individual and group "failings" over analyses of systemic culprits, and on its bedrock insistence on scientific/technological remedies over fundamental social and institutional change. It has thrived in times of mainstream anxiety over genuine or perceived gains of marginalized groups, making it an attractive tool for conservatives. And so, decades after litigants and activists, doctors and attorneys proved that African-American, Latina, and Native American women and girls were being singled out for coerced, eugenically informed sterilization procedures, Norplant began to be foisted on these same communities with the full force of the judiciary and the medical establishment and with the blessing of both conservative politicians and liberal organizations. After generations of queers resisting pathologization, exactly twenty-five years after the Stonewall uprising, at a time of increased visibility in the political, social, and cultural realms, *The Science of Desire* appeared on the scene to cast us as genetically distinct from the rest of humankind. Eugenics is, once again, making a very public ascent.
To grasp the resiliency of this often discredited but never dormant philosophy is to understand the consolidation of race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation—not only as categories but also as ideological weapons of a state committed to eugenic curatives. The first section of this book, "National Hygiene," examines eugenics as it served, and was served by, nationalism. Anointed guardian of national health and character, eugenics served the restrictionist lobby well for over a hundred years, predicting dire consequences for the country's bloodline if immigration of the "unfit" was not curtailed. The eugenic verdict on what constituted sound and unsound bodies was imposed on legislative debate, constructing immigrants as both contaminated and contaminants of the body politic. Eugenicists and their fellow travelers singled out everyone whose origins could not be traced to northwestern Europe, including southern Blacks making their way north during the Great Migration. As Charles Mills wrote of the era of de jure white supremacy, "[T]his period had the great virtue of social transparency.... One didn't have to look for subtext, because it was in the text itself."

Science, and at its zenith eugenics was considered science, was not summoned solely by exclusionists and supremacists. It was, and continues to be, used simultaneously to persecute and to vindicate. The second section, "Queer Anatomy," examines the use of scientific pronouncements on homosexuality by a medical establishment hostile to all gender transgressors, including lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered people (LGBTs), and by queers and our allies who have long relied on eugenic, psychiatric, hormonal, and now genetic theories of homosexuality in a bid to win acceptance. In both instances, science has become savior, a cure for either homosexuality or homophobia, depending on your standpoint. And in both instances, the results have been catastrophic.

Finally, the third section, "Sterilization and Beyond," examines liberalism's propulsion of eugenics. An Enlightenment faith in progress has meant an unwavering belief in science as apolitical. This has, at different historical moments, extended to adherence to biological determinism. Coupled with liberalism's investment in quick-fix individual solutions to basal inequities, this easily translated into support for race-, class-, and disability-based sterilization policies, from compulsory tubal ligations to mandated Depo-Provera acceptance. These measures were portrayed
as a means to “help the poor help themselves.” But wherever biologism and public policy have intersected, they have extracted a terrible price from the poor, physically and politically.

No treatise on U.S. immigration can stand without a discussion of nationalism and racism. Nationalism, George Mosse noted, has “attempted to co-opt most of the important movements of the age.” Eugenics, far from being exempt from this process of absorption, has played a pivotal role in nationalist and racist enterprises, as practice and as theoretical prism, an ideology in the service of other ideologies. As Étienne Balibar has written, “for the nation to be itself, it has to be racially or culturally pure.”

This is an obsessional imperative which is directly responsible for the racialization of social groups whose collectivizing features will be set up as stigmas of exteriority and impurity, whether these relate to style of life, beliefs, or ethnic origins.

Central to this imperative, Balibar contends, is a “racism of extermination or elimination (an ‘exclusive’ racism) and a racism of oppression or exploitation (an ‘inclusive’ racism), the one aiming to purify the social body of the stain or danger the inferior races may represent, the other seeking, by contrast, to hierarchize and partition society.” Eugenics employed and rationalized both “inclusive” and “exclusive” racism—the former, most notably, though not solely, through eighty-five years of IQ tests (an exam whose initial purpose in this country was to manufacture and expose the alleged intellectual inferiority of Jews, Italians, and Slavs), the latter by means of antimiscegenation laws, coerced sterilization, and most central to the first section of this book, immigration restriction.

“National Hygiene: Twentieth-Century Immigration and the Eugenics Lobby” examines eugenicists’ contribution to the construction and monitoring of the nation, beginning with the confluence of anti-immigrant and pro-eugenics rhetoric that informed the Immigration Acts of 1917 and 1924 and continued on, through the decades, in an only slightly mutated form. It is an exploration not only of the blatant white supremacy and xenophobia that licensed these enactments, but also of the racial cataloging of immigrants and the ways in which national character
was biologized and quantified—both in the pages of eugenist journals and on the floor of the U.S. Congress.

Eugenists’ “scientific” validation of racism, their dexterity in exploiting labor strife, environmentalism, urban poverty, world war, crime, disease, and white anxiety over interracial social contact, is revealed in their own documentation of their movement. The *Journal of Heredity* (originally the *American Breeders Journal*) and *Eugenic News* proved essential to my investigation, both in terms of reconstructing eugenists’ campaigns and in grasping the meaning they themselves ascribed to their crusade. In this, they offered a unique portal to eugenists’ restrictionist agenda. More important, a survey of the publications’ eclectic contributor pool reveals the broad base of their support. Eugenists’ own annals tended toward self-aggrandizement. They had nothing to gain by exaggerating their political pull. Their claims to political relevance might easily be dismissed as an exercise in self-importance if not for evidence provided by congressional records. Transcripts of various immigration debates and hearings attest to the fact that eugenists were well received, even courted, by lawmakers. Indeed, some legislators counted themselves among their ranks.

Eugenists owed their influence over twentieth-century immigration policy in large part to nineteenth-century legislation: the Page Law of 1875 and the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. By 1917, decades of anti-Asian policy had already racialized the debate, though “debate,” implying more dissent than was actually voiced by lawmakers, is certainly too active a term. The primacy accorded the 1917 and 1924 statutes here is not intended to downplay either the singularity or precedent-setting nature of these earlier bans, but rather to highlight the evolving and increasingly technical matrix of charts, test results, surveys, and computations that eugenics brought to the fore in immigration legislation in the decades before World War II.

Doctors wrote with alarm about America’s disastrous attempt to “assimilate bad germ plasm.” Laymen, the most notorious of whom may be Madison Grant, warned of Jewish characteristics being “engrafted upon the stock of the nation.”*Harry Laughlin*, of the Eugenics Research Association, was invited to give expert testimony before the House Committee on Immigration and Naturalization’s 1920 hearings on the *Biological Aspects of Immigration*. The language he employed was the language
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of chemists and anatomists and statisticians. Jews and Italians, he indicated on a chart submitted to the committee, composed a disproportionately high percentage of the foreign-born in U.S. asylums. Citing the alleged immorality, innate propensities to crime and vice, smaller crania, illiteracy, compromised heredity, and diminished mental capacity of non-Nordic peoples, anti-immigrant agitators promised national calamity if Congress did not act fast. Immigrants, racialized and demonized, were posited as a threat to what Harvard professor Robert DeCourcy Ward called the "American race."  

During this period, the menacing "immigrant" was coded as male, with the important exceptions of the prostitute (corrupter of men) and the mother of future citizens (corrupter of bloodlines). It was this latter categorization that enabled eugenicists (although not only eugenicists) to advance and exploit white hysteria over bi- and multiracial children, actual and anticipated. Eugenicists were, among other things, believers in and tabulators of blood quantum. The Great Migration, along with the entry of large numbers of southern and eastern European immigrants, would, Grant wrote in 1916, "produce many racial hybrids and some ethnic horrors that will be beyond the power of future anthropologists to unravel."  

Eugenics used whatever was at hand to advance its legislative and social goals. It dovetailed nicely with virulent state animosity toward socialists, anarchists, and communists, as radicalism was, in the view of restrictionists, the domain of Italian and Jewish immigrants. During and after World War I, eugenicists warned of unwanted refugees flooding the United States—bad enough, they warned, in and of themselves, even worse because of the leftist "provocateurs" who would, in the chaos, be able to slip through existing immigration bans and spread propaganda. At the same time, eugenicists appealed to American-born, white workers. Opposition to immigration restriction was said to be a ploy by industrialists to undermine workers' gains and the health of the nation by importing cheap labor and defective germ plasm—all in the same bodies. 

Most inquiries into the eugenics lobby and its impact on U.S. immigration end in 1924, when passage of the National Origins Act effectively slammed the door on any significant nonwestern/nonnorthern European immigration. Eugenicists and their allies, however, saw the legislation as
a temporary compromise at best, and reinvigorated earlier warnings of white “amalgamation” with Puerto Ricans, Japanese (in Hawaii), Filipinos, and Mexicans (who, Laughlin exclaimed, were threatening to retake the Southwest).18 Other accounts date the beginning of the end to the early 1930s, when the Third Reich made eugenics an ugly word, even in the United States. An examination of eugenicist publications, congressional records, and other supporting documents tells a different story. Neither the rise of fascism nor the reading of its record at Nuremberg spelled the end for eugenicists. Their influence was not as overt as in prewar years, but they remained a political presence. The Pioneer Fund, for example, has been one of the torchbearers for a eugenically informed immigration policy since 1937. The Fund’s original charter called for “racial betterment” and increased procreation by descendants of white settlers of the original thirteen colonies. Francis Walter, cosponsor of the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act, served on its board in the 1950s.19 When the 1965 Immigration Act went before the House Committee on the Judiciary, the Fund’s codirector testified in favor of preserving the national origins quota system.

An examination of immigration “reform,” past and present, provides an opportunity to expose the intertwining strands of eugenicist thought, if for no other reason than the fact that individual eugenicists have seldom confined their attacks to a single demographic group or social policy. The final chapter of The Bell Curve advocated both IQ-based entry for immigrants and the termination of welfare (which, according to the authors, fosters reproduction among women with low intelligence quotients).20 Like their pronouncements on race and intelligence, Herrnstein and Murray’s views on immigration echoed the work of early twentieth-century eugenicists: U.S.-born whites were situated at the top of the intellectual heap, and African-Americans were eternally fixed in last place:

White immigrants have scores that put them above the mean for the native-born American population (though somewhat lower than the mean for native-born American whites). Foreign-born blacks score about five I.Q. points higher than native-born blacks.21

Herrnstein and Murray blamed the low mean IQ of immigrants (likely, they wrote, to be less than 100) on members of ethnic groups who score “significantly below the white average,” thereby deflating the median
figure of all immigrants. “Immigrant” has always been a racialized term in the United States. Today, and certainly not for the first time, it is frequently used as a club against Latinos and Asians. The following is a not so thinly veiled attack on the 1965 Immigration Act, which allowed entry for previously excludable Asian immigrants provided they had family in the United States:

This is not the place, nor are we the people, to try to rewrite immigration law. But we believe the main point of immigration law should be to serve America’s interests. It should be among the goals of public policy to shift the flow of immigrants away from those admitted under the nepotistic rules (which broadly encourage the reunification of relatives) and toward those admitted under competency rules, already established in immigration law.23

Elsewhere in their eight-hundred-page tome, Herrnstein and Murray lamented the passing of turn-of-the-century immigrants who were “brave, hard-working, imaginative, self-starting—and probably smart,” attributes, they commented, lacking in current immigrants to the United States. Of course, few Americans around 1900 recognized any of these qualities in the newcomers, and scientists and scholars went to great lengths to document the intellectual, spiritual, and physical shortcomings of the perceived interlopers.

Herrnstein and Murray’s unapologetic nativism would have been just another episode in academic immigrant bashing if not for the historical moment in which it appeared: shortly before the vote on Proposition 187.24 The suggestion here is not that California voters went to the polls with copies of The Bell Curve tucked squarely under their arms, but rather that the book and, more important, the media attention it generated were products of—and contributors to—a climate of heightened scapegoating and xenophobia of national proportions. It was, and remains, a hysteria reinforced and made corporeal by a federal crackdown: in the year following the passage of Proposition 187, the United States deported a record 51,000 undocumented immigrants.25 While current anti-immigration offensives can in no way be reduced solely or even primarily to manifestations of scientific racism or paranoid concerns over the national gene pool, it would be a mistake to minimize the resemblance between much of the current rhetoric and the previous eugenics crusades for restrictive immigration laws it recalls.
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In certain instances it seems that Mother Nature hesitates over her sexual determinations. It almost amounts to biological stuttering. In such cases anything may happen.26

A few years ago, UCLA biologist Dr. Lauren Allen told attendees at the American Association for the Advancement of Science that in the not too distant future a brain scan could conceivably alert parents to their child’s sexual orientation.

[T]here are some unknown percentages of people that are not going to grow up heterosexual... If these techniques could eventually be used to identify these children, [then this knowledge] could be used to raise those children in a way that they would feel more comfortable.27

Allen’s remarks reflect a genuine faith in the implicit humanitarianism of science, especially when applied to social issues. Leaving aside the question of why any child should be brought up with an eye toward any sexual orientation, it is highly unlikely that a brain scan would dismantle homophobia inside or outside the family. “Early detection” thus far (i.e., parental guesswork) has moved too many people to disown, beat, and even institutionalize their children.

But predictions such as Allen’s, like Hamer’s undertaking, continue to receive warm welcomes, in part because of a liberal belief in progress and knowledge, in part because social categories, rather than substantive research questions, are driving scientific inquiry. This is true not only of Hamer’s work at the National Institutes of Health, but of Simon LeVay’s measurements of cell-group size in the “gay hypothalamus” and of Bailey and Pillard’s lesbian twin studies. Due to their veneer of plausibility and rationality, these are far more perilous than cause-and-effect claims perhaps more easily laughed off—such as the recent lawsuit filed by a woman who insists she was heterosexual until an electronic bingo board fell on her.28 Yet, there are obvious biases implicit in their research, the most pronounced being the fundamental premise that homosexuality is not normative. This fresh interest in the roots of homosexuality is cause for extreme concern, especially given the rise in hate crimes and homophobia in the streets and the Senate that accompanied its onset. Scientific exploration is neither funded nor pursued for politically neutral ends. At this level it is conducted for only one of two reasons: to either replicate or eradicate what is being studied. Given the backlash to queer visibility and the victim-blaming apparent in legis-
lative and cultural responses to AIDS, it is difficult to believe that time and money were being doled out to ensure a steady population of gays and lesbians.  With the losses to AIDS, breast cancer, and youth suicide, and with the escalating antigay violence faced by our community, the more relevant and pressing question is not “why are we here?” or “how did we get this way?” but rather “why is it so important to find out?”

The second section, “Queer Anatomy: One Hundred Years of Diagnosis, Dissection, and Political Strategy,” documents a century of medical models and interventions imposed on (and sometimes embraced by) lesbians, gays, transgendered people, and bisexuals in the United States. It highlights the danger posed by the intersection of medical and judicial discourse—a melding that enabled punishment to be enacted under the guise of treatment—and the cumulative nature of all derivation hypotheses. Expositions of moral turpitude, anatomical flaws, eugenic mishaps, psychiatric disorders, and hormonal imbalances—none of these theories eclipsed the others, though each was hailed as signaling a new day for either treatment or liberation. Causation theories were additive, each supplying new (and not so new) ammunition to an arsenal of antigay rhetoric and punishment.

Because of the medical profession’s dedication to publishing, there is no shortage of documentation. Diagnoses and treatments were assiduously chronicled in medical journals and related texts, both by practitioners antagonistic to queers as well as by those who thought they were working on our behalf. Articles in the Journal of Orificial Surgery, the British Medical Journal, Sexology, and numerous medical texts, not to mention contemporary news accounts, record over one hundred years of physicians’ boasts and disappointments. Particularly in the nineteenth century, as Siobhan Somerville notes, this literature was one of only a few venues available for explicit discussions of sexuality. Further, it “held substantial definitional power within a culture that sanctioned science to discover and tell the truth about bodies.”

This “truth” was bound up with other truths. It would be impossible to excavate the roots and the reach of the medicalization of queers without an understanding of scientific racism and other eugenics endeavors. Not only were they ideologically tethered, but they had the same champions and often the same victims. In 1904, G. Frank Lydston, a professor at the Chicago College of Physicians and Surgeons who lectured on the dangers of “sexual perversion,” also wrote, “Physical and moral degeneracy...
with a distinct reversion to type, is evident in the Southern negro... especially manifest in the direction of sexual proclivities."\(^3\) Dr. F. E. Daniel of Texas advocated castration for "all sexual crimes or misdemeanors" as well as mandatory sterilization for the purposes of "race improvement."\(^3\) African-American lesbians and gays were declared predatory; their anatomy, gender deviation, and sexual propensities sensationalized and exaggerated by researchers seeking to substantiate their own biases. Eugenics enterprises emerge as inextricably linked. Treatises on homosexuality enlarged and benefited from existing pronouncements of scientific racism, as well as eugenicist justification of the economic status quo and the relentless monitoring of female sexuality and compliance with gender norms.

When physicians and theorists connected nonprocreative sexuality among women to ancestry, insanity, and anatomy, lesbians and other gender nonconformists became obvious recipients of their attention. The simultaneous ascription of lesbianism to insanity and inheritance foreshadowed the more formal consolidation of psychiatric and biological approaches to homosexuality that has circulated for the better part of a century. "Orificial" surgery gave way to lobotomies and hormone regimens—both of which remained legitimate responses to homosexuality even in the midst of a lesbian and gay civil rights movement. Aversion therapy is still an accepted procedure among many practitioners.

There is, to borrow from Foucault, no doubt that the medical and juridical discourse on homosexuality that emerged over a hundred years ago enabled all manner of inventive social control over queers. But, he further noted, the emerging discourses "also made possible the formation of a 'reverse' discourse: homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturality' be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified."\(^4\) Queers were not only subjects of the new research, not only its consumers, but also its exploiters, if failed exploiters. As a political strategy, this has wrought grave consequences. The emerging heredity-based models resulted in further jeopardy for gays (not the least of which was inclusion in many states' mandatory sterilization statutes). Medical doctors' forays into the legal system had forged the ideological links between eugenics, "perversion," and crime. Inattentive to the punitive nature of the eugenic discourse that circulated around them, Havelock Ellis and Magnus Hirschfeld advanced biological theories
of “inversion” and the “third sex” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their efforts to decriminalize homosexuality, resting on medical models, bolstered claims of inborn deviance. Work citing science as exonerator—if not emancipator—of a despised “sexual minority”—from Hirschfeld to the gay press of the past thirty years—document the painful truth that, in desperation, queers have frequently cooperated with our own oppression.

In a time marked by sheep cloning and the Human Genome Project, eugenics often operates under the guise of a sort of liberatory biology. When Colorado’s antigay Amendment 2 went to court in the fall of 1993, Donna Minkowitz of the Village Voice reported that “it was not the state’s attorneys but the pro-gay ones whose arguments could set back the clock on gay liberation.” In their attempt to prove the unconstitutionality of the amendment, attorneys called on “expert” witnesses to offer testimony on the “masculinization” of genitals of future lesbians in utero and “temporal lobe pathalogy” among transsexuals.15 The amendment, which would have banned antidiscrimination protections for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals, was struck down, but predating civil rights on anatomy remains a risky strategy and one generally used against marginalized peoples.36

Hamer, who also took the stand in Colorado, has reflected somewhat on the political uses of his work. Scientists, he has written, can take measures to ensure that their research is not abused, such as asserting intellectual property rights, opposing genetic tests and treatments for sexual orientation, and helping to set guidelines for the ethical use of genetic research.37 Yet, one need only look to the physicists who split and “harnessed” the atom to realize that scientists cannot control the intellectual or cultural currency of their work. Conceding that today’s research could lead to a range of prejudicial tactics, from employment and insurance discrimination (based on DNA scans for genes implicated in sexuality) to homophobia-induced decisions to abort, Hamer warned:

> Although such hypothetical dangers are frightening, I believe there is a far greater danger. A danger that is present now, not in the future. A danger that is real, not hypothetical. . . . The real danger is not to study sex at all.38

But such concerns are not so easily reduced to the realm of the hypothetical. Employers and insurers do discriminate.39 Parents do discard and dismantle their queer children.
In response to concerns about a hypothetical “genetic sexual orientation test,” Hamer wrote, “biology is neutral. There is no reason that gays . . . could not use such a test to abort fetuses that had the ‘straight gene,’ or refuse to hire people who didn’t have a ‘gay’ genetic profile.” This, however, assumes a power equilibrium that simply does not exist. Between 1992 and 1997, twenty-eight antigay initiatives passed in this country and nine gay rights laws were repealed. 40 Laurie Andrews, genetic ethicist and author of The Clone Age: Adventures in the New World of Reproductive Technology, cites a recent survey of potential parents that found that 33 percent of respondents want control over their offspring’s sexual orientation. 41 All this leaves little doubt as to who would screen for a genetic propensity toward homosexuality and toward what ends, and yet, as of this writing, no major LGBT organization is monitoring the ethics or implementation of genetic research on queers. 42 The question remains: if queers were truly safe, would the scientific community be having this discussion?

While the United States shuts her gates to foreigners, and is less hospitable than other countries in welcoming visitors to this land no attempt whatever is made to discourage the rapid multiplication of undesirable aliens — and natives — within our own borders. On the contrary: the Government of the United States deliberately encourages and even makes necessary by its laws the breeding — with breakneck rapidity — of idiots, defectives, diseased, feeble-minded and criminal classes. 43

After World War II, eugenic ideology was largely considered to be the property of foreign fascists, racists, and nationalists. The United States was able to ignore its own history of scientific racism, supposedly negligible in comparison with the brutality of the Third Reich. Far from admitting our participation in the production and practice of eugenics, we have cast our nation as savior of Europe’s eugenics survivors, and thus we can, to paraphrase Jonathan Boyarin, eulogize someone else’s victims while denying our own. 44 This is not hard to do, given the enormity of the Nazi crusade. But the truth is more complex. Science claims for itself a certain internationalism, and there was a tremendous exchange of ideas in the eugenics world. Likewise, eugenics was not solely the purview of the extreme right wing. It crossed not only international waters, but political ones as well. While there can be no doubt that U.S. eugenics has been staked and sustained by all manner of reactionaries and
conservatives, congressional xenophobes, racist policy makers, paternalistic medical practitioners, and a judiciary hostile to the poor and to the disabled, it has also been promoted by many who would recoil at being included in these ranks.

The third section, “Sterilization and Beyond: The Liberal Appeal of the Technofix,” does not seek to exonerate or minimize the role of eugenicists on the political right. They were, and remain, the backbone of scientific racism. However, they were not alone. Liberal voices have, for the better part of this century, been among the loudest praising eugenicist undertakings, including mandatory sterilization policies. These champions of eugenic sterilization were driven by liberalism’s elevation of the individual and by a persistent reliance on what I refer to as the “technofix” (a term collapsed from Robert Blank’s assessment of “technological fixes” that “divert attention from the need for more basic social changes”).

The tribute Margaret Sanger is paid by mainstream feminism offers an excellent illustration of liberal acquiescence to and participation in the eugenics movement. Her activism in the birth control movement frequently overshadows her advocacy for income-based population control measures, yet there can be no mistaking her allegiance to the prominent eugenicists of her day. In 1919 Sanger wrote, “Like the advocates of Birth Control, the eugenicists...are seeking to assist the race toward the elimination of the unfit. Both are seeking a single end but they lay emphasis on different methods.” Eugenics without birth control, she declared, “seems to us a house [built] upon the sands.” So inevitably entwined were these two movements in Sanger’s mind that in 1925 she polled readers of her Birth Control Review on whether or not the journal should merge with a “Eugenics magazine.” Though no such joint venture materialized, her publication, both during and after her tenure as editor, remained a de facto amalgamation of the two. Sanger, and the unproblematic homage she continues to be paid, embody the quintessential liberal-eugenic alliance, an alliance that has yet to be completely severed.

While Angela Davis, Linda Gordon, and Betsy Hartmann have exposed Sanger’s adherence to eugenics doctrine, she continues to be vindicated by biographers and others as a woman who merely forged alliances where she could, rather than a true believer in eugenics. Ellen Chesler, author of Woman of Valor: Margaret Sanger and the Birth Control Movement in America, and Carole McCann, author of Birth Control Politics in the
United States, 1916–1945, characterize her as a product of her age, and on this point they are certainly correct. Her peers in the eugenics movement were preoccupied with concepts of “race hygiene” and “feeblemindedness” and with mandatory sterilization statutes. Sanger shared with them their desire to punish those deemed genetically unworthy, their paternalism toward the poor, and their preoccupation with the morality and sexuality of people of color. Though McCann and Chesler deny Sanger’s racism and minimize the extent to which her views on the disabled and the poor factored into her pro-eugenics stance, Sanger’s articles, books, and personal correspondence all disclose an unabashed courtship of eugenicists. A discussion of the ties between eugenics and birth control is in no way intended to discredit the latter. At the same time, a feminist commitment to reproductive rights and freedoms must lay bare the ongoing reverberation of that early compact, particularly in welfare policies that encroached more and more into the bodies of poor women—especially women of color—as time wore on.

Sanger and her colleague Clarence Gamble focused their efforts on eliminating not poverty but the poor. Sanger endorsed and enabled Gamble’s efforts to establish a direct link between welfare and sterilization in the southern states in the years after World War II. Gamble’s vision was not his alone, and in the decades that followed, doctors, social workers, and government agencies took up the cause. Sterilization in the South was referred to as the “Mississippi appendectomy,” not only because it was so common but because medical staff relied on deception to obtain “consent.” Similar “protocol” was followed in clinics across the United States as hysterectomies and tubal ligations were performed on Chicanas, Puerto Ricans, African-Americans, and Native Americans without patient (or, in the case of young girls, parental) consent. As this campaign was commonly rationalized as a panacea to poverty, an attendance to class is essential to any examination of eugenic sterilization practices. Class dictated who would be viewed as unworthy of procreation and who would easily fall to economic coercion. What’s more, after the Holocaust, overtly race-based sterilization proposals were a hard sell, necessitating a linguistic re-encoding of sorts. Similarly, today we hear not of eugenics, but of “gene therapy” and “health care rationing.” This is not to understate or sublimate the importance of race as a central determinant in targeting entire groups of women for sterilization in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Sterilization abuse of African-American
women, for example, was an extension of a long history of medical atrocities perpetrated by eugenicists eager to “put the Negro Question into Science and Science into the Negro Question.”

For the poor and racialized and criminalized, tubal ligation, hysterectomies, and vasectomies were never value-free medical procedures. Rather, they were technological fixes imposed on individual bodies in lieu of meaningful correctives to economic inequity. The latest round of reproductive technologies—quinacrine (tested on women in the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia), Norplant, and Depo-Provera—have not altered the technofix paradigm, nor have they shifted its demographics. All physician controlled, they stand in for substantive challenges to a grossly inadequate welfare system and a booming criminal justice system. A critique of liberal assent to such “solutions” as the targeting of teenage girls as Norplant acceptors, the imposition of implants and other chemical contraceptives on AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children, now Temporary Assistance to Needy Families) recipients, and Norplant-for-probation plea bargains concludes the third section. The history of eugenic sterilization is also the history of the steadfast refusal of liberal organizations, including some liberal feminist organizations, to oppose practices that constitute population control policies and state-sponsored assaults on poor women and girls of color, even as they espouse reproductive “choice.” But “choice” is not a static or immovable construct. It does not stand outside of history or politics or society. It is bound by race and class, particularly where technology is concerned.

Eugenics has always been an extremely nimble ideology. It cannot be isolated from the movements it bolstered and was conscripted by: nationalism, “reform-oriented” liberalism, out-and-out homophobia, white supremacy, misogyny, and racism. Its longevity relies on these confederacies for the simple reason that even as one falls into relative dispute, others remain intact. Moreover, its appeals to biases of every stripe has meant that most individuals singled out for exclusion or genetic extrapolation or surgical intervention have multiple identities and belong to more than one target group. If for no other reason than this, “[t]he current round of genetic fetishism,” as Adolph Reed calls it, demands an integrated rebuttal.

But if eugenics is agile, it is also reductionist and therefore highly amenable to sound-bite reportage. It promises simple, indisputable, pre-
determined core divisions—divisions that naturalize disfranchisement and disparity. Eugenics takes externally imposed social categories, with all their insufficiencies and hazards (and often violent origins), and from these postulates eternal medical truths. But these will ultimately prove insufficient. The world, as Muriel Rukeyser reminded us, is made of stories, not of atoms.
Conclusion

Whereas inordinate individual wealth is damaging to society, and undesirable civic tendencies are transmissible by heredity, it is hereby enacted that each society for the improvement of the poor shall call in two philosophic anarchists and one socialist, who shall determine whether any person who shall have acquired inordinate wealth is by reason of the over development of his acquisitive greed a menace to the peace and welfare of the community, and if they so determine, they may cause to be performed upon him an operation for sterilization to prevent procreation, provided, in no event shall anarchists and socialists receive more than $3.00 for their consultation fee.

—Charles A. Boston, “A Protest against Laws Authorizing the Sterilization of Criminals and Imbeciles”

While I was still in the early stages of my research, a friend gave me Charles Boston’s send-up of sterilization statutes and it has remained tucked up over my desk ever since. It offered a little comic relief, as I immersed myself deeper and deeper in the less than uplifting story of this country’s eugenics past. More than that, it served as a reminder of the historical continuity of dissent. The necessary longevity of that challenge is itself a warning on the tenacity of eugenics.

It is tempting to relegate U.S. eugenics to its early twentieth-century heyday, or to ascribe to its components a linear and manageable history. In reality, the record of eugenics is neither linear nor manageable. It is
not even merely historical, but ongoing. In truth, the distance eugenics has traveled since the word was first coined has been, at best, linguistic, but never paradigmatic. The premise that people with disabilities should, and could, be expunged/excised/eliminated by “controlled evolution” remains largely intact. This seems to be a point of concurrence, rather than contention, among liberals and conservatives. Gay gene research continues, threatened only by sensational reports on the gay germ. Lombroso’s born criminal of the nineteenth century has given way to John Donohue and Steven Levitt’s 1999 theory of “unborn criminals.” According to the two economists, the drop in crime during the 1990s is the outcome of the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision and, they write, “appears to be attributable to higher rates of abortion by mothers whose children are most likely to be at risk for future crime.” These mothers are identified by Donohue and Levitt as teenagers, single parents, and African-American women.2

George Mosse has described racism as a “scavenger ideology”—a “heightened nationalism” that posits the differences between peoples as immutable.3 Eugenics, too, is a scavenger ideology, exploiting and reinforcing anxieties over race, gender, sexuality, and class and bringing them into the service of nationalism, white supremacy, and heterosexism—not for the first time, but under cover of a new phraseology. The verbiage of eugenics, the valor, neutrality, and redemptive power accorded science and its counterfeits, has enabled it to extend itself not only to diverse demographic target groups, but to disparate political philosophies. The alliances that have resulted appear, at first glance, counterintuitive. The broad base of “social inadequates,” the appeals to liberals and conservatives, the invocation of objective science by seemingly oppositional political camps, and the role of eugenics as both co-opter and supporter of a wide range of movements and ideologies may make these connections appear evasive. Indeed, it is this very elusiveness that has endowed eugenics and its permutations with such resilience. Yet commonalities persist.

The most tangible of these is the living causeway of individuals who participated in multiple campaigns. Their efforts lay bare the connections among eugenic assaults and between eugenics and other movements. Margaret Sanger’s use of Yerkes and Terman’s flawed IQ data; Harry Laughlin’s 1914 declaration that “the compulsory sterilization of
certain degenerates is... designed as a eugenic agency complementary to the segregation of the socially unfit classes and to the control of the immigration of those who carry defective germ plasm"; F. E. Daniel's expressed desire to castrate gay men and sterilize other impediments to "race improvement"; FAIR's involvement both in the passage of California's Proposition 187 and in the peddling of quinacrine—all demonstrate eugenicists' awareness of the interdependency of their efforts.

More enduring, if less overt, are the theoretical mechanisms shared by most, if not all, eugenic projects: the monitoring of national identity, the use of metaphor to shore up animosity toward already despised and/or feared groups, and a subscription to technological antidotes to structural inequities. In combination, and with varying degrees of prominence, all eugenics endeavors have used claims of biological primacy to justify and further the disfranchisement of the most politically, socially, and/or economically vulnerable groups in the United States.

Each campaign saw reactionary practices and "progressive" rationales for turning to science for a quick fix, the merging of medical and judicial/legislative doctrine, and backlash against reviled and increasingly visible groups. The utility of eugenics to extreme (and not-so-extreme) right-wing objectives is clear. It offered biological justification for everything from economic apartheid to Jim Crow. Anti-immigrant agitators used whatever data they could manufacture to bemoan the "passing" of Anglo-Saxon dominance and promote restriction, exclusion, and deportation. For well over a century, a heterosexist medical establishment has intervened to punish, imprison, segregate, and experiment on queers, suspected and real. Scientific racists had not only the license and wherewithal to sterilize women against their will, but the ability and class animosity to withhold welfare and health care from women they did not want populating the country.

But eugenics has also been propelled by populist, reform, and liberal sentiments, whether artifice or genuinely felt. Ward's 1920 fingering of steamship companies and employers of "foreign-born hyphenates" was an attempt to garner the support of pro- (native) labor sympathizers. Here, eugenics posed as defender of the working man. In a more individuated science-as-savior approach, medical pronouncements on homosexuality have often centered on the humanity of healing the "afflicted," thereby enabling a normal life. More recently, such "benevolent" impulses have taken the form of calling biology to task and removing the
guilt of personal choice and/or parental failure. Finally, sterilization, be it tubal ligation or Norplant or quinacrine, has promised liberal proponents everything from an end to teen pregnancy to the elimination of world hunger.

Eugenics enterprises emerge as inextricably linked, whether they originate from punitive conservatives or technofix liberals. Any embrace of biological determinism or technological palliatives as stand-ins for substantive challenges to institutionalized racism, xenophobia, classism, homophobia—no matter how congruent with liberalism it may have appeared—not only failed to deliver on promises of social redress, but threatened political alienation and physical assault.

The linguistic and material composition of eugenic policies relied, and continues to rely, on the interplay of legal, public policy, and medical discourses. The medicojuridical complex has been an indispensable and constant enabler of eugenics in the United States. The first and perhaps most obvious of its manifestations is the practice of direct state intervention, as when judicial ruling mandates a medical procedure (like sterilization or castration) as punishment, therapy, or prophylactic (to hinder or halt a "diseased" hereditary line). Legislative edicts such as the 1917 and 1924 Immigration Acts, which rested heavily on their eugenic and racist appeal, would also fall into this category, as would sterilization-for-probation deals, economically coerced acceptance of Norplant, and absorption of reproductive technologies by welfare policy.

The second medicojuridical front has asserted itself in the state's sanctioning of eugenic enterprise in a slightly more understated manner. This involves the housing of such research in government facilities (such as immigration stations, state or county hospitals, or federal research programs), the accreditation of such facilities and medical staff, and the federal funding (and by extension legitimacy) extended to such endeavors.

Lastly, and a little paradoxically, silence, too, becomes an enforcer of judicial, legislative, and medical consolidation. In a society where so much is regulated, an absence of involvement, or at least interest, on the part of the government is both striking and suspect. Failure to interrupt (or even note) Indian Health Service's mass sterilization policy or to ban electroshock "therapy" in the treatment of "childhood gender non-conformity" is conspicuous and constitutes state complicity with human rights abuses.
"Even Bogus Science Has Political Consequences"

The forces that shaped restrictionist eugenics are still in evidence: racism, xenophobia, the quest for (and construction of) a "pure" national core, the conflation of race and nationality, and the ability of eugenics to serve and absorb other ideologies. An examination of the lobbying efforts of anti-immigration eugenicists and other exclusionists sympathetic or opportunistic enough to employ eugenics arguments reveal a century of scientific intrusion into the legislative process. This input helped to cement the connections between white supremacy, nationalism, and xenophobia by providing them with a legitimating and unifying discourse. Eugenicist number crunchers fed the flame by producing statistics to establish immigrants' innate propensity toward crime, disease, illiteracy, immorality, and insanity—all deemed manifestations of weak heredity and all costly to citizen taxpayers. While Congress no longer has a designated eugenics expert, many of the rhetorical devices employed by Laughlin and his colleagues continue to be trotted out more than seventy years after the passage of the Johnson-Reed Act: immigrant as malefactor (from Robert DeCourcy Ward's tirade against immigration laws that enabled the birth of "criminal children" to the California Coalition for Immigration Reform's proclamation that "open borders = more citizens murdered"), immigrant as contaminant and contaminated (from blame for the bubonic plague in 1936 to Alan Nelson's current claim that undocumented immigrants are responsible for spreading disease in the United States), immigrant as financial drain (from pre-World War I charges that Europe was sending the United States its "paupers" to the erroneous designation of immigrants as taxpayer burdens during the Proposition 187 campaign). Madison Grant's warnings of "national suicide" have yet to stop ringing in his countrymen's ears. Eugenics casts immigration restriction as national (self-)defense.

Like Laughlin, Grant, Ward, and Johnson, who played on apprehension about World War I, interracial unions, bolshevism, and labor "unrest," today's anti-immigrant lobbyists also draw from and nourish the political pressure points of their time: antiwelfare sentiment, the war on crime, fears over a "population bomb," and even mainstream environmentalism. The tone of news coverage and the underlying rhetoric of FAIR, of contemporary Pioneer Fund beneficiaries, and of eugenicists and fellow travelers has not departed much from those early days. They,
too, offer hysterical warnings about the implications of immigrant women’s alleged hyperfertility and its fiscal and racial implications for the country, deflecting charges of racism by packaging their attacks as apolitical scientific findings. Increasingly, it seems, Robert Ward’s “American race” is still the goal.

Like those leveled against immigrants, “scientific” assessments of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered people have been widely regarded as value-free, even emancipatory (the chief difference being that, in the case of the former group, it was the rest of the nation that would be liberated from the grip of eugenic menace, whereas in the case of the latter, the menaces themselves would be freed from what made them threatening in the first place). Karoly Benkert’s 1899 attestation that “Nature, in her sovereign mood, has endowed at birth certain male and female individuals with the homosexual urge, thus placing them in a sexual bondage,” situated homosexuality as natural, but nevertheless tortuous. We seem to have held fast to this view. For the LGBT community, this has meant that we have frequently been coerced and manipulated into cooperating with our own victimization. From “orificial surgery” to Simon LeVay’s autopsies, the conviction that medical experimentation can only enhance the lives of queers—either by “curing” us of homosexuality or trying to convince a hostile, straight world that it is not our fault—has eclipsed the inevitable cultural biases in researchers’ equations.

A stalwart faith in the objectivity of scientific theories has proven costly. No matter what the intentions of theorists and practitioners, the historical record of the medicalization of homosexuality and the continuity of the resulting consequences cannot be denied. Causation theories of homosexuality have been additive and therefore have abetted, not confronted, homophobia. LeVay’s hypothalamus hypothesis will not dislodge psychiatric diagnoses any more than the latter displaced morality-based condemnations. Like past endeavors, the current search for origins is severely flawed—conceptually and in execution. Adherence to it by some gay rights advocates is just as much an act of political desperation as the right’s invocation of IQ tests to quash Head Start programs and affirmative action. In an era that has seen visible, militant, and well-organized responses by the queer community to AIDS and to homophobia, the rush to genetic explanations of homosexuality is neither incidental nor coincidental. Yet, despite the bankruptcy of biological models and their entanglement with the mechanisms of backlash, a
turn to socialization arguments must also be resisted. Queers must opt out of the nature versus nurture paradigm altogether.

The validity of the biology/environment binary is seldom interrogated: What is driving the imperative to isolate, once and for all, the origins of homosexuality? Why the desire to affix blame—for it is blame that is being leveled—to parenting or heredity or both? To whose advantage is it and what issues are being obscured in the process?

Homosexuality is accorded a kind of eugenic primacy when sexuality is constructed along hereditary or evolutionary lines. Any glitch in a petri dish or on a slide can be attributed to queerness if that is the focal point of the research. Similarly, other eugenicist treatises have granted dominion to race or class or ethnicity, marking those as biological arbiters of all human behavior.

Human sexuality, as it has been documented at the laboratories of the Salk Institute and the National Institutes of Health, is reduced to a zero-sum equation when it comes to queers. It is treated by researchers and by some gay rights groups as a unitary construct, uncomplicated by the range of lived experience within the LGBT community. In fact, Donna Minkowitz of the Village Voice, who covered the Amendment 2 trial in its district court phase, reported that CLIP’s attorneys seemed reluctant to even mention bisexuals for fear that they would jeopardize their claims to the biological constancy of homosexuality (thereby acquiescing to, instead of challenging, the erroneous assertion that social groups can only petition for civil rights on the basis of biological immutability). Hamer wrote that, for his study, he had to measure sexual orientation in a way that was “scientifically sound, quantitative, and could be replicated by other investigators.” Basing their research on such a rigid monolith, scientists seek a gene, a hormone, a cluster to explain homosexuality, when they cannot even define it. Kate Bornstein has written that “A dominant culture tends to combine its subcultures into manageable units.” Both scientific and legislative pronouncements on homosexuals and homosexuality have had everything to do with making people manageable. Our response must be to remain as unruly as possible.

If any trajectory has served as a wake-up call, a notice to be wary of all eugenic maneuvers whatever their political origin, it is the long campaign of compulsory sterilization. It is a history not limited to the dan-
gers of the right's scientific racism, but inclusive of the liberal fidelity to technological/surgical intervention as a means of ending privation. It goes a long way toward explaining, for example, why, in the midst of litigation and education drives by organizers fighting involuntary sterilization in the mid-1970s, NOW representatives joined with Zero Population Growth in opposing the regulation of sterilization in California.11

It is important to restate, in these concluding pages, that eugenics has been championed largely by nationalists, heterosexists, and white supremacists possessed of enmity and paternalism toward women, the poor, and the disabled. Without glossing over the primacy of their culpability, liberal capitulation to, and propulsion of eugenics must be addressed.

A good place to start would be to end the deification of Margaret Sanger—not only because such idolization signifies blatant disregard for those deemed, by virtue of race or class, eugenic castoffs—but because Sanger erected the bridge between scientific race- and class-demonization and what should have been a truly liberatory birth control movement. Her role as consensus builder cannot be denied. Her coding of eugenics as sound and compassionate and as mutually dependent on birth control has been upheld by liberals, albeit with an overhauled vocabulary. Sanger's courtship of eugenicists, NOW's opposition to even the meager protections against sterilization abuse drafted by HEW, mainstream feminism's failure to challenge welfare-for-Norplant deals, the consensus of opinion evident in the derision and pathologization of youth and the disabled, Planned Parenthood's embrace of population control tactics, all underscore the simple fact that liberalism is not the polar opposite of conservatism.

Liberalism's investment in a body-by-body approach to economic inequity—an outlook that may align it more closely with the right wing than the left (despite the media's insistence that liberalism is the left)—assured, and continues to assure, its allegiance to eugenics. The history of eugenics is one of both overlapping and strategic affinities that contest preconceived, static notions of "left" and "right." Clearly, any project seeking to shatter the appeal of eugenics must call liberals and conservatives to task.

A close reading of U.S. eugenics brings us back to Balibar's estimation of national purification, a process through which the nation must
"isolate within its bosom, before eliminating or expelling them, the ‘false,’ ‘exogenous,’ ‘crossbred,’ ‘cosmopolitan’ elements.” To these self-regulating efforts, eugenics brought avowals of hereditary superiority and biological fatalism, claims perfectly suited to political and cultural backlash against immigration, against increasing gay and lesbian visibility, against demands for civil rights and economic justice. A mere thirty years after Brown v. Board of Education, The Bell Curve informed us that affirmative action is a lost cause because African-Americans are genetically predisposed to intellectual inferiority. After two and a half decades of feminist theorists and activists struggling to force a sense of social and political culpability into the dialogue around rape and battering (indeed, struggling to get the very words “rape” and “battering” circulated), we saw the press jumping to print spurious research findings suggesting that male aggression is not socially constructed at all, but genetically determined. All this has a potentially depoliticizing effect, as attempts to dismantle injustice are neutralized by unproven genetic hypotheses that naturalize disparity and suggest the biological futility of resistance.

A credible threat to the latest eugenics revival will only materialize if its various outcroppings are juxtaposed and viewed as mutually reinforcing. The preceding pages attempted such a decompartmentalization of what are frequently held to be isolated assaults, waged on the basis of race, gender, class, disability, immigration status, and/or sexuality. There are, of course, things missing from this list, critical issues in desperate need of attention: the gene mapping of the Human Genome Project; the “genetic prospecting” of seven hundred indigenous groups worldwide by the Human Genome Diversity Project; the harvesting, cloning, and patenting of genes from the peoples of Panama, Micronesia, the Solomon Islands, New Guinea, and East China by U.S. scientists; the implementation of probation-for-castration plea bargains; the ultimatums issued to women in industry to accept sterilization or face demotion; the search for a breast cancer gene and the absolute refusal to adequately address environmental suspects. Certainly, my own subject position influenced my decisions on what to include, though my political convictions cause me to dwell on what I know to be imperative but that which, for lack of space and time, remains absent. It is my hope that even what is missing will be illuminated in part by what is here.
Whatever guise eugenics arrives in, whatever promises its adherents make, its agenda is eerily transparent. It proffers “scientifically” sustained scapegoating and calls it sound public policy; it defends a violent status quo as a viable political strategy. There is no mystery to seeing through this subterfuge. All we have to do is ask ourselves, “Whose bodies will bear the brunt of the resulting enactments? Who has paid, and who will continue to pay, the physical and political consequences of these configurations?” Over a hundred years into eugenics practice, the answers remain unchanged. We ignore them at our own peril.