

Jazmin Matney
Racial Injustices Essay
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The American Eugenics Movement; The Blight on America's History

There are numerous racial injustices that have occurred in America, various that minority groups combat with on a daily basis. However, one of the most heinous of these atrocities was the American Eugenics Movement. Not only did the American Eugenics Movement inspire Hitler's ethnic cleansing of Europe, it instigated the consistent medical mistrust fostered into minority groups. The American Eugenics Movement forcibly sterilized thousands of minority women, essentially creating massive disruption within their life all in the name of facilitating a "White" or "Pure" America. It can be established that, without a doubt, the American Eugenics Movement is one of the preeminent examples of racial injustice in America, directly against American citizens; this is supported by the history of the movement, the personal experiences, and the long-term consequences of the American Eugenics Movement.

The Eugenics Movement started in the late nineteenth century. However, truthfully, it can be proved that the Eugenics Movement had started before the term "Eugenics" came into existence. According to a research paper written by Willow S. Clouse, entitled "The Forced Sterilization of Black Women as Reproductive Injustice", the paper states that Black women during the emancipation period were forcibly sterilized as retaliation from their white counterparts after no longer being deemed "valuable" for producing labor. Additionally, Female slaves before this time period were not 'advertised' in the way as male slaves, instead, they were labeled as cattle to fuel the southern economy and produce domestic labor for plantations. Female slaves were often sexually assaulted and had no say in their partners. Hence, after slavery was outlawed, medical practitioners and former slave owners began searching for ways to stop "impure" reproduction. Francis Galton coined the term "Eugenics" in support of marriages that were deemed "fit" by his standards. The term was later used to kickstart the Eugenics Movement in order to promote the improvement of the human race through various forms of governmental intervention. The idea of facilitating a more "pure" human race was widely upheld by government officials, universities and researchers. As a result, nearly 150,000 women (mainly poor African-American women) were sterilized without their consent, as stated in a biology article entitled "U.S. Scientists' Role in the Eugenics Movement (1907–1939): A Contemporary Biologist's Perspective". "There were four main contributors to the Eugenics Movement: Charles B. Davenport, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, H.H. Laughlin, and Marget Sanger." These four people not only used their platforms as researchers and medical practitioners to garner support for the Eugenics Movement, but also consistently supported the use of government incentives to control minority reproductive rights. Furthermore, books were published and held as standard for sterilization as well as government acts. The most prevalent government established law was Virginia's Eugenic Sterilization Act of 1924 which allowed for Virginia state institutions to operate to prevent conception of "genetically inferior children". This was a pivotal stepping stone for more than thirty U.S states to enact similar laws. Yet again,

these legislations targeted only minority groups and on some occasions people with disabilities. Effectively establishing that the American Eugenics Movement was cataphoric racial injustices against marginalized groups of people.

As we know, during the movement, women were sterilized without their consent. It would typically happen during medical procedures where patients would be told it was absolutely vital to have some form of surgery in order to be rid of their "illness"(I place heavy emphasis on illness because majority of the time the "illness" in question was never true), medical practitioners would then sterilize women and men without their knowledge. Moreover, there are countless victims of the eugenics movement and a plethora of stories that deserved to be discussed instead of fabricated by deceit, ill-intention, and bias by the government and officials who would rather preserve their name. The people who have gone through forced sterilizations are more than victims and deserve to have their stories told in order to stop history from repeating itself. So, I have decided to include one of the most prevalent accounts followed by an account that is hardly acknowledged. Elaine Riddick, a African American women, was fourteen years old when she was kidnapped and raped by her neighbor. Riddick later gave birth to her only child at a North Carolina hospital where they performed a sterilization procedure immediately after giving birth. It wasn't until Riddicks first marriage in her attempt to have children where she discovered her fallopian tubes were "Butchered". The state eugenics board(composed of five people) had recommended Riddick to be sterilized because she was supposedly promiscuous and feebleminded. Riddick states, In her interview with Black Woman For Wellness, "I was raped by a perpetrator [who was never charged] and then I was raped by the state of North Carolina. They took something from me both times," she said. "The state of North Carolina, they took something from me both times," she said. "The state of North Carolina, they took something so dearly from me..." Elaine Riddick was not the first and certainly not the last minority victim to experience forced sterilization. The Relf Sisters, twelve-year-old Minnie Lee Relf and fourteen-year-old Mary Alice Relf, were two African American sisters residing in Alabama at the time of their coerced sterilization. As stated in the thesis of Paola Alonso entitled "Autonomy Revoked: The Forced Sterilization of Women of Color in 20th Century America", it states, "The girls' mother, Minnie Relf, was illiterate and believed she was authorizing birth control shots for her daughters when she signed "X" on a surgical consent form brought to Relf's apartment by two nurses from the local family planning Clinic." There was a long strenuous list of court cases that followed to provide justice for the Relfs that uncovered how sterilization was abused and funded by federal governments.

The American Eugenics Movement resulted in a negative rippling effect on ethnic groups. One of these effects being distrust in the government. Many minorities are taught that the government is not a reliable source and does not care for their well-being or improvement. The eugenics movement also resulted in medical mistrust, marginalized groups began to believe that medical partners could not be trusted because of their continuous abuse of power and racist doctrines. Finally, the eugenics movement resulted in minorities developing a skewed perspective of their safety in America. Minorities could hardly rely on law enforcement to take action when they were harmed and constantly had to be hyper aware of their surroundings, the eugenics program solidified this idea that nowhere was safe. Consequently, the eugenics program also reinforced racism, classism and ableism against the American population as well

as the formation of organizations that had foundations on racism and extremist groups. The most well known being Margaret Sanger and Planned Parenthood. Margaret Sanger was one of the leaders of the Birth Control Movement, however, she had heavy affiliation with Neo-Malthusian and eugenic groups. These groups believed that poverty and race resulted in overpopulation. While Sanger is not the first to have radical, unpractical, and inherently racist beliefs in regards to the eugenics movement; She is one of the most prolific due to her association with the induction of Planned Parenthood.

In conclusion, it is evident that the American Eugenics Movement was one of many racial injustices in American society and has created a cascading effect of inequalities and disadvantages against ethnic communities. The eugenics movement resulted in forced sterilizations of minorities, developed mistrust in the American government, and resulted in Hitler's inspirations for European ethnic cleansing. It is inherently clear that the American Eugenic Movement has had a substantial impact and needs to be addressed as one of the greatest Racial Injustices against African-Americans. I believe that in order to fully move on from that grasp of forced sterilization and the eugenic mindset in America we would have to come together collectively and reorganize our perceptions of one another: In summary we need to completely stop creating polarized groups that are only synthesized through stereotypes and fears. While this is idealistic, I believe that is possible as long as we come together it is possible.

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