

**UNITED STATES  
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MEMORIAL  
MUSEUM**

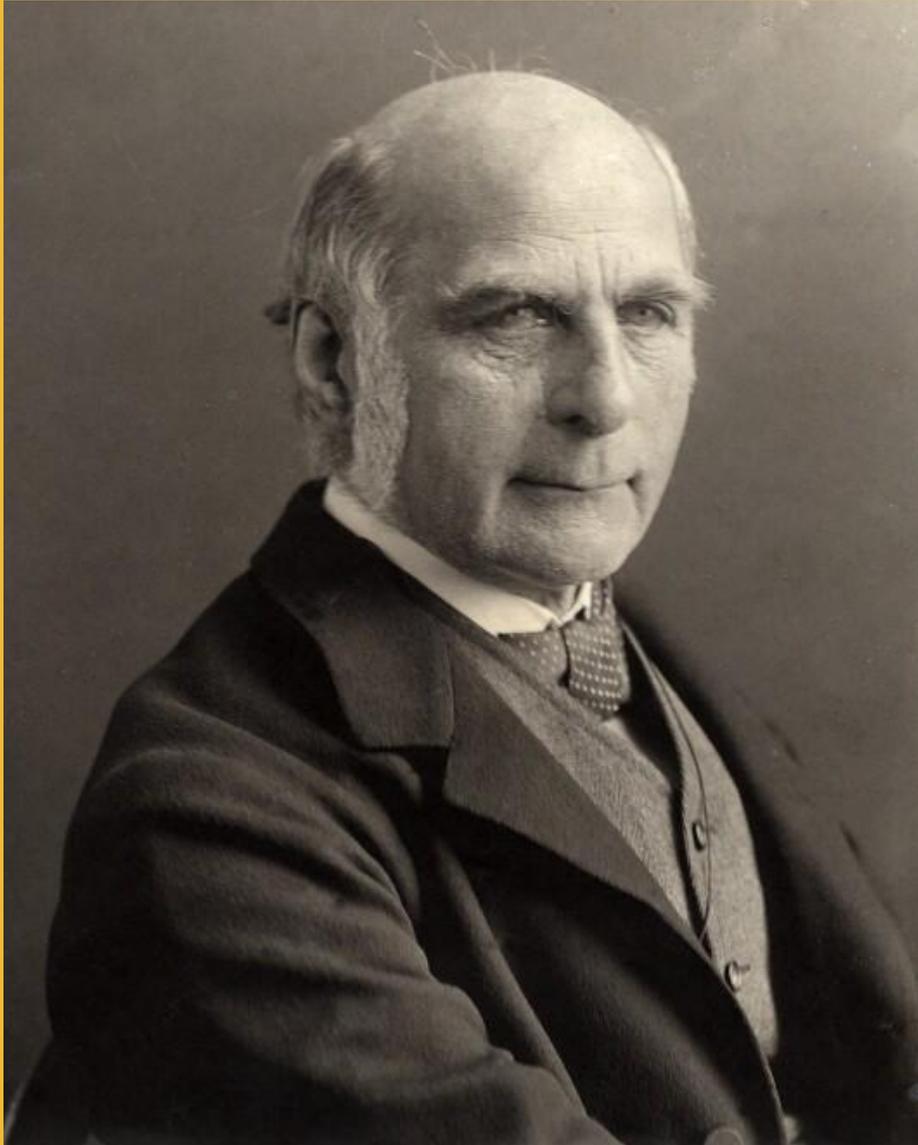
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# EUGENICS

# Eugenics:

- The false belief, based in discredited science, that the human population can “improve” with selective breeding. This belief led to laws legalizing the forced sterilization of people deemed racially and genetically “inferior” so they could not have children.
- In Germany, eugenics was also called “racial hygiene.”



**Sir Francis Galton, a British scientist, created the term “eugenics” in 1883. His ideas, which linked human heredity to moral and social issues, quickly became popular in northern and western Europe, and in the United States.**

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# A DECADE *of* PROGRESS IN EUGENICS

Scientific Papers *of the*  
Third International Congress of Eugenics  
*held at*

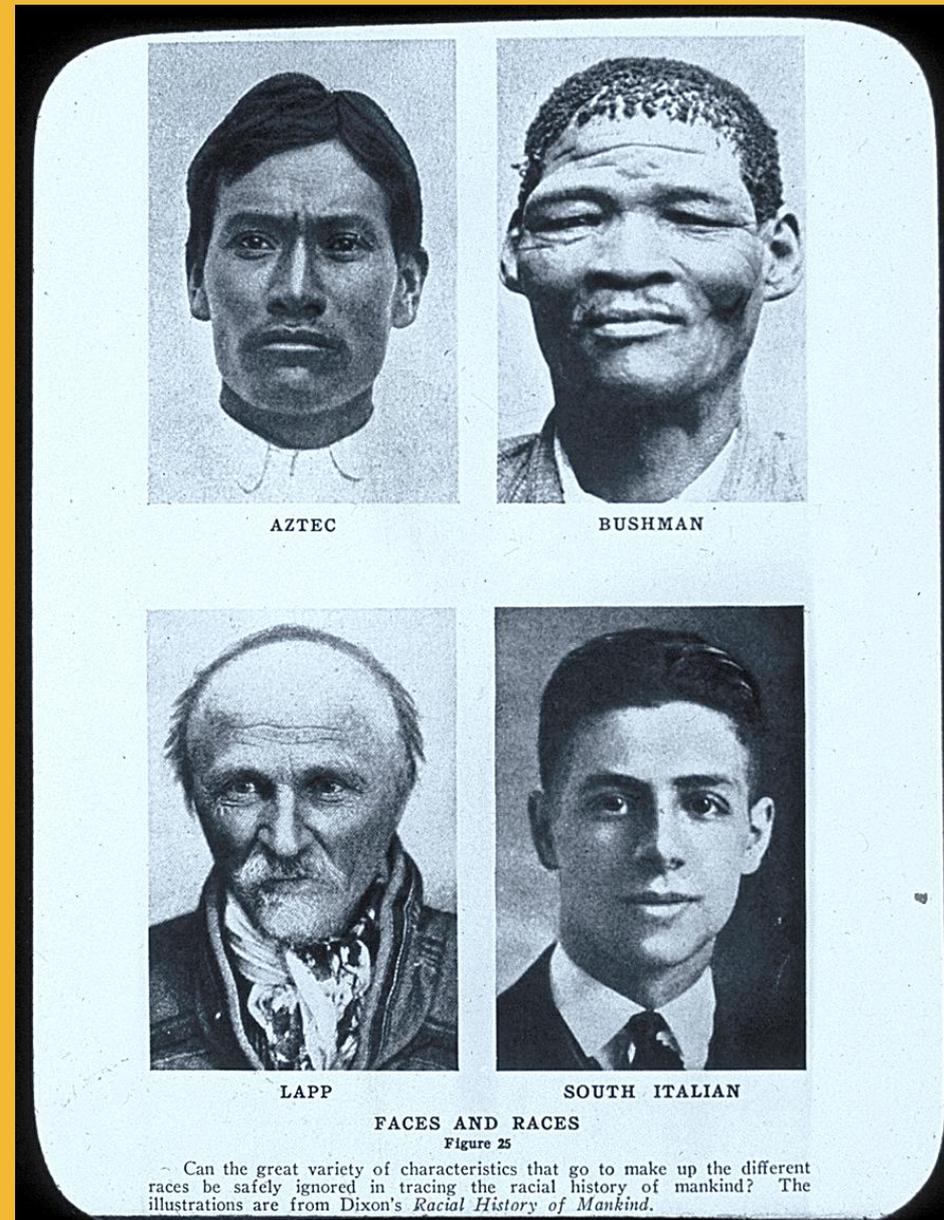
American Museum of Natural History  
New York, August 21-23, 1932



**Scientists from all over the world gathered for international conferences to discuss eugenics. Colleges and universities taught the theory of eugenics as if it was a proven fact.**

Eugenicists argued that where you were born, your race, and who your parents were determined what kind of person you were going to become.

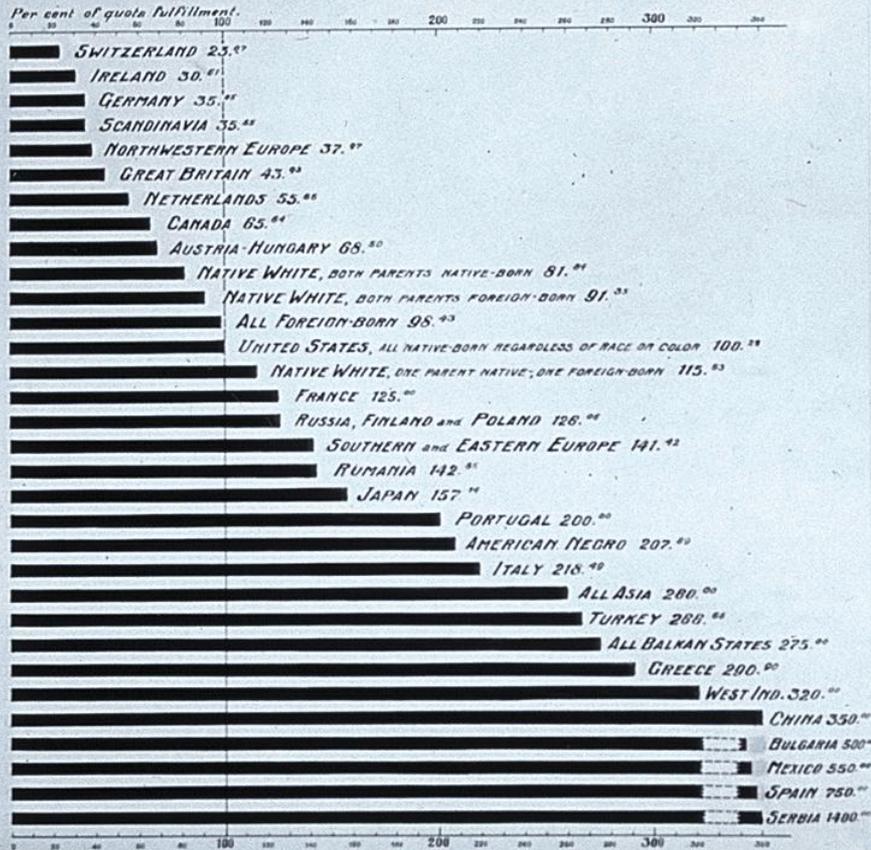
They believed they could predict whether you would become a criminal, or if you were going to be a “burden on society.”



*Relative Social Inadequacy of the Several Nativity Groups and Immigrant Races in the United States.*

**CRIME.**

*Based upon an analysis of the population of 155 state and federal custodial institutions.*



**Explanation.**

1. Institutional quota is determined by apportioning numbers corresponding to the whole institutional population, found by special useful census survey, among the several nativity groups and alien races according to their relative numbers found in the whole population of the United States by the Census of 1910.

2. The ratio or quota fulfillment for each nativity group or race is found by dividing the actual number of institutional inmates

of the particular group or race by the quota allotted to the particular group or race.

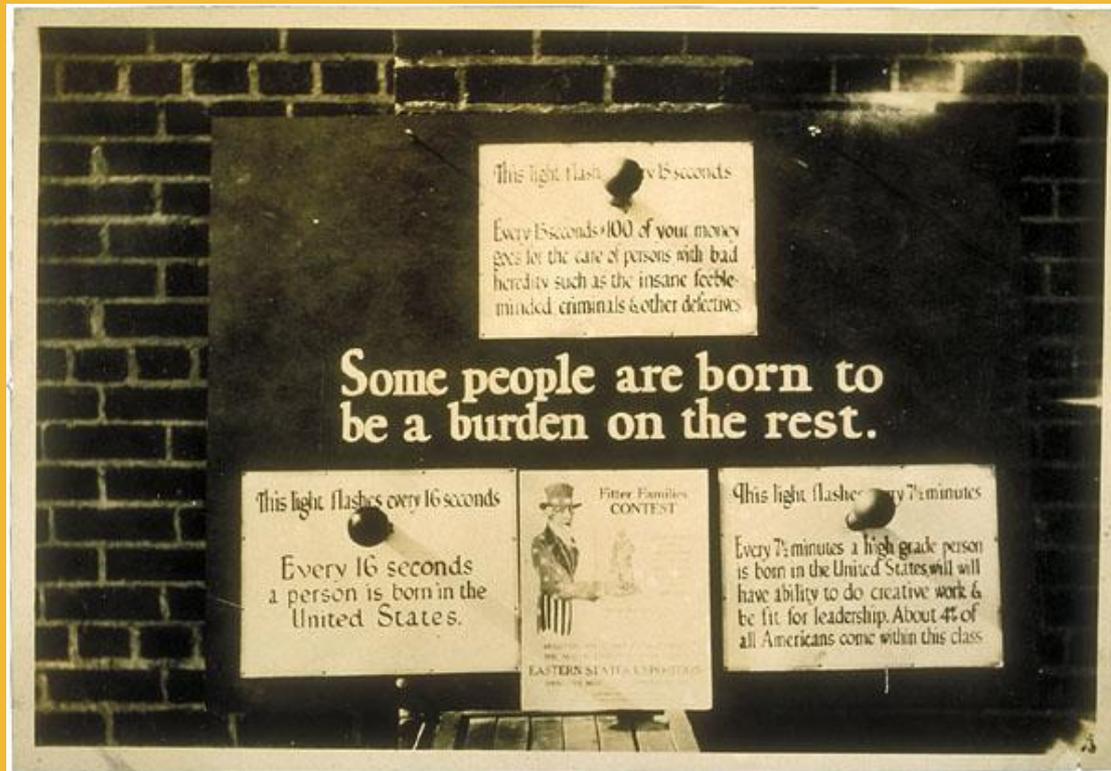
3. Thus, if the percent or quota fulfillment is greater than 100, the particular group or race has exceeded its quota in supplying social inadequates in state and federal institutions in the United States. If it is less than 100, the particular quota lacks fulfillment by such proportion as the particular percent is less than 100.

Eugenicists argued that criminal behavior was linked to genetics and race. This chart supposedly measured the “criminality” of various “races.”

In reality, there is no biological link between genetics and morality, or between race and criminality.

In the United States, organizations held “Fitter Family” contests at state fairs, awarding families who supposedly had “superior” genes.

This display warned fair-goers that people with “inferior” genes would become financial and genetic burdens on the country.



**Eugenicists argued that they were not racist and that their arguments were based in measurable science.**

**In the United States, eugenics led to:**

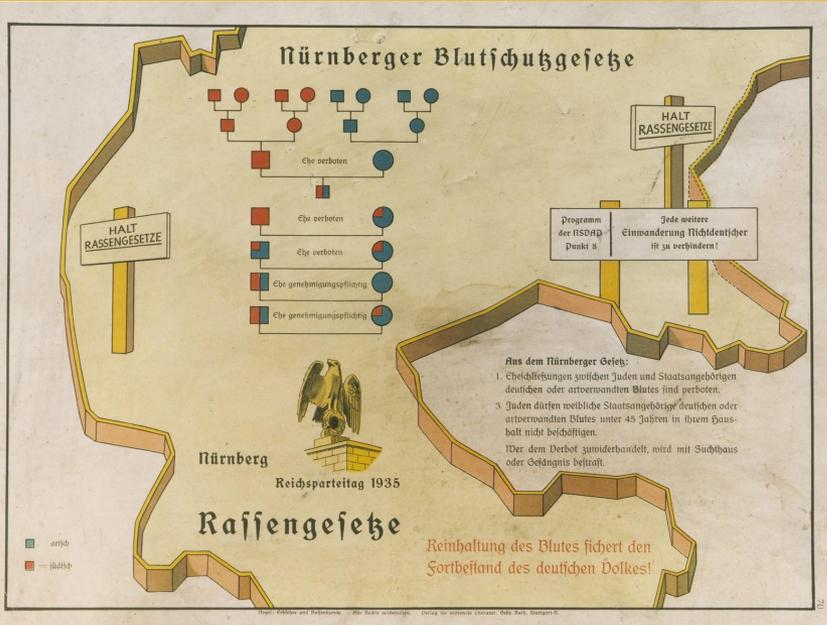
- **new immigration laws limiting immigration and giving priority to countries with “good” immigrants**
- **laws forbidding interracial marriage**
- **laws allowing doctors to forcibly sterilize people deemed genetically “unfit” to have children**

**Some of these laws were in place for decades. Hundreds of thousands of people were affected by them.**

In Nazi Germany, lawmakers and scientists quickly used the already-popular theories of eugenics (or “racial hygiene”) to advance Nazi racial goals.

The Nazis classified Jews as a separate, inferior race, and outlawed “interracial” relationships. They claimed this was necessary for Germany to prosper.

This poster is subtitled “Maintaining the purity of blood insures the survival of the German people.”





- **After the Holocaust, eugenics was discredited.**
- **In 2000, scientists announced that they had mapped the human genome. They discovered that human beings are genetically 99.8% identical.**
- **Eugenics is false. No human beings are genetically superior or inferior.**
- **The idea that “races” are genetically different is also false. There is often a greater genetic difference between individuals within a “race” than between people of different “races.”**