

Feeble Science: Letchworth Village and Eugenics

By Rebecca Woolsey

It is hard to believe that the work of four men could have caused so much illogical injustice and inhumanity, but when it comes to the movement known as eugenics, this surely was the case. Three of these men built the foundation, not knowing that their scientific achievements would breed what they eventually did. The other man assisted in the spread of the movement. With the 1859 publication of Charles Darwin's, The Origins of Species, English philosopher Herbert Spencer's suggestion that heredity was under the control of "physiological units," and Gregor Mendel's work concerning the hereditary patterns among wrinkled and smooth peas, the pseudoscience of eugenics was forming. In 1868, Darwin suggested the idea that "the units throw off minute granules which are dispersed throughout the entire system..."¹ Gregor Mendel's early experiments with peas recorded certain governable inheritable traits, he called them "dominant" and "recessive".² These could be expressed mathematically or represented in heredity charts,

¹ Lynn Gamwell and Nancy Tomes, *Madness in America: Cultural and Medical Perceptions of Mental Illness Before 1914* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), 121

² Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics And America's Campaign To Create a Master Race* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2003), 26

linking their paths.³ Darwin was speaking of genes and with this and Mendel's postulations, the genetic base of mankind was thrown into the spotlight. Years Later, a man named Charles Davenport would sound the trumpet, launching the movement of eugenics forward. Darwin's theories were by some, applied to the realm of society and individuals, thus, Social Darwinism became a philosophy among scientists and intellectuals.

Social Darwinism as it is called among its supporters, misapplies Darwin's theories. It encompasses social planning, and biology and misapplies Darwin's thoughts on evolution. Darwin himself in fact never used the term. An article reconsidering Darwin's ideas regarding evolution and natural selection states that Darwin's claims suggest that only "socially organizing societies" can survive through cooperation.⁴ Some supporters of Darwin's theory of evolution have misapplied the biological principles of natural selection -- "survival of the fittest" -- to the social, political, and economic realms.

The idea of "Social Darwinism" has often been used as a general term for any evolutionary argument about the biological basis of human differences. Drawing on Social Darwinism, supporters of the 20th-century eugenics movement sought to improve the human genetic stock, much as farmers do in agriculture. This parallel is made abundantly clear when the existence of publications such as the *American Breeders* magazine, a magazine with contents including not only such things as pollen sterility in grapes but, articles on eugenics.⁵ These ideologies were blended together and a new

³ Black, *War Against the Weak*, 26

⁴ Bill Ross, "Darwin Reconsidered", (Ontario, Canada, accessed April 12,2007), available from <http://www.strike-the-root.com/62/ross/ross1.html>

⁵ Table of Contents, *The Journal of Heredity* (formerly the *American Breeders magazine*), Volume VI, No. 6, June, 1915

ideology was created which sought to improve the human race. Eugenics was here. In the words of Francis J. Galton, Darwin's cousin, eugenics was, "the study of all agencies under social control which can improve or impair the racial quality of future generations." The "degenerates", were a plague upon society. At an American Breeders Association conference on 1911, a list categorizing those who were socially "unfit" was made. The "feeble-minded" or mentally retarded, paupers, alcoholics, criminals of all sorts, down to evaders of fines, prostitutes, epileptics, the insane, the physically weak, those predisposed to specific diseases, the deformed, and the blind, deaf and⁶ mute were among those identified as "unfit". A report to the American Breeders Society extolled the need for public awareness as to the cost of caring for such people. The annual expenditures for the destitute, defective and criminal were near \$100 million.⁷

Scientists and intellectuals from such institutions as, UC Berkeley, Columbia University, University of Chicago and the National Institute of Mental Health, contended that with new knowledge arising regarding human development and genetic heredity, the production of children by families likely to produce degenerates should cease without delay. The Journal of Heredity (formerly the American Breeders Magazine) states, "The amount of feeble-mindedness in the community is much larger than anyone suspects...somewhere between 300,000 and 400,000.

Eugenics can be divided into two schools of thought, Positive and Negative. Positive eugenics included such things as Better Babies contests and Fitter Families Contests. Better Babies contests often amounting to what could be considered a dog show. Babies were judged in much the same way, physical prodding, measurements and

⁶ Black, *War Against The Weak*, 58

⁷ Black, *War Against the Weak*, 39

evaluation based on the ideals of what a “perfect” human specimen was. Fitter Families contests named an “average family” and a “best couple”, families that would produce exceptional “fit” offspring. But good offences require good defenses, hence the need for a counter movement.

Negative eugenics was the discouragement of the breeding of the “unfit”, and the effort to lessen the propagation of degenerates. Supposedly, “among morons the taint is more likely to spread than not.”⁸ Negative eugenics included many policies and programs, such as segregation of the “unfit” away from the rest of society, in institutions or jails. It also included genetic screening and charting, immigration control (many eugenicists believed that immigrants from certain countries were racially inferior), marriage restrictions, compulsory sterilization by vasectomy or tubal ligation, forced abortions, the promotion of differential birthrates and even euthanasia. With these ideas in place, promulgation was the next step and was achieved by the integration of these principles into the scientific community. The institutions housing the undesirables of the day were the ideal storehouses of the genetically unfit and became the places of study for those in the field of eugenics.

In 1909 the National Committee for Mental Hygiene brought about serious reform of mental institutions and opted for some to become “cottage hospitals.”⁹ Letchworth Village Institution was one example of this. Situated in the rolling hills of Theills, New York, Letchworth’s creators believed that living in the country and working the land was

⁸ J. Hered, “Feeble-mindedness”, *The Journal of Heredity*, Vol. 4, No. 6 (June 1915) 32

⁹ Ibid.

the ideal situation for those deemed defective.¹⁰ But just what did that mean, “defective”? Well, in looking at Letchworth’s population, one sees that this label was widely used to describe and commit many different types of people to the institution.

Residents at Letchworth included people with Down’s Syndrome, or mongoloids as they were called at the time, dwarves, albino’s, epileptics, delinquents, people suffering from a goiter, microencephaly, (a neurological disorder in which the circumference of the head is significantly smaller than average) and flaring ears, to name a few.¹¹ The population of Letchworth by such defectives points directly to the fact that it was influenced by the views of Eugenicists. They believed that such disabilities were intrinsically linked with both feeble-mindedness and poverty and sought to not only prove this but to eradicate such traits among the American population. The lame, insane, and deformed were lumped together with the troubled, delinquent, and unfortunate to create a huge class of people deemed defective or unfit.¹²

The article titled, Letchworth Village: The newest State Institution for the Care of the Feeble-minded and Epileptic, lays out the purposes and set up of the institution. This article appeared as a sort of advertisement for the institution in a journal called *The Survey*, which was nearly two thousand pages thick and was distributed to doctors, schools, universities and institutions. The village would provide a farm life and a meaningful existence for residents.

¹⁰ Charles S. Little, M.D., “Letchworth Village: The Newest State Institution For The Feeble-minded and Epileptic”, *The Survey*, March 1912; Accessed January 12, 2007; Available from <http://www.eugenicsarchive.org>

¹¹ Letchworth Village “Freak Show”, 3rd International Eugenics Conference (The Harry H. Laughlin Papers, Truman State University, Photographic, Blk Photo 2,32, 1932, accessed, February 22, 2007); available from http://www.eugenicsarchive.org/eugenics/view_image.pl?id=1087

¹² Black, *War Against the Weak*, 53

“Letchworth Village: The Newest State Institution for the Feeble-minded and Epileptic” demonstrates that Letchworth Village was an institution that was under the influence of the views of mental healthcare that existed during the turn of the century and functioned as a eugenic institution that upheld the ideals of the movement and while the article paints the picture of a comfortable and humane refuge for the ill and infirm, it proved to be anything but comfortable or humane.

Letchworth Village opened in 1909¹³. Before this time, family care and the care of defectives in almshouses predominated. The caregivers were influenced by the Calvinistic view that illness resulted from sin. Then came the era of the asylum, when the number of institutions housing such people rose steeply.

In turn of the century America, asylums were filled with people left uncured by the treatments of the day, most notably, the moral treatment.¹⁴ Moral treatment held with it the promise of possible cure for those deemed defective. Moral treatment was based on humane psychosocial care and moral discipline and was marked by a daily schedule of work and leisure activities and did not include biomedical methods.¹⁵ Moral therapy provided a firm routine of work and rest. Supporters of the so-called moral treatment believed the causes and solutions of insanity rested in society not scientific research.¹⁶ They desired the segregation of the unfit into secluded communities.

¹³ Abandoned But Not Forgotten, “Letchworth Village History” Available from, http://www.abandonedbutnotforgotten.com/letchworth_village_history.htm

¹⁴ Lynn Gamwell and Nancy Tomes, *Madness in America*, 121

¹⁵ L M Dunkel, “Moral and humane: patients' lives in early nineteenth-century American mental hospitals.” (Bull Med Library Assoc. 1983 July; 71(3): 274–281. Accessed April 17,2007) Available from, <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=22719>

¹⁶Ibid.

Growing interest in heredity as a factor in mental illness was prompted by a disenchantment with asylum practices of moral treatment. Reformers pressed for large, stripped down hospitals for chronic cases, such as Willard asylum for the insane in upstate New York. Such places would have been largely custodial, meaning that they opted for the use of restraints, straitjackets, confinement, seclusion and sedation using such drugs as chloral hydrate.¹⁷ Others argued for a cottage or village like atmosphere, and while most state institutions opted for the stripped down version of custodial or jail-like institutions, some did embrace the village construct.

The village would provide a farm life and a meaningful existence for residents. It was the first completely inclusive institution with its own power and water supply and was supported by the inmates.¹⁸ The article states that Letchworth Village institution is situated in the town of Haverstraw, three miles back from the west side of the Hudson river and is comprised of about 2,000 acres of countryside. The land is bordered by farms, valleys and hills and cut in half by the Minnisceongo Creek. The residents of Letchworth were truly cut off from the rest of society and society from them, as was the preferred situation for the mentally ill and handicapped.¹⁹

The article, “Letchworth Village: The Newest State Institution for the Feeble-minded and Epileptic” illustrates that Letchworth Institution functioned as an institution under the influence of the principles of Eugenics. The institution adhered to the tenets of segregation, classification and research and collaborated with Eugenic organizations.

¹⁷ Lynn Gamwell and Nancy Tomes, *Madness in America*, 122

¹⁸ Abandoned But Not Forgotten, “Letchworth Village History” Available from, http://www.abandonedbutnotforgotten.com/letchworth_village_history.htm

¹⁹ Lynn Gamwell and Nancy Tomes, *Madness in America*, 125

The article states, “Several principles laid down in the beginning have been rigidly adhered to.”²⁰ The main principle, according to the article, being segregation of the inmates. Firstly, a line of segregation was to be firmly drawn between the sexes.²¹ Segregation of the feebleminded throughout the reproductive period was thought to be a costly alternative to mass compulsory sterilization or asexualization by eugenicists,²² many of whom strongly advocated the latter along with incarceration and marriage restriction.²³ The eugenic movement sought these measures as a way to prevent the procreation of people deemed inferior. At Letchworth, segregation was the law of the land. Dormitories for girls were separated from those of boys by a stream running through the grounds and individual dormitories spaced at least two hundred feet apart, that there would be separation of the various grades of inmates as well.²⁴ The fact that segregation was such a pillar of this institution is the first sign that eugenic ideals were behind the administration of Letchworth.

Charles Davenport, the stated leader of America’s eugenic campaign²⁵, laid out the principles of eugenics, which included the solutions of sterilization and segregation, in his textbook, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics*. This textbook, published just one year before the article, “Letchworth Village: The Newest State Institution for the Feeble-minded and Epileptic”, went to print. This textbook was widely distributed and methodically integrated into university courses, becoming accepted dogma in the

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Charles Benedict Davenport, *Heredity In Relation to Eugenics*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911) 255-259

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Charles S. Little, M.D., “Letchworth Village”

²⁵ Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak*, 33

scientific community.²⁶ Charles S. Little, superintendent and author of the Letchworth article no doubt came into contact with the book and integrated its principles into the formation of the institution, Davenport's textbook having been entrenched in university curriculum at some forty- four institutions of higher learning by 1914²⁷, and widely read among the scientific community.

Letchworth Institution had planned six separate groups, each so far removed from the others that they could be considered a small institution in itself.²⁸ Each group consisted of a certain number of dormitories, which could accommodate up to seventy inmates. A kitchen and dining hall were situated in the center of each group of buildings. This central building served as a gymnasium, dance hall and a site for Sunday school.²⁹ A doctor's house and an attendant's house were located nearby. Other buildings on the premises included an administration group consisting of office buildings, homes for men and women officers, a library and a fire station. A tuberculosis hospital was tucked away near the edge of the grounds. In the main tract of buildings were a laundry, bakery, refrigeration building, a storehouse and clubhouses for the social purposes of the officers. Hospitals for acute cases and a laboratory for scientific purposes were also in this area. But, segregation was not only utilized to separate the sexes, it was also used to separate individuals among the sexes, the grades.

When reading the article the language distinctly illustrates that the grading of individuals according to the principles of eugenics did indeed commence at the Letchworth Institution. This system of grading stands as further proof that eugenics was

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ ²⁸ Charles S. Little, M.D., "Letchworth Village"

²⁹ Ibid.

alive and active at Letchworth. Eugenicists graded and labeled individuals according to their deformity and or mental defect. Davenport's textbook speaks of "general mental ability" and offers a system of grading individuals based on scores of the Binet tests. The series of tests were designed to gauge,

"Mental ability by gauging a variety of capacities such as general information, ability to count and to repeat phrases, to recognize names and describe common things and to make fine sense discriminations. Such tests show that there are all grades of mental ability."³⁰

Davenport's system of grades is exhibited in many articles and books from the time. At the lowest extreme is the "idiot". Idiots had a mental age of three and under and struggled with simple self-preservation. Next, came the imbeciles, low, medium and high grade, whose struggles were, simple menial work, simple manual work and complex manual work, respectively. The mental developmental ages of imbeciles were from four to ten years in age. Lastly came the "moron", whose mental age was from ten to twelve. Such individuals had as their struggles work that required reason or judgment.³¹ At Letchworth there were three groups for each sex; one for the "young and improvable";

³⁰ Charles Benedict Davenport, *Heredity In Relation to Eugenics*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911) 65-66

³¹ "Exhibit of work and educational campaign for juvenile defectives", (American philosophical Society, ERO, MSC77, ser1, box35: Trait Files. Accessed January 25, 2007), available from http://www.eugenicsarchives.org/eugenics/image_header.pl?id=384&printable=1&detail
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one for the “middle-aged and industrious”; and one for the “infirm and helpless”.³²

Inmates were classified in the observation building before being transferred to the various sub-groups.³³

“Letchworth Village” states that it will record eugenic research to share with the eugenic community once classified, detailed family histories were taken. The Eugenics Records Office (ERO) at Cold Springs Harbor in New York called for all institutions that cared for the defective to conduct detailed family histories, or pedigrees, in order to further their genetic research into the heritability of illnesses. The ERO was the central bureau for the study of eugenics and heritability. It was the storehouse for the family histories of defective and exceptional individuals alike and Letchworth’s defectives were no exception. The heredity chart of one of Letchworth’s inmates, published in the first annual report of Letchworth Village is nothing if not detailed.

Emma W.’s family record reads, “mother, two brothers and a sister feeble-minded; mother’s father feeble-minded and mother’s mother tuberculosis; father, drunken epileptic.”³⁴ The report also labels, aunts, uncles and all subsequent offspring as mental defectives. It is not known whether this specific report was taken by a staff member at Letchworth or by a field worker from the ERO, but both are possible. The ERO and Letchworth often worked together to gather such valuable information. The 1921 training class of the ERO studied the inmates of Letchworth for over a month. In this

³² Charles S. Little, M.D., “Letchworth Village”

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ “The Burden of the Feeble-minded”, (American Philosophical Society, ERO, MSC77, Ser1, Box35: Trait Files. 1913, accessed February 16, 2007) available from www.eugenicsarchive.org/eugenics/topics_fs.pl?theme=5&search=letchworth%20village&matches=2422,2420,1875

instance and others, not only pedigrees but also photos were taken and medical examinations were performed.³⁵

The article calls the task of research “the laboratory purpose”. The language evokes the feeling of fear that characterizes eugenicist’s thoughts on defect,

“When we realize that our institutions are filled with groups of from four to six children from single families which extend beyond the reach of obtainable family histories, we see that scientific study becomes imperative.”

Eugenicists were convinced that, left alone, the defects they saw as the scourge of society, would become dominant traits among Americans.

Much research was conducted at Letchworth Village, another indicator that eugenic principles were rampant at this institution. One of the head researchers, Dr. George Jervis conducted research on both mental deficiency and early senility in mongoloid idiocy and is credited with the discovery of the causes of Phenylketonuria, a form of mental retardation.³⁶ But not all research that commenced at Letchworth was focused on the institutions patients; in fact, the residents were the lab rats on which the first live polio vaccine was tested by Dr. Hilary Koprowski in 1950 and were the subjects on whom some of the first flu vaccines were tested.³⁷

³⁵ "Clinical and Field Studies of the 1921 Training Class," Eugenics Record Office, Eugenic News (vol. 6) available from <http://www.eugenicsarchive.org>

³⁶ Abandoned But Not Forgotten, “Letchworth Village History” Available from, http://www.abandonedbutnotforgotten.com/letchworth_village_history.htm

³⁷ Sanofi-Aventis Group, “Polio Eradication”. Available from, <http://www.polio.info/polioeradication/front/index.jsp?codeRubrique=34&lang=EN&siteCode=POLIO>

“Letchworth Village” paints the picture of an institution whose residents led happy and productive lives. Surrounded by idyllic countryside scattered with fruit trees and streams, residents were given “all the comforts of the ordinary home.”³⁸ Dormitories had their own playgrounds and picnic areas. Holidays and birthdays were celebrated according to the article. Inmates would be schooled and trained in self-help, providing them with the mental and manual discipline needed to enforce their enjoyment.³⁹ According to the article, the training of the lower grades of feeble-minded and epileptic individuals would consist of a “variety of gymnastic exercises,” with a routine of work and play designed to take up all waking hours. The word “gymnastics” evokes images of children playing on jungle gyms and doing cartwheels, but this was not what actually came to pass for the residents of Letchworth Institution. Conditions within Letchworth were much like those of other institutions at the time.

Professor emeritus of human development at Brandeis University, Gunnar Dybwad, Ph.D., recounted his experience as a student studying juvenile delinquency at Letchworth Village in 1938 and illustrated a very different picture of life for Letchworth’s inmates. Dormitories that were to house only seventy people were crowded with “100 beds, with 125 children sleeping in them”; in other dorms, there were no beds at all. In his early days as a student at Letchworth, Dybwad saw, “an incontinent man in a small room lying in a box of sawdust.”⁴⁰ Conditions like this and worse were present in

³⁸ Charles S. Little, M.D., “Letchworth Village”

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Gunnar Dybwad, Ph.D., “From Feeble-mindedness to Self-Advocacy: A Half century of Growth and Self-Fulfillment” (Presented at the 118th Annual Meeting of the American Association on Mental Retardation, June 2, 1994, accessed February 25, 2007) Available from <http://www.mncdd.org/parallels2/pdf/88-QOC-HDT.pdf>

many of the institutions of the day. One, an institution for the feeble-minded in Lincoln, Illinois had the same overcrowded conditions and even allowed for the passive euthanasia of its inmates. Windows were left open and unscreened, Lincoln staff consciously permitted infecting flies from toilets and garbage to swarm around patients.⁴¹ It is not unreasonable to assume that in such overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions as were present at Letchworth that inmates there were also at risk of infection.

But, it seems that in the cases of institutional deaths, the cause was often overmedicating. The Rockland county medical examiner, Frederick T. Zugibe, investigated some 110 cases of death at Letchworth Village in 1978. Dr. Zugibe, despite relentless political pressures including harassment, character assassination, and false accusations, asserted that of the 110 deaths he investigated at Letchworth and 93 cases investigated at nearby Rockland State Hospital, more than 30 percent of deaths were due to aspiration brought on by psychotropic and sedative drugs.⁴² The patients were given high doses of sedating medication and then choked on, most likely, their own vomit. Perhaps this was Letchworth's own brand of eugenic passive euthanasia.

As for the supposed schooling of the residents of Letchworth Village, Dybwad offers a comparative glance. Only a small number of children actually went to school the rest, "marched every morning and afternoon with hoes and other farm implements for a full day of slave labor on the institutional farm."⁴³ Given that during the years between

⁴¹ Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak*, 254-256

⁴² Sarah Netter, "Ex-Rockland medical examiner writes book on famous case" (Accessed April 1, 2007) Available from, <http://e-forensicmedicine.net/drugs.htm>

⁴³ Gunnar Dybwad, Ph.D., "From Feeble-mindedness to Self-Advocacy: A Half century of Growth and Self-Fulfillment" (Presented at the 118th Annual Meeting of the American

1930 and 1960 the inmates of Letchworth Village raised over one million dollars in crops,⁴⁴ and that the people housed there were most often considered to be lifers, it is not hard to believe that they would eventually be seen as nothing more than a source of slave labor for the village. The article itself mentions that it would be a workshop and that the best kind of workshop for such people is the land.⁴⁵ The Letchworth Village Article also states “It has been abundantly shown in older institutions that the wise teaching of the feeble-minded has been a profitable investment for the state from an economic point of view.”⁴⁶

Dybwad asserts that the staff at Letchworth viewed its residents as people who were hardly aware of their idyllic surroundings. Letchworth Village had one of the first Electroencephalogram’s in the state of New York. One day, he observed the EEG screening of Letchworth inmates. Because some of the residents were restless during the procedure, the lab tech would distract them with a Mickey Mouse film. The film was stopped and started for each patient, maybe in the middle of the film or near the end. When the film was over, it was simply played backwards. The lab tech stating that “they wouldn’t know the difference anyhow”.⁴⁷ In light of this rare first hand account of the conditions inside Letchworth, it becomes clear that the many problems plaguing the institutions of the era were present at Letchworth Village as well.

Association on Mental Retardation, June 2, 1994, accessed February 25, 2007) Available from <http://www.mncdd.org/parallels2/pdf/88-QOC-HDT.pdf>

⁴⁴ <http://www.omr.state.ny.us/Journal/20aniv/hp-Journal21et.JSF>

⁴⁵ Charles S. Little, M.D., “Letchworth Village”

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Gunnar Dybwad, Ph.D., “From Feeble-mindedness to Self-Advocacy”.

“Letchworth Village”, portrays the village as an institution with the ideals and principles of eugenics at its core. It exemplifies the views held by Americans concerning the care of defectives during the turn of the century and while promoting itself as a cozy cottage village, it conducted research on its inmates and often housed and treated them without humanity. With eugenic principles firmly in place throughout the institution, Letchworth functioned as a eugenic laboratory and although, of the more than 30,000 institutionalized people in New York, only five were actually forcibly sterilized and there is no indication that these five people were residents of Letchworth, the institution segregated its inmates from the rest of society and from each other with the probable purpose of regulating procreation. Letchworth Village is still up and running to this day, although it is now more like the place the 1912 article described, assisting those with mental retardation to function within society, not away from it. Letchworth Village changed its name to Hudson Valley DDSO in the 1990’s.

“Governor George E. Pataki signed Chapter 86 of the laws of 1999 on June 22, 1999 changing the name of the Letchworth Village Developmental Disabilities Services Office (DDSO) to Hudson Valley DDSO. The new name became effective immediately.”⁴⁸

And that the,

“OMRDD wants to maximize opportunities for people who are seeking and receiving services for their loved ones with mental retardation and developmental

⁴⁸ OMRDD Reports, “Letchworth Village Name Changed □to Hudson Valley DDSO” (OMRDD Reports, Volume 11, No. 1. July, 1999, accessed April 2, 2007); available from http://www.abandonedbutnotforgotten.com/letchworth_village_history.htm

disabilities by providing clear and meaningful information. Although there is a rich history and meaning to the Letchworth name, it does not describe what is available.⁴⁹

This is the description of Letchworth Village today and it portrays yet another idyllic picture; one of real humanity coupled with modern ideas on retardation and defects. Hopefully this is actually the case.

The eugenic movement in America was conceived by some of the wealthiest and most learned people of the twentieth century including Gordon Allen M.D., a researcher for the National Institute for Mental Health, Ernest W. Burgess, Professor at the University of Chicago, Kingsley Davis, Helen Judy-Bond and Dorothy Paschal of Columbia University, Professors Joseph Folsom of Vassar and Professor Frank Nankins of Smith were all on the Board of the American Eugenics Society,⁵⁰ and are responsible for the forced sterilization of over 70,000 Americans during the first few decades of the century.⁵¹ It was supposedly “science”, but this label, like most of the labels pinned to the unfortunate inmates of Letchworth Village was decidedly most unscientific. You might even call it feeble.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ *Eugenics Quarterly*, Volume 1, (American Eugenics Society, Inc eugenics quarterly) 1954, 1

⁵¹ Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak*, 398