



BioPolitical

News&Views

June 6, 2020

We are in a moment of extreme challenge for each of us and for our country's future – yet again. The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many other Black men and women are recent horrors in a centuries-long history of systemic racism.

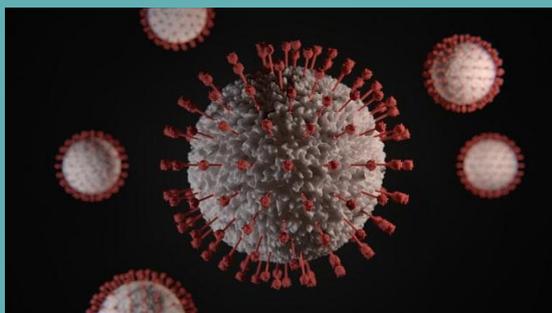
The waves of anger, grief, and protest in response to these killings offer some hope for confronting and finally ending this inhumane system. For that hope to be realized, we will have to step up, to sharpen our opposition to white supremacy and deepen our commitment to explicitly anti-racist work. Those of us with privilege and influence because we are white or have economic and social resources must listen to and learn from leaders and organizations fighting racism and all forms of oppression, and take concrete actions to achieve real social change.

The Center for Genetics and Society's commitment to social justice includes unearthing the legacies of scientific racism and eugenics. These legacies are not curiosities of a long-buried past. They distort current endeavors ranging from biomedical research to bioethics, from genetic genealogy to DNA forensics, from assisted reproduction to general health care. They continue to dehumanize targeted groups, stratify society, and justify inequities.

To do this work, both as an organization and as individuals, means confronting anti-Black racism and white supremacy in all their forms. We will learn and do as much as possible as we work in coalition to bend the arc of history toward justice.

In solidarity,
The CGS team

SPOTLIGHT



Who Among Us Is Valuable Enough to Save?

In a new post on *Biopolitical Times*, Pete Shanks argues that the promotion of “herd immunity” is simplistic to the point of being dangerous, while “immunity passports” are neither ethical nor practical.

[Read the full blogpost](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Deep Appreciations and Fond Farewell

We extend heartfelt thanks and warm wishes to Charles Garzón, the Center for Genetics and Society's longtime Director of Finance and Administration, who left his position at CGS last month. Charles often commented that he worked "behind the scenes" to keep the office running and the lights on. The range and extent of his contributions to CGS since 2005 have been truly fundamental to our work, in ways that far exceed his formal title or that simple description. Many thanks, Charles! We wish you well in your future travels, and can't wait to hear about them.

COMMENTARY



Police Killing Black People is a Pandemic, Too

Osagie Obasogie, *The Washington Post* | 06.05.2020

Black lives seem not to matter, which reveals an underlying eugenic ideology in the United States of letting disease and violence thin the herds of undesirable groups.



The Scandal-Plagued Company behind Stranded Surrogacy Babies is Also Promoting a Controversial IVF Technique

Katie Hasson, *Biopolitical Times* | 06.05.2020

This one clinic in Ukraine exemplifies many of the longstanding concerns about the international fertility and cross-border surrogacy industry, including the rapid commercialization of risky, untested, and highly controversial mitochondrial manipulation techniques.



Surrogacy, Assisted Reproduction, and COVID: Stark Problems, Underlying Concerns

Emily Galpern, *Biopolitical Times* | 05.27.2020

The COVID crisis is illuminating pre-existing problems, and highlights the need for stronger regulations that both empower each party and support family formation at no one's expense.



Is CIRM Doomed?

Pete Shanks, *Biopolitical Times* | 05.15.2020

Facing a fiscal crisis, would California voters approve an expensive ballot initiative?

WHAT WE'RE READING

EUGENICS

Addressing Racism's Toll: My Minneapolis Experience

[Michele Goodwin](#), *Ms.* | 06.01.2020

Minneapolis is picturesque, peaceful, artistic, environmentally mindful—and hip. However, it is also a place of fear, hostility, passive-aggression and lack of mindfulness regarding race.

'All the psychoses of US history': how America is victim-blaming the coronavirus dead

[Lois Beckett](#), *The Guardian* | 05.21.2020

As racism warps the US pandemic response, a health crisis has escalated into a culture war.

Inside America's Horrifying Modern-Day Eugenics Movement

[Cassie Da Costa](#), *The Daily Beast* | 05.18.2020

The new documentary *Belly of the Beast* explores the epidemic of forced sterilizations within the female prison population of California.

From Black Death to fatal flu, past pandemics show why people on the margins suffer most

[Lizzie Wade](#), *Science* | 05.14.2020

Similar tragedies were repeated for hundreds of years in Indigenous communities as colonial violence and oppression rendered Native Americans susceptible to epidemics.

Coronavirus is the ultimate demonstration of the real-world impact of racism

[Alana Lentin](#), *The Guardian* | 05.12.2020

The Black, Asian and minority ethnic experience in the UK during this pandemic demonstrates how race profoundly shapes people's lives.

How Racism Is Shaping the Coronavirus Pandemic

[Isaac Chotiner](#), *The New York Times* | 05.07.2020

Historian Evelyn Hammonds talks about how false theories of "innate difference and deficit in black bodies" have shaped American responses to disease, from yellow fever to syphilis to COVID-19.

Disease Has Never Been Just Disease for Native Americans

[Jeffrey Ostler](#), *The Atlantic* | 04.29.2020

Native communities' vulnerability to epidemics is not a historical accident, but a direct result of oppressive policies and ongoing colonialism.

ASSISTED REPRODUCTION

Are surrogate and IVF babies 'essential' in a pandemic?

[Amrita Pande](#), *Mail & Guardian* | 05.22.2020

This is the perfect storm to challenge the neoliberal approach to reproductive healthcare, where individually accessed technological solutions have effectively depoliticised structural inequalities.

100 Babies Stranded in Ukraine After Surrogate Births

[Andrew E. Kramer](#), *The New York Times* | 05.16.2020

Travel bans have prevented the babies' parents from entering the country. One official says as many as 1,000 babies will be born before restrictions are lifted.

Does it matter that traces of coronavirus have been found in semen?

[Alison Motluk](#), *HeyReproTech Newsletter* | 05.12.2020

Genes from SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, have been found in semen from infected patients. Should we be concerned?

GENOMICS

The Inflated Promise of Genomic Medicine

[Erik Parens](#), *Scientific American* | 06.01.2020

COVID-19 has laid bare the need to develop a more realistic and forthright vision of the role that genetics can play in promoting the health of all of us.

23andMe study to recruit sickest Covid-19 patients in bid to unravel role of genetics in disease

[Rebecca Robins](#), *STAT* | 05.13.2020

Recruiting enough patients could be challenging for consumer genetics companies, which don't have access to the same information as hospitals doing similar research.

The Folly of 'America First' in the Race for Biodata Amid a Pandemic

[Tamsin Shaw](#), *The New York Review of Books* | 05.13.2020

Genomic biodata is essential for epidemiology, as well as for the development of vaccines and treatments. America's response to the coronavirus pandemic has exposed its shocking lack of preparedness for a public health emergency.

SOCIETY

Qatar virus tracing app stirs rare privacy backlash

[Gregory Walton](#), *AFP* | 05.24.2020

Like other governments around the world, Qatar has turned to mobile phones to trace people's movements, but privacy concerns over Qatar's app, which is mandatory on pain of prison, have forced officials to offer reassurance and concessions.

America's Patchwork Pandemic Is Fraying Even Further

[Ed Young](#), *The Atlantic* | 05.20.2020

The coronavirus is coursing through different parts of the U.S. in different ways, making the crisis harder to predict, control, or understand.

Apple and Google are building a virus-tracking system. Health officials say it will be practically useless

[Reed Albergotti and Drew Harwell](#), *Washington Post* | 05.15.2020

As states and national governments make efforts to use technology to augment their contact tracing efforts, Apple and Google's monopoly in the smartphone market has proved an obstacle.

Judith Butler on the Violence of Neglect Amid a Health Crisis

[Francis Wade](#), *The Nation* | 05.13.2020

A conversation with the theorist about her new book, *The Force of Nonviolence*, and the need for global solidarity in the pandemic world.

ANIMAL & PLANT TECHNOLOGIES

United States relaxes rules for biotech crops

[Erik Stokstad](#), *Science* | 05.18.2020

New regulations focus on traits, not the technology used to create them. An engineered plant won't be regulated if it contains minor changes that could have been made through traditional breeding.

Mouse embryos that are 4 per cent human are step towards spare organs

[Michael Le Page](#), *New Scientist* | 05.13.2020

Biologists have created mouse-human chimeras whose bodies were composed of up to 4 per cent human cells when the early embryos were destroyed after 17 days. The highest proportion previously achieved is around 0.1 per cent.

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