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SPOTLIGHT



Reviews of Two Books Wrestling with Genomics

Pete Shanks, *Biopolitical Times* | 08.28.2026

Two recently published books – *What We Inherit* by Sam Trejo and Daphne O. Martschenko and *Original Sin* by Kathryn Paige Harden — both attempt to make sense of current genomics research and to respond to controversial techniques, including polygenic risk scores and the prospect of heritable genome editing.

COMMENTARY



Gene therapy trial characterised by hype and hubris ends in a child's death

Claire Robinson and Jonathan Matthews, Guest Contributors, *Biopolitical Times* | 08.25.2026

The death of a seven-year-old girl days after she received an experimental base editing gene therapy at a hospital in China is reminiscent of the death of Jesse Gelsinger in the U.S. decades earlier. Both were a result of downplaying the risks associated with gene therapies and a reckless “Wild West” approach. Is this case just “the tip of the iceberg” for ethics violations, greed, and corruption in gene editing ventures?

WHAT WE'RE READING

GENE EDITING AND GENE THERAPY | GENOMICS
EUGENICS | SURROGACY | SURROGACY360
ASSISTED REPRODUCTION | VARIOUS

Three deaths in China shake trust in the country's speedy clinical trial system

Ryan Cross, *Endpoints News* | 08.20.2026

China's approach to testing gene editing treatments is under scrutiny after the deaths of three individuals in investigator-initiated clinical trials over the past year. The system prioritizes speed by allowing testing without oversight from national regulators – an approach that many US experts critique, while others are pushing for adoption of a similar system stateside.

The Promise and Peril of Gene Editing

Emily Packard Dawson and Lainie Friedman Ross, *MedPage Today* | 08.18.2026

The death of a child in a gene editing experiment in China is a tragic reminder of the need for guardrails on innovation to prioritize safety and ethics, not just speed and flexibility.

Montana's plan to become an experimental medical hub just pushed forward

Jessica Hamzelou, *MIT Technology Review* | 07.30.2026

New "right to try" legislation in Montana means that biotech companies can sell experimental drugs to consumers, as long as those consumers consent and undergo an application review process with a board of doctors and scientists. Longevity enthusiasts and people contending with diseases for which there are few effective treatments are especially interested in the approach. Critics are concerned about the lack of oversight from the FDA.

A fatal reaction: A cutting-edge gene-editing trial in China went disastrously wrong. A family wants accountability

Brendan Borrell, *Science* | 07.23.2026

A seven-year-old girl died days after receiving an experimental base editing gene therapy at a hospital in China. Reports suggest that the researchers downplayed or did not disclose safety risks, pressured the girl's parents for financial support, and withheld animal safety data showing adverse reactions. When they published their results in *Nature*, the researchers did not disclose the girl's death or the side effects in primates.

'Too Rare to Care'? A New Center for Rare Diseases Hopes to Change That

Gina Kolata, *The New York Times* | 07.21.2026

A new nonprofit hopes to make gene therapy development for rare diseases faster by creating treatments that function as "routine procedures," in contrast to current development and approval pathways, which frame each gene therapy for a rare disease as a new drug.

Nobel Laureate Jennifer Doudna enters AI protein design arena

Darren Incorvaia, *Fierce Biotech* | 07.16.2026

Crispr co-inventor Jennifer Doudna is pivoting to AI-based protein design. In newly published research, Doudna's team tests the use of AI-created proteins in genome editing.

GENOMICS

ICE Collected Nearly 1 Million People's DNA Last Year—including Young Children

Dhruv Mehrotra, *Wired* | 08.03.2026

During the second Trump administration, ICE's collection of detainees' DNA has dramatically increased. A policy change has expanded the scope of DNA collection to anyone detained by ICE, which has resulted in millions of migrants, including children, having their DNA stored indefinitely in FBI databases that are used to investigate crimes.

This Lifesaving Genetics Tool Works Best if You're White

Emily Baumgaertner Nunn, *The New York Times* | 07.20.2026

Predictive genomic tools have been trained primarily on the DNA of people of European descent, which makes them ineffective at predicting risks for other groups. Researchers want to reduce these biases by adding more minority groups' genetic data, but patterns of mistreatment of people of color in medical research raise concerns that their genetic data will be misused.

EUGENICS

The Return of a Discredited Pseudoscience

Dan Falk, *Nautilus* | 08.20.2026

Eugenic ideas never really went away, but they are returning to mainstream politics and culture in full force. Donald Trump has repeatedly suggested that migrants have “bad genes”; RFK Jr. has implied that only being “fit” can make it possible to survive measles; and companies like Nucleus Genomics are running ads that invite customers to “have your best baby.”

Trump’s Immigration Policy Echoes 1920s Turn Against Certain Newcomers

Hamed Aleaziz, *The New York Times* | 08.13.2026

Trump’s efforts to drastically reduce immigration to the US echo the xenophobia and racism of US immigration crackdowns in the 1920s. Then and now, proponents of limited immigration used nationalist rhetoric and eugenic ideas to spread stereotypes about migrants’ inferiority.

‘La Operación’: The Hidden History and Forced Sterilization of Puerto Rican Women

Lillian Kollross, *Ms. Magazine* | 07.25.2026

A new docuseries examines the US government’s forced sterilization of women in Puerto Rico in the mid-20th century, explaining its origins in the eugenics movement, the corporate interests that contributed to widespread sterilization on the island, and its impact on women of color.

‘We’re in bold times’: Resurgence of eugenics-coded health policies, products in US

Abigail Ruhman, *Association of Health Care Journalists* | 07.10.2026

A panel on health journalism focused on reporters’ and editors’ responsibility to recognize and push back on contemporary resurgences of eugenics in political narratives and policy proposals.

SURROGACY

Map of Countries Impacted Most by Trump Birthright Citizen Surrogacy Order

Jenni Fink, *Newsweek* | 08.19.2026

Donald Trump’s latest attack on birthright citizenship arrived in early August with a new executive order. This one attempts to deny federal recognition of citizenship for some situations involving foreign nationals, including compensated surrogacy arrangements in which both intended parents are not US citizens.

A Florida Surrogate, a Father in China, and the Babies Caught Between

Katherine Long, *The Wall Street Journal* | 07.31.2026

A Florida judge is deciding whether to award custody of twins to the surrogate who gave birth to them and her husband, who have been caring for them for over 20 months, or to their genetic father, who contracted with the surrogate from his home in China. Due to visa issues and legal disputes, he has not left China or picked up the children in the almost two years since they were born. The case shows how surrogacy across state and national borders, with limited regulation, can result in complex custody issues.

Why Mexico is at the heart of ethical debate over global surrogacy

Oscar Lopez, *The Guardian* | 07.19.2026

Europeans are increasingly pursuing surrogacy arrangements in Mexico, where the practice is relatively affordable but also unregulated. The lack of regulation worries researchers, who cite evidence of exploitation of economically vulnerable surrogates and legal gaps that affect children born via surrogacy.

SURROGACY360



Video: Surrogacy laws and rules vary widely across Africa Eunice Wanjiru, DW | 07.30.2026

Surrogacy laws and regulations differ across Africa and are in varied stages of development. South Africa has an established framework to regulate surrogacy and only allows non-compensated arrangements. Ongoing questions in surrogacy arrangements in Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and Uganda are motivating consideration of more specific laws that address the rights and interests of surrogates, intended parents, and the children born from surrogacy arrangements.

ASSISTED REPRODUCTION

When the Choice to Be Childless Is Not Your Own

[Anna Louie Sussman](#), *The New York Times* | 08.21.2026

Infertility treatments like IVF are inaccessible to many, and attacks from the right are intensifying these inequities. Does the reproductive justice movement's call for the right to have or not have children provide a way forward for public policy? Recognizing family life as a human right can provide the foundation for considering pathways to improve equitable access to fertility technologies.

IVF staff accused of misleading UK parents about sperm and egg donors in northern Cyprus

[Anna Collinson and Jo Adnitt](#), *BBC* | 08.17.2026

Fertility clinics in Northern Cyprus operate with limited regulation, which creates additional risks for intended parents and can make it difficult to find accurate information about clinic practices. A recent investigation of clinics in the region revealed that at least 30 children were conceived using donors other than those selected by intended parents. Ongoing inquiries aim to ascertain whether the clinics were negligent or intentionally deceived clients.

North Dakota fertility doctor sued for secretly using own sperm in treatments

[Sophie Ryall](#), *BioNews* | 08.03.2026

A North Dakota fertility doctor is being sued for repeatedly using his own sperm in infertility treatments without the knowledge or consent of his patients. His employer, the University of North Dakota, has begun an investigation into his conduct and is taking steps to terminate his employment there.

Fertility clinics are offering young mitochondria in controversial fertility technique

[Edward Chen](#), *Nature* | 07.28.2026

Researchers are alarmed that several fertility clinics globally are advertising the experimental and largely unstudied technique of pronuclear genome transfer, sometimes called “mitochondrial replacement therapy,” which creates an embryo using the DNA of three people. Clinics in the Bahamas, Albania, Ukraine, and the Philippines are advertising the technique as an IVF add-on that will increase success rates, despite safety risks.

Senate Democrats revive IVF as midterm issue highlighting Trump failures

[Julianne McShane](#), *MS NOW* | 07.23.2026

As midterm elections approach, Senate Democrats are reviving efforts to expand access to IVF – and draw attention to Donald Trump’s unfulfilled campaign promise to make IVF free.

Embryo personhood, once on the margins of abortion debates, is moving closer to the center

[Risa Cromer](#), *The Conversation* | 07.17.2026

A Health and Human Services funding notice describes IVF embryos as “children,” demonstrating a concerning shift in federal policy toward embryonic personhood. Anti-abortion conservatives’ references to embryos as persons, and their impact on federal policy, threatens reproductive rights and IVF access.

VARIOUS

Editorial: A revolutionary stem-cell therapy must proceed responsibly to achieve its full potential

Nature | 08.18.2026

As more induced pluripotent stem cell treatments are developed and tested, researchers, biotech companies, and regulators should ensure responsible development of therapies with safety, not speed, at the forefront.

Supercooled kidneys have been transplanted into pigs in a “landmark achievement”

[Jessica Hamzelou](#), *MIT Technology Review* | 07.23.2026

Researchers “supercooled” pig kidneys and then transplanted them back into pigs to show that the technique could successfully preserve organs for several days prior to transplantation. They hope to test the technique with human organs next.

If you’ve read this far, you clearly care about the fight to reclaim human biotechnologies for the common good. Thank you!

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