



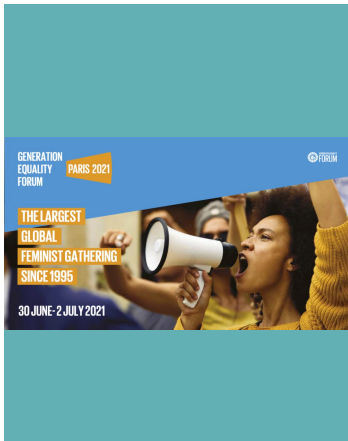
CENTER FOR  
GENETICS  
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# BioPolitical

## News&Views

July 8, 2021

### SPOTLIGHT

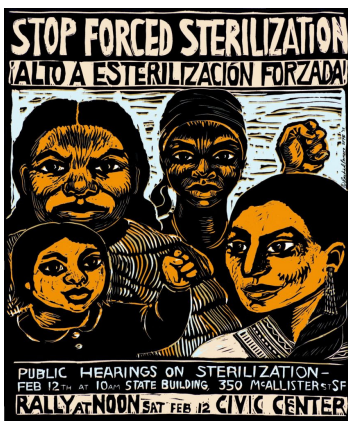


#### CGS is a Commitment Maker with Generation Equality

Emily Galpern, *Biopolitical Times* | 07.01.2021

Inspired by the Generation Equality Forum, the largest global gathering of feminists since 1995, the Center for Genetics and Society will be leading a coalition of organizational and academic leaders from 7–10 countries to bring gender, reproductive, racial, disability, and LGBTQ justice to the forefront of public and policy debates about human biotechnologies.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS



#### Breaking News: Victory in Campaign to Compensate Survivors of California Eugenic Sterilizations

In a landmark victory, reparations for survivors of state-sponsored sterilization are a part of the California state budget bill awaiting approval by Governor Newsom. People involuntarily sterilized in California prisons or under the 20th-century state eugenics program will be eligible for compensation up to \$25,000. This win comes after a four-year effort led by California Latinas for Reproductive Justice, Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, and California Coalition for Women Prisoners, supported by reproductive, disability, criminal justice, and other social justice allies around the country. CGS has organized support for the policy throughout our biopolitical network since the bill's initial introduction in 2018. This is a small but important step to address this reprehensible history.

### COMMENTARY



## Britney Spears is Yet Another Victim of America's Eugenics Movement

[Connor McAlister](#), *Biopolitical Times* | 07.08.2021

Britney Spears' conservatorship and her forced IUD have brought to light the lingering effects of the American eugenics movement of the 20th century. She is the latest victim of a long history of forced sterilization and the reproductive oppression of those deemed "undesirable."



## Leah Lowthorp on Genetic Testing and Privacy—Why it Seems Like a Good Idea Until It's Not

[Anna Fang](#), *Biopolitical Times* | 07.07.2021

Former CGS staffer Leah Lowthorp, now Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Folklore Studies at the University of Oregon, recently took to the Good ID Stories Instagram page to speak about genetic ancestry testing, privacy, and the inability of DNA to capture the nuances of an individual's identity.



## Remembering Richard Lewontin (1929-2021)

[Stuart Newman](#), *Biopolitical Times* | 07.06.2021

Richard Lewontin made his mark on evolutionary biology with empirical work demonstrating an unexpectedly high degree of genetic variation in natural populations. Along the way, he published several influential papers contesting, on rigorous theoretical grounds, the purported genetic basis of IQ differences between demographic groups such as socially defined races. His death on July 4, which followed by three days that of his wife of 73 years Mary Jane, is a personal loss, and one that leaves an empty space in world science.

# WHAT WE'RE READING

GENE THERAPY | GENOMICS | DNA DATABASES | ASSISTED REPRODUCTION |  
DISABILITY RIGHTS | RACISM | GOVERNANCE

## GENE THERAPY

### What mRNA is Good For, And What It Maybe Isn't

[Derek Lowe](#), *Science* | 06.29.2021

The huge success of the mRNA vaccination platform has raised hopes about what comes next. But there are major differences between vaccines and therapeutics. More infectious disease vaccines are a definite possibility; beyond that the difficulties mount up. There may be real promise in the cancer vaccine field, but only in the long term.

### He Inherited a Devastating Disease. A CRISPR Gene-Editing Breakthrough Stopped It

[Rob Stein](#), *NPR* | 06.26.2021

Scientists used an experimental gene-editing technique to treat a rare disease in which the liver produces a destructive protein. This is the first example in which CRISPR-Cas9 is injected directly into the bloodstream to reach a tissue far away from the site of injection and edit very specific disease-causing genes. [See also the report in *Science*, below.]

### CRISPR injected into the blood treats a genetic disease for first time

[Jocelyn Kaiser](#), *Science* | 06.26.2021

In a preliminary but promising clinical trial, a novel treatment used messenger RNA to encode one of CRISPR's two components and thus deactivate a mutated gene. Several study participants experienced sharp drops in their production of a mutant liver protein, with few short-term side effects. The researchers called it good proof of principle for injectable CRISPR treatments. [See

also the report on *NPR*, above.]

## For now, stem cells for Covid-19 are mostly a shot in the dark

[Paul Knoepfler](#), *STAT* | 06.25.2021

Dozens of clinical trials are testing different kinds of stem cells against Covid-19, and many stem cell clinics have started pitching cell therapies for Covid-19 in the past year. But this approach is unlikely to work; the experiments, and the buzz surrounding them, could even do harm.

## GENOMICS

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### China's gene giant harvests data from millions of women

[Kirsty Needham and Clare Baldwin](#), *Reuters* | 07.07.2021

A prenatal test used worldwide sends pregnant women's genetic data to BGI, the Chinese company that developed it in collaboration with the military. U.S. officials see a security risk.

### Whole genome sequencing of all UK newborns 'would have public support'

[Nicola Davis](#), *The Guardian* | 07.04.2021

At present a blood spot test for nine serious health conditions is conducted for all UK newborns. Should their whole genomes be sequenced instead? To gauge public attitudes, Genomics England held a webinar and four online workshops with 130 participants, suggesting "some public support." The findings will be presented on 8 July.

### Researchers raise concerns about using genetic risk scores to pick 'healthier' embryos

[Claudia López Lloreda](#), *STAT* | 07.01.2021

In a report published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, a group of researchers questions the reliability, ethical implications, and potential unintended consequences of using polygenic scores to select embryos, especially as companies push beyond disease prediction to screen for traits such as cognitive ability.

## DNA DATABASES

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### Orange County Prosecutors Operate "Vast, Secretive" Genetic Surveillance Program

[Jordan Smith](#), *The Intercept* | 07.03.2021

An unregulated, questionably legal, and ethically dubious scheme by Orange County prosecutors targets individuals charged with very low-level misdemeanor offenses to obtain DNA samples. They've generated a vast database of samples that cannot be uploaded to the FBI's CODIS nationwide network because they would violate federal rules.

### Training the Next Generation of Indigenous Data Scientists

[Sabrina Imbler](#), *New York Times* | 06.29.2021

A four-day workshop explored the right of Indigenous people to govern the collection, ownership, and use of their biological and cultural data. The movement pushes back on a long history of researchers taking Native data without permission, often stigmatizing the communities who participated or disregarding their customs surrounding the dead.

## ASSISTED REPRODUCTION

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### France legalizes IVF for lesbians and single women

[Sylvie Corbet](#), *AP* | 06.29.2021

France's parliament has passed a law that will allow single women and lesbians access to medically assisted reproduction for the first time. Fertility treatments such as artificial insemination and in vitro fertilization are free in France but were previously provided only to infertile heterosexual couples.

## **When a child is born: the film lifting the lid on surrogacy, race and disability**

[Cath Clarke](#), *The Guardian* | 06.24.2021

*The Surrogate*, which is about to be released in the UK, broaches difficult conversations about surrogacy, abortion, racism, Down syndrome, and white privilege through the story of a woman who agrees to be a surrogate for her friend and his husband.

## **Which lives matter in reproductive biomedicine?**

[Camisha Russell](#), *Reproductive Biomedicine & Society* | 06.02.2021

The most recent Black Lives Matter moment provides an important opportunity for consideration of the interlocking social and political systems that contribute to ongoing racism and racial inequality. What does this mean in the context of reproductive biomedicine, with its deep connections to eugenics? Which lives does reproductive biomedicine devalue and how?

## **DISABILITY RIGHTS**

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### **Britney Spears' Reproductive Freedom is a Disability Rights Issue**

[Zoe Brennan-Krohn and Rebecca McCray](#), *ACLU News* | 06.25.2021

Spears' experience is part of a long history of people with disabilities — most often people of color — being robbed of the right to control their reproductive destinies. The coercive power and control handed to conservators is a disability rights crisis, and an insult to the reproductive liberty of people with disabilities.

## **RACISM**

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### **Jordan Crowley Would Be in Line for a Kidney—if He Were Deemed White Enough**

[Jennifer Tsai](#), *Slate* | 06.27.2021

A race-based assumption that “on average, black persons have higher muscle mass than white persons” is still affecting who is eligible for a kidney transplant. For one biracial teenager, the consequences are stark; as a white person, he would qualify, but his doctors decided he is Black.

### **The ‘race realist’ on campus**

[Jason Fagone](#), *San Francisco Chronicle* | 06.24.2021

Professor Gregory Christainsen gained sudden notoriety at Cal State East Bay when some faculty discovered his journal articles on race and IQ and read them in horror. Why was he allowed to teach Black and Latino students that they were inherently less smart? What happens when a professor's teachings aren't just unpopular, but wrong?

## **GOVERNANCE**

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### **California to pay victims of forced, coerced sterilizations**

[Adam Beam](#), *AP* | 07.07.2021

The payments will make California at least the third state — following Virginia and North Carolina — to compensate victims of the eugenics movement that peaked in the 1930s. The state has set aside \$7.5 million for the reparations program, part of its \$262.6 billion operating budget that is awaiting Gov. Gavin Newsom's signature.

### **Ohio Will Now Allow Doctors to Refuse Treatment to LGBTQ+ Patients Over Religious Beliefs**

[Nico Lang](#), *them.* | 07.06.2021

While the provision's supporters say it does not permit discrimination against marginalized populations, advocates believe that it will prevent LGBTQ+ people from receiving treatment for their particular health needs.

### **WHO outlines principles for ethics in health AI**

Nicole Wetsman, *The Verge* | 06.30.2021

The World Health Organization has released a guidance document outlining six key principles for the ethical use of artificial intelligence in health: protecting autonomy, promoting human safety and well-being, ensuring transparency, fostering accountability, ensuring equity, and promoting tools that are responsive and sustainable.

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