

# The Blumenfeld Education Letter

"My People Are Destroyed For Lack Of Knowledge" HOSEA 4:6

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The purpose of this newsletter is to provide knowledge for parents and educators who want to save the children of America from the destructive forces that endanger them. Our children in the public schools are at grave risk in 4 ways: academically, spiritually, morally, and physically — and only a well-informed public will be able to reduce those risks.

"Without vision, the people perish."

## Eugenics in American Education And the Making of a Black Underclass

One of the evil fruits of the tree of evolution is the idea of eugenics, the notion that human beings can be bred to perfection by the same methods used to breed perfect cattle. Since evolution itself reduces man to the level of animal, it is not surprising that eugenics was adopted by many in the educational elite as the means of solving man's social problems. But eugenics in itself poses a problem: what do we mean by human perfection, and whose definition of perfection shall be adopted?

The founder of the eugenics movement, Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911), cousin of Charles Darwin, found his model of perfection in the British elite. But he was painfully aware that the birthrate of the elite was far lower than that of the inferior classes. In this he saw a great danger to civilization. He concluded that ways had to be found to encourage the fertility of the superior stock and to discourage the fertility of the inferior stock.

In order to determine which individuals had superior traits, Galton devised a series of tests. According to Prof. J. McVicker Hunt, Galton "saw that if [eugenical] decisions were to

be made as to which human beings were to survive and reproduce it would be necessary to have some criteria for survival. So he formed his anthropometric laboratory [in 1884] for the measurement of man, with the hope that by means of tests he could determine those individuals who should survive. Note that he was not deciding who should be selected for jobs in a given industry, but who should survive to reproduce."

Galton realized, however, that physical measurements alone were not enough to determine the criteria he needed. He began searching for ways to investigate psychological differences. In 1886 he was introduced to James McKeen Cattell, a young American who had just completed two years of study in the laboratories of Prof. Wilhelm Wundt, the world's leading experimental psychologist, at Leipzig University in Germany. Cattell had conducted various forms of reaction-time experiments, which Galton believed could be adapted for his purposes.

Cattell spent the next two years studying at Cambridge University where he set up a psychology lab. During this time he was greatly influenced by Galton's ideas. In fact, he would later

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call Galton "the greatest man I have ever known."

Cattell is best known in psychology as the first person to use experimental techniques to investigate the mental differences among normal individuals. He coined the term "mental test." What Galton did was give Cattell the framework of physical and physiological anthropometry in which to develop his interest in individual differences.

Cattell's background was quite interesting. He was born in 1860 and graduated in 1880 from Lafayette College (Easton, Penn.) where his father, a Presbyterian minister, was president. While at college, Cattell studied the ideas of Auguste Comte, the French philosopher, who stressed the authority of scientific knowledge over religious or metaphysical forms of thought. This philosophy, known as Positivism, led Cattell to adopt a new "religion" of science.

### Editor's Comment

Eugenics -- or scientific racism -- is the skeleton in the progressive closet. It is amazing to what extent this important component of the progressives' world view has been left out of the history books. For example, the word eugenics is not even to be found in the index of Lawrence Cremin's history of the progressive education movement. Yet most of the major figures in that history were avowed eugenicists. The essay in this issue is an attempt to bring these important facts to light so that we may better know what we are dealing with in public education. If there is a key that unlocks the most deeply held secrets of the progressive education movement, it is the word eugenics.

### Cattell Meets Dewey

In 1882-83 Cattell studied at Johns Hopkins University where his classmate was John Dewey and their professor was psychologist G. Stanley Hall. Hall was the first American to study in the laboratories of Wilhelm Wundt in 1878.

After completing his work at Leipzig and Cambridge, Cattell returned to the United States where he became professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania. In 1891, Cattell moved to Teachers College, Columbia University, where as professor of experimental psychology he built the nation's leading department of psychology. In 1904 Cattell arranged for his friend John Dewey to come to Columbia as professor of philosophy.

At Columbia, Cattell's star pupil was Edward L. Thorndike who espoused the principles of eugenics and became America's leading educational psychologist, devising a new theory of learning based on conditioning techniques used in animal training. His book, Animal Intelligence (1898) laid the groundwork for the school of behaviorism.

Both Cattell and Thorndike were active in applying the principles of eugenics to education. Like Dewey, they held an organic view of society. Dewey wrote in his famous, My Pedagogic Creed:

"I believe that the individual who is to be educated is a social individual and that society is an organic union of individuals. . . . Examinations are of use only so far as they test the child's fitness for social life and reveal the place in which he can be of most service and where he can receive the most help."

Inherent in Dewey's creed is the notion that individual human worth is determined by social usefulness, a concept taught today in lifeboat survival exercises.

Just as eugenics became a religion for some of the true believers, progressive education was somewhat of a religion to John Dewey, who wrote in that same Creed, originally published in 1897, that "the teacher is engaged, not simply in the training of individuals, but in the formation of the proper social life"; and that "in this way the teacher always is the prophet of the true God and the usherer in of the true kingdom of God."

It was inevitable that those who believed in eugenics would see society in racial terms and impose racist ideas on American education. The veneer of science made racism respectable among the social-radical progressives who were supposedly only interested in the future good of mankind.

### Eugenics Movement Grows

Eugenics conferences were held in the United States to spread the new gospel of scientific racism within academia. For psychologists, the challenge was to develop the means to determine individual genetic superiority or inferiority. G. Stanley Hall, who had become president of Clark University (Worcester, Mass.) in 1889, encouraged his students to develop tests to assess mental capacity. One of his students, Lewis Terman, devised a mental test that was to become the most famous of them all, one that measured the I.Q., or Intelligence Quotient. The I.Q. expressed the ratio of a child's mental age to his chronological age, multiplied by one hundred. Terman believed that intelligence was a matter of genetic inheritance and that genetic superiority could therefore be determined by his test.

One of the earliest tests to determine racial differences was conducted by R. Meade Bache and published in The Psychological Review in 1895. It was a reaction-time test, using three groups

of males: 12 Caucasians, 11 American Indians, and 11 American Negroes. They were tested for the speed with which they reacted to the sight of a pendulum, a particular sound, and a slight electric shock.

The Indians reacted fastest, the Caucasians slowest, and the blacks fell in the middle. On the basis of these flimsy results, Bache determined that the smarter and more intellectually developed the individual, the slower his reaction time to ordinary physiological stimuli. From this he concluded:

"Pride of race obscures the view of the white with reference to the relative automatic quickness of the negro. That the negro is, in the truest sense, a race inferior to that of the white can be proved by many facts, and among these by the quickness of his automatic movements as compared with those of the white."

In other words, a superior physical trait was now a sure sign of mental inferiority!

The Anglo-American eugenics movement grew in influence on both sides of the Atlantic. In England it was embraced by Fabian socialists because they believed that an ideal society could be produced only by "superior" people. In America, it drew such progressives as Margaret Sanger, Gifford Pinchot, David Star-Jordan, Charles W. Eliot, Emma Goldman, and such conservatives as Herbert Hoover and Charles Davenport. What both conservatives and radicals had in common was their rejection of biblical religion and their acceptance of the new religion of science.

Eugenicists Henry Goddard (a student of G. Stanley Hall) and Charles Davenport (a Harvard graduate) were particularly influential in effecting changes in immigration policy in the United States. The Immigration Act of

1924 severely curtailed the influx of immigrants of supposedly "inferior" stock. What greatly disturbed the eugenicists was the low fertility rate of America's elite stock. They were alarmed, for example, that late 19th century Harvard graduating classes had, twenty to twenty-five years later, accounted for male progeny equal only to half to two-thirds their original number.

In 1921, the Second International Congress of Eugenics was held at New York's Museum of Natural History. Its president was Henry Fairfield Osborn, who wrote in the program:

"The right of the state to safeguard the character and integrity of the race or races on which its future depends is, to my mind, as incontestable as the right of the state to safeguard the health and morals of its people. As science has enlightened government in the prevention and spread of disease, it must also enlighten government in the prevention of the spread and multiplication of worthless members of society, the spread of feeble-mindedness, of idiocy, and of all moral and intellectual as well as physical diseases."

Osborn, an 1877 graduate of Princeton, had been professor of zoology at Columbia before becoming curator of the museum. He was known as one of America's foremost exponents of evolution.

### Thorndike's Influence

Among the members of the Congress' General Committee were Herbert Hoover, Gifford Pinchot, Robert M. Yerkes, and Edward L. Thorndike, who was then chairman of the psychology department at Teachers College, Columbia.

Thorndike taught the principles of eugenics in his books on teacher training which were widely read in the profession. In Elementary Principles of Education, which he authored with his protegee Arthur I. Gates and which was published in 1929, he wrote:

"Education, then, cannot improve the racial stock by the direct means of biological heredity, but it may do so, indirectly, by means of social inheritance. It may improve the race by teaching prospective parents to breed men, as they do plants and animals, by discovering the nature of the best stocks and by seeking to increase their fertility while decreasing the productivity of the poorest strains. To achieve this end, ideas and mores different from those now prevailing must be established since most persons still feel superstitious dread of tampering with the question of who shall be born, though no other question so deeply affects the welfare of man."

To Thorndike, blacks were inferior and had to be treated differently in education. Thorndike's colleagues were in agreement on this issue, for the eugenics-inspired tests always seemed to provide "scientific proof" that blacks were inferior to whites. Cattell's weekly publication, School & Society, often reported the results of these tests. For example, the March 6, 1915, issue published an account of tests conducted by W. H. Pyle of the University of Missouri entitled "The Mind of the Negro Child." When some of the Negroes turned out to be more intelligent than expected, Pyle commented, "It may be that the negroes living under better social conditions are of better stock. They may have more white blood in them." The issue of March 20, 1915, carried an advertisement for "The Mental Capacity of the American Negro" by Marion J. Mayo. And at the National Education Association

convention in August 1915, Lewis Terman spoke on "Education and Race Improvement."

The practical results of all of this was the relegation of blacks to an education in keeping with their inferior station. In a speech Thorndike gave to his colleagues in 1928, he said:

"I am commissioned to describe and discuss scientific researches concerning the curriculum. . . . Teachers in the course of their work observe certain facts about the results which certain courses of study have upon certain pupils and make up their minds that this, that and the other features of the course of study have such and such advantages or weaknesses. They then proceed to change the curriculum in so far as they have the zeal and power to do so. Many improvements have had such an origin, for example, the change in certain schools for Negroes from a predominantly literary to a predominantly realistic and industrial curriculum. . . .

"Researches concerning individual differences have also exposed the fallacies of judging curricula by their products without allowances for the selection of the human material upon which the curriculum worked. . . . The differences in gain due to taking English, history, mathematics and Latin rather than English, history, typewriting and cooking is less than the difference in the gains made by very intellectual pupils . . . and average pupils taking identical programs, and is less than the difference in the gains made by white pupils and colored pupils taking identical programs."

In other words, as a result of "scientific research," pupils were now no longer being judged as individuals, but as members of different racial groups. Scientific racism had become an integral part of progressive education policy.

## Germany Applies Eugenics

The rise of Nazism in Germany with its evil racial policies brought the whole eugenics movement into disrepute. Many scientists had rejected it as pseudo-science, in the same category as phrenology. But Nazi racism indicated dramatically how eugenics would work in practice. In 1933, the Nazi government passed a Eugenic Sterilization Law that resulted in the compulsory sterilization, within three years, of 275,000 people judged "unfit" by Hereditary Health Courts. In 1939, the Nazi regime inaugurated a policy of euthanasia for the mentally diseased or disabled. Some 70,000 patients were shot and gassed to death. All of this was prelude to the mass extermination of Jews that would take place during the war years.

Despite the growing revulsion to eugenics after 1933, Edward L. Thorndike continued to believe in it right up to his death in 1949. In his last book, Human Nature and the Social Order, published in 1940, he wrote, in a section on "Eugenics and the Good Life": "Improvement of the human genes . . . is the surest means of fostering the good life; it operates at the source by producing better people." In other words, there was no hope of improvement for people who started out with bad genes, like blacks. Therefore, they should be trained with a "realistic and industrial curriculum."

While Thorndike is barely remembered today, his impact while he lived was enormous. Lawrence Cremin, in his history of Teachers College, writes:

"Coming to Teachers College in 1899 at the age of 25, [Thorndike] rose within five years from instructor to full professor and head of the Department of Educational Psychology. For 40 years he served Teachers College and his chosen field, becoming in every sense the outstanding educational psychologist of his era. . . . The schoolroom was for Thorndike a 'great

laboratory' in which the modification of instincts and capacities into habits and powers was the central and unending subject of educational research. . . .

"Like all the pioneers, Thorndike inspired innumerable disciples and leaders to carry on his revolutionary work in education . . . . Indeed, it may well be stated that two thinkers, Thorndike and Dewey, supplied the two great formative influences of twentieth-century educational theory and together established the frame of reference in which their contemporaries and successors were to work."

### **The Evil Legacy**

In other words, the two most important influences in modern American education were a eugenicist and a socialist, and today's public schools reflect those influences. For example, most blacks are not taught to read in American public schools. They go through a process called "learning to read," but they emerge from the process as functional illiterates, without verbal skills or writing skills, without vocabulary. This has been going on now for so long that a black underclass has emerged: that is, a significant number of blacks who simply do not have the skills needed to survive in a high-tech society. To exist, they turn to welfare, drug dealing, crime. Illiteracy is the plague of the black underclass.

Of course, blacks are not the only ones who don't learn to read in American schools. The methods used to teach reading severely cripple about one-third of all the children in public schools.

This has been the case now since 1955, at least, when Rudolf Flesch wrote his famous book, Why Johnny Can't Read. In that book Flesch wrote:

"The teaching of reading -- all over the United States, in all the schools, in all the textbooks -- is totally wrong and flies in the face of all logic and common sense."

He then went on to explain how in the early 1930s the professors of education changed the way reading is taught in American schools. They threw out the alphabetic-phonics method, which is the proper way to teach a person to read an alphabetic writing system, and they put in a new whole-word or sight-word method that teaches children to read English as if it were Chinese, an ideographic or hieroglyphic writing system. Flesch said that imposing an ideographic teaching method on an alphabetic writing system caused reading disability.

### **The Destroyers of Literacy**

And who were the men who created the new reading instruction method that has led to America's literacy decline? John Dewey, James McKeen Cattell, Edward L. Thorndike, G. Stanley Hall, Arthur I. Gates, Charles Judd, William Scott Gray, Edmund Burke Huey -- a combination of eugenicists and progressives.

John Dewey provided the educational philosophy that justified the shift from intellectual training to socialization. James McKeen Cattell's reaction-time experiments in Wundt's laboratories provided the supposedly scientific basis for the change. Edmund Burke Huey, a pupil of G. Stanley Hall, wrote the authoritative book advocating the change (The Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading, 1908). Edward L. Thorndike's behavioral psychology provided the new classroom methodology based on conditioning. His protege, Arthur I. Gates, actually edited the new readers for the Macmillan Company. Charles Judd of the University of Chicago, another Wundtian Ph.D., organized the wholesale reform of the public school curriculum,

and his protege, William Scott Gray, supervised the writing, editing and publication of the Dick and Jane reading program.

The horrible mess that is now public education is a direct result of the work of these men, their colleagues and disciples. The academic and moral disintegration of the system was caused by the widespread adoption and implementation of policies based on eugenics, socialism, behavioral psychology, and humanism. As long as these basic policies remain the underpinnings of the system, no meaningful reform will be possible.

## The Growing Educational Underclass

Last year in Boston, more students dropped out than graduated from high school. In parts of Detroit and rural Louisiana and Alabama, fewer than a third of all teenagers get a diploma. Nationwide, nearly a million students graduate each year unable to read and write, and 1 in 4 never graduates at all. And the problem has been getting worse. Since 1970, when the graduation rate reached an all-time high, the percentage of dropouts has steadily increased. The National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University projects a staggering 40 percent dropout rate by the year 2000.

These children -- most of them poor, black or Hispanic -- are America's educational underclass. Once they drop out, it's a short journey to the world of adults trapped in joblessness and poverty.

According to the National Coalition of Advocates for Students, a child who is poor, black or Hispanic is far more likely to be physically disciplined, suspended, expelled or made to repeat a grade than a white middle-class child. A minority child is three times as likely as a white child to end up in vocational education or in classes for the mildly mentally handicapped.

Assigned to these "tracks" in first or second grade on the basis of standardized tests that many criticize for cultural bias, these children find it nearly impossible to get back in the mainstream. "My boy was placed in a class for the mentally retarded," recalls one Chicago parent of a formerly misclassified child. "That blue slip is really a one-way ticket to emotional and educational death for many children. It says to a child, 'You are retarded.' It says to a child, 'You are lost.'"

The current wave of school reform is bound to make matters worse, for by raising graduation standards, those children who cannot measure up to those standards will merely drop out. However, the average test scores of the graduating class will look good, and the public will believe that the schools have actually been improved.

But the process of failure begins in the kindergarten and first grade where 85 percent of American children are taught to read via the look-say method, a method known to cause reading disability in at least one third of the students exposed to it. Until intensive phonics is mandated as the sole method of teaching reading in the first grade, we can expect massive reading failure to be the norm in American public education.

Meanwhile, a third of all major corporations provide training programs that teach workers to read, write and count. The cost to industry is about \$25 billion a year.

Over the next 14 years, the number of young people in the American work force will shrink by two fifths, at the same time that industry will be demanding increasingly advanced skills from employees. Without a highly skilled work force, America's standard of living and capacity to compete in world markets will decline sharply. (U.S. News & World Report, 5-18-87)

## Vital Reading

Marva Collins' Way by Marva Collins and Civia Tamarkin, J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 9110 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90069, \$6.95.

Marva Collins is the black educator who spent 16 years teaching in the Chicago public school system before deciding that she had had enough. "The longer I taught in the public school system, the more I came to think that schools were concerned with everything but teaching," she says.

In September 1975 Marva began a private school of her own with four students and one classroom. Today, her Westside Preparatory School is considered the nation's most successful private alternative in a black community. Its success has been widely acclaimed by the media but not by the public educators of Chicago who continue to do what they do best: miseducate.

I have known Marva for many years through my association with the Reading Reform Foundation. She has been one of America's strongest and most vocal advocates of intensive phonics in the teaching of reading. Because of this she is not very popular among reading instruction professionals and specialists who use look-say basal programs.

Marva Collins' Way is an important book for anyone who wants to understand what one woman is doing to pull black children out of the underclass. Mrs. Collins writes:

"I prepared my children for life. . . . And I bluntly told them to face that fact that no one was going to hire them for a job if they walked into an office wearing picks in their hair, if they slinked into a room as though their hips were broken, or if the boys

wore earrings or high-heeled shoes or wide-brimmed hats. . . . I encourage them to become universal people, citizens of the world.

"I did not teach black history as a subject apart from American history, emphasize black heroes over white, or preach black consciousness rather than a sense of the larger society. My refusal to do so was a sore spot between me and some members of the black community. . . .

"I'd say to my students, 'Is there anyone in here who doesn't know he's black?' And the children would shake their heads and laugh. Then I'd ask, 'Is there any black child in here who plans on turning white?' Again there would be laughter. 'In that case let's get on with the business of learning.'

"I'm opposed to teaching black English because it separates black children from the rest of society; it also implies they are too inferior to learn standard language usage. . . . I was convinced black English was another barrier confining my students to the ghetto.

"Instead of teaching black pride I taught my children self-pride. All I wanted was for them to accept themselves. I pointed out that in many ways the ghetto is a state of mind. If you have a positive attitude about yourself, then no one can put you down for who you are or where you live."

This book will also teach you more about education than you'll ever learn in a teachers college. It goes against everything John Dewey, Cattell, Thorndike, Gates, Judd, Gray, and the others stood for. It's what every teacher and student teacher in America should read. But let's face it. How many teachers actually read books for pleasure anymore?