

1 [Recommending the Inclusion of California’s History of Eugenics into the California High
2 School Curriculum]

3 **Resolution urging the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors to join the Youth Commission in**
4 **supporting the inclusion of the history of eugenics and forced sterilizations in California into**
5 **the California high school curriculum.**

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7 WHEREAS, California has a heavy history with eugenics and forced sterilization that is
8 little known and rarely spoken of; and

9 WHEREAS, In 2003 the San Francisco Chronicle explored California’s role in the
10 eugenics movement in an article entitled “Eugenics and the Nazis -- the California connection”
11 in which it was stated that eugenics “was created in the United States, and cultivated in
12 California, decades before Hitler came to power. California eugenicists played an important,
13 although little-known, role in the American eugenics movement's campaign for ethnic
14 cleansing;”¹ and

15 WHEREAS, In 2003 the San Francisco Chronicle published another article entitled
16 “State's little-known history of shameful science / California's role in Nazis' goal of
17 'purification'” in which it was stated that California “practiced a form of eugenics that helped
18 inspire Hitler's Nazis;”² and

19 WHEREAS, This article goes on to state that “California was such a prominent
20 practitioner of forced sterilization that it was held up as a model by the Eugenics Record
21 Office, the Long Island think tank that was the movement's unofficial headquarters. The

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23 ¹ Black, Edwin. "Eugenics and the Nazis -- the California connection - Fate." *Fate San Francisco Bay Area - News, Sports, Business, Entertainment, Classifieds - SFGate*. N.p., 9 Nov. 2003. Web. 26 Feb. 2013.
<<http://www.sfgate.com/opinion/article/Eugenics-and-the-Nazis-the-California-2549771.php>>.

24 ² Abate, Tom. "State's little-known history of shameful science / California's role in Nazis' goal of 'purification' - SFGate." *SFGate: San Francisco Bay Area - News, Sports, Business, Entertainment, Classifieds - SFGate*. N.p.,
25 10 Mar. 2003. Web. 26 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.sfgate.com/business/article/State-s-little-known-history-of-shameful-science-2663925.php#page-2>>.

1 Eugenics Record Office, in turn, had links to the Nazi party during the 1930s;³ and

2 WHEREAS, The California's Senate Resolution No. 20, passed in 2003, "urges every
3 citizen of the state to become familiar with the history of the eugenics movement, in the hope
4 that a more educated and tolerant populace will reject any similar abhorrent pseudoscientific
5 movement should it arise in the future;"⁴ and

6 WHEREAS, Resolution No. 20 presents no specific outline for how this idealistic
7 "urging" is to become a reality; and

8 WHEREAS, In an official letter acknowledging California's legacy of eugenics State
9 Attorney General Bill Lockyer stated, "At the Dawn of an era when cloning and genetic
10 engineering offer both great promise and great peril, we must learn from our history, teach our
11 children about our past and be mindful of our future;"⁵ and

12 WHEREAS, In contrast to California's Senate Resolution No. 20 and Attorney General
13 Bill Lockyer's admiral sentiments, California's school curriculum does not currently focus on
14 educating young adults so that they can become familiar with the disturbing history and legacy
15 of eugenics in our state and union; and

16 WHEREAS, The 2012 FAIR (Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, Respectful) Education Act
17 established a precedent for teaching tolerance by addressing the contributions made to our
18 society by the LGBT community;⁶ and

19 WHEREAS, The FAIR education act also highlights the contributions of people of color
20 and people with disabilities; and

21 WHEREAS, FAIR provides a structure for teaching the history of eugenics in California,
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23 ³ Ibid.

24 ⁴ "Senate Resolution No. 20." CSUS. N.p., n.d. Web. 27 Feb. 2013. <www.csus.edu/cshpe/eugenics/docs/senate_resolution_20.pdf>.

25 ⁵ Lockyer, Bill. Bill Lockyer to Dede Alpert, March 11, 2003.

⁶ "About Fair." Protect the FAIR Education Act. Accessed October 26, 2012.
< <http://www.faireducationaction.com/about-the-fair-education-act-california-sb48/> >.

1 which would both educate the populace and provide redress to the victims of this somber
2 history; and

3 WHEREAS, It is vital for young people to learn about California's history with the
4 eugenics movement and forced sterilization, as sterilizations in California lasted until the
5 1980s with over 20,000 sterilizations in 1983 alone;⁷ and

6 WHEREAS, Education as a form of redress is constructive and looks to create positive
7 change in the future, while other forms of redress such as monetary compensation and public
8 displays of apology are often polarizing and messy or simply ineffective; and

9 WHEREAS, Educational reform reaches a larger and more open population than such
10 forms of redress, and moves toward achieving the goal originally stated in the California
11 Senate Resolution No. 20; and

12 WHEREAS, Citizens of California need to know the truth about the role that California
13 played in the eugenics movement, just as the victims of sterilization deserve to have their
14 stories heard; and

15 WHEREAS, The greatest service the state of California can do for the victims of
16 compulsory sterilization at this belated hour is to enact substantive educational measures that
17 will help prevent anything like this from occurring in the future, while respectfully
18 acknowledging the injustices of the past; and

19 WHEREAS, A petition was submitted on Change.org entitled "High School Students for
20 the Incorporation of the History of Eugenics into California Curricula" that outlines a specific
21 plan for changing U.S. history textbook standards and the language of California educational
22 code to include curriculum on sterilization and eugenics in public high schools;⁸ and

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24 ⁷ "Attempts of Redressing - Eugenics G Block." *Eugenics G Block*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Feb. 2013.
<<http://eugenicsinamerica.weebly.com/eugenics-in-california.html>>

25 ⁸ Chernoguz, Jonathan. "High School Students for the Incorporation of the History of Eugenics into California Curricula..." *Change.org*. N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Feb. 2013. <www.change.org/petitions/high-school-students-for-the-incorporation-of-the-history-of-eugenics-into-california-curricula>.

1 WHEREAS, The petition includes five basic recommendations for the structure of the
2 curriculum:

- 3 • “Potential guiding question: ‘Why was sterilization seen as a viable option for solving a
4 diverse array of societal problems in California?’
- 5 • A concise background on the origins of eugenics and its prominent role in US History
- 6 • Identify the unique motives and circumstances underlying the two distinct eras of
7 eugenics in California: the forced sterilization of those who were deemed ‘unfit’ by state
8 hospitals and clinics, and the continued Eugenics through the mid-1900s into the 1970s
9 such as the forced sterilization of Latin American women in Southern California up until
10 the late 1970s.
- 11 • Highlight the links between the history of sterilization in the US and California and the
12 eugenic atrocities committed by Nazi Germany by showing how American scientists
13 supported eugenics long before and after ‘racial betterment’ in Nazi Germany.
14 Eugenics is a part of our history in California and the US, not some distant European
15 legacy.
- 16 • Actively address contemporary issues to which questions of eugenics are still relevant
17 and examine the power and danger of advancements in genetic technology in modern
18 day California;” and

19 WHEREAS, Under the outlined plan California public high schools would be required to
20 choose U.S. history textbooks that include the history of eugenics in America with a spotlight
21 on California, but adequate educational reform of the history of eugenics could also be
22 achieved with additional instructional material that would supplement and expand on current
23 California textbooks; and

24 WHEREAS, The curriculum outlined would follow the four goals of FAIR by accurately
25 detailing California’s involvement in the Eugenics movement while remaining respectful to the

1 victims; and

2 WHEREAS, The eugenics curriculum would seek to advance the goals of the state by
3 preparing students for the challenges of the future through a thorough and complete
4 examination of the past; and

5 WHEREAS, Jessica Cussins in her Biopolitical Times article “High School Students’
6 Campaign to Spread Awareness of California’s Eugenic History” states that “The student
7 petition is one of the most uplifting and creative ways to grapple with this painful history that I
8 have seen;”⁹ now therefore be it

9 RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Youth Commission supports the inclusion of the
10 history of eugenics into the California high school curriculum; and be it further

11 RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Youth Commission urges the Mayor, the BOS
12 and SFUSD to join the Youth Commission in support of this proposal; and be further

13 RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Youth Commission supports a better
14 understanding of the history of eugenics in California, so that the lessons of the past will not
15 be forgotten in working towards a more tolerant and educated society.

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20 Mia Shackelford, 2012-2013 Youth Commission Chair

21 Adopted by Youth Commission May 20, 2013

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25 ⁹ Cussins, Jessica. "CGS: High School Students' Campaign to Spread Awareness of California's Eugenic History." CGS. N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Feb. 2013. <<http://www.biopoliticaltimes.org/article.php?id=6668>>