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GENETICS  
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# BioPolitical

## News&Views

July 10, 2020

### SPOTLIGHT



#### COVID-19 and Intimations of Eugenics under the Guise of Bioethics

Gina Maranto, *Biopolitical Times* | 06.29.2020  
Calls for “extreme altruism” in the time of coronavirus are disturbing in light of what the pandemic has revealed about how we differentially value lives.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### Human-Animal Embryo Chimeras - What Could Go Wrong?

An [interview](#) with Dr. Stuart Newman, professor of cell biology and anatomy, about recent news that researchers created mouse-human chimera with the highest percentage of human cells to date.

### COMMENTARY



#### 20 Years After the Human Genome was Mapped, Where Are We?

Pete Shanks, *Biopolitical Times* | 06.26.2020  
The soaring rhetoric in 2000 suggested that treatments for disease were just around the corner and would revolutionize medicine. Today, affordable gene therapy seems still to be a long way off.



## \$5.5 billion stem cell rescue plan makes November ballot

David Jensen, *Capitol Weekly* | 06.22.2020

Voters will decide whether the state stem cell agency should get a major infusion of public money. CGS Executive Director Marcy Darnovsky noted that the initiative “does little to ease the serious concerns about CIRM that have been voiced for years by the Center for Genetics and Society, other public interest advocates, and researchers, and echoed by several policy bodies.”

## WHAT WE'RE READING

HERITABLE HUMAN GENETIC MODIFICATION | GENE THERAPY | EUGENICS | RACISM | BIOETHICS | STEM CELLS | LAW ENFORCEMENT | REGULATION | ASSISTED REPRODUCTION | TRANSHUMANISM

### HERITABLE HUMAN GENETIC MODIFICATION

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#### CRISPR gene editing in human embryos wreaks chromosomal mayhem

Heidi Ledford, *Nature* | 06.25.2020

Three studies showing large DNA deletions and reshuffling heighten safety concerns about heritable genome editing. “If human embryo editing for reproductive purposes or germline editing were space flight, the new data are the equivalent of having the rocket explode at the launch pad before take-off,” says geneticist Fyodor Urnov.

#### Embryos donated to science blow the whistle on CRISPR

Alison Motluk, *HeyReproTech* | 06.23.2020

The controversial gene-editing technique mis-snips again. And thanks to embryos donated to science, we know about it.

### GENE THERAPY

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#### Two patients die in now-halted study of Audentes gene therapy

Ben Fidler, *BioPharma Dive* | 06.26.2020

Two children who suffered liver problems have died after receiving a high dose of a gene therapy in a clinical trial. The technology had shown enough promise in early tests that the company had sold last December for \$3 billion.

#### A Year In, 1st Patient To Get Gene Editing For Sickle Cell Disease Is Thriving

Rob Stein, *NPR* | 06.23.2020

Victoria Gray is the first person with a genetic disorder to get treated in the United States with CRISPR. The billions of genetically modified cells doctors infused into her body clearly appear to be alleviating virtually all the complications of her disorder, sickle cell disease.

### EUGENICS

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***Belly of the Beast: California's dark history of forced sterilizations***

[Shilpa Jindia](#), *The Guardian* | 06.30.2020

A new documentary focuses on the nearly 1,400 involuntary sterilizations that were conducted in California prisons between 1997 and 2013.

## **China cuts Uighur births with IUDs, abortion, sterilization**

*Associated Press* | 06.28.2020

“It’s genocide, full stop. It’s not immediate, shocking, mass-killing on the spot type genocide, but it’s slow, painful, creeping genocide,” said Joanne Smith Finley, who works at Newcastle University in the U.K. “These are direct means of genetically reducing the Uighur population.”

## **UCL denames buildings named after eugenicists**

[University College London](#), *UCL News* | 06.19.2020

Signs on the Galton Lecture Theatre, Pearson Building and Pearson Lecture Theatre will be taken down immediately. Other changes to the names on maps and signposts around UCL will take place as soon as is practicable.

## **RACISM**

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### **Amid protests against racism, scientists move to strip offensive names from journals, prizes, and more**

[Eli Cahan](#), *Science* | 07.02.2020

The names being changed include open supporters of eugenics and white supremacy. Historian Alexandra Minna Stern comments that they “make visible the values and priorities and beliefs of an institution.”

### **On Racism: A New Standard For Publishing On Racial Health Inequities**

[Rhea W. Boyd](#), [Edwin G. Lindo](#), [Lachelle D. Weeks](#), and [Monica R. McLemore](#), *Health Affairs* | 07.02.2020

Despite racism’s alarming impact on health, and the wealth of scholarship that outlines its ill effects, preeminent scholars and the journals that publish them routinely fail to interrogate its key role in racial health inequities.

### **Race Is Real, But It’s Not Genetic**

[Alan Goodman](#), *Discover* | 06.25.2020

For over 300 years, socially defined notions of “race” have shaped human lives around the globe — but the category has no biological foundation.

## **BIOETHICS**

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### **How making a COVID-19 vaccine confronts thorny ethical issues**

[Bethany Brookshire](#), *ScienceNews* | 07.07.2020

How do we ethically test a vaccine? Can people be forced to get it if they don’t want it? Who should get it first? A slew of ethical questions arise long before anything is loaded into a syringe.

### **The Future of Bioethics: It Shouldn’t Take a Pandemic**

[Larry R. Churchill](#), [Nancy M. P. King](#), [Gail E. Henderson](#), *Hastings Center Report* | 06.29.2020

A focus on “lifeboat ethics” drives ethics resources away from persistent and systemic problems—in particular, the structural injustices that give rise to health disparities affecting disadvantaged communities of color.

## **STEM CELLS**

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## **Directors of the California Stem Cell Agency Back \$5.5 Billion Stem Cell Ballot Measure -- With One Exception**

**David Jensen**, *California Stem Cell Report* | 06.26.2020

All but one of the Directors of CIRM endorsed a proposed \$5.5 billion bond measure to refinance the agency. Jeff Sheehy, a patient advocate member of the board since its inception in 2004, voted no and supplied a lengthy statement explaining his decision.

## **Stem cell companies sell hope with unproven medicine for COVID-19**

**Brent Schrottenboer**, *USA Today* | 06.22.2020

Stem cell businesses are trying to take advantage of coronavirus fear by marketing unproven treatments. The FDA and FTC have sent several warning letters to stem-cell-related firms over the past few months.

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT**

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### **China's massive effort to collect its people's DNA concerns scientists**

**David Cyranoski**, *Nature* | 07.07.2020

Genetic material is being collected from men across the country to help solve crimes, but researchers worry the data will be misused.

### **A DNA Mix-Up Involving a Washing Machine Kept a Man in Jail for 3 Years**

**Heather Murphy**, *New York Times* | 06.26.2020

The Louisiana case highlights how prosecutors and crime labs withhold key documents from defense lawyers, keeping some defendants in custody for months or years.

## **REGULATION**

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### **NGOs call for moratorium on controversial 'gene drive organisms'**

**Natasha Foote**, EURACTIV | 07.03.2020

Over 78 environmental and agricultural organisations signed a letter this week calling for a moratorium on gene drive technology. EURACTIV takes a closer look at the controversial technology.

### **Before genetically modified mosquitoes are released, we need a better EPA**

**Natalie Kofler and Jennifer Kuzma**, *Boston Glob* | 06.22.2020

Last month, the US Environmental Protection Agency approved the release of genetically modified mosquitoes. This is just the first step toward Oxitec selling its proprietary mosquito to US mosquito-control boards, and by extension US taxpayers.

## **ASSISTED REPRODUCTION**

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### **Pregnant Women Have Received False Results From This DNA Paternity Test**

**Peter Aldhous**, *BuzzFeed News* | 07.04.2020

If we don't want unproven DNA tests to become the snake oil of the 21st century, we need something similar to drug approval for genetic testing.

### **In China, single women are banned from freezing their eggs. Now one woman is fighting for change**

**Cecily Huang**, *ABC [Australia]* | 06.27.2020

The case highlights several aspects of the fraught issue of fertility in China, from government control to social and demographic pressures to the high cost of raising children.

## US Transhumanist Party rocked by furore over “lab-grown human meat” project

Jonathan Matthews, GMWatch | 07.06.2020

Even by transhumanist standards, the ructions that have just rocked the US Transhumanist Party over their 2020 Presidential candidate have been remarkable. “Cannibalism of any sort and by any means, including auto-cannibalism, is not tolerated by the USTP.”

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