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CENTER FOR GENETICS AND SOCIETY

BIOPOLITICAL VIEWS & NEWS

November 8, 2018

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

[Giving Tuesday 2018](#)

Mark your calendars! November 27 is Giving Tuesday, a global day of giving fueled by social media and your generosity. At the start of this charitable season, Giving Tuesday celebrates our collective power to build a fair and just world. Your #GivingTuesday contribution will help the Center for Genetics and Society fight the emergence of a new eugenics and work to ensure that human biotechnologies benefit the common good. [Please pitch in](#) and encourage your friends to support #GivingTuesdayCGS!



[Honors for Dorothy Roberts, CGS Advisory Board member](#)

[Dorothy E. Roberts](#), long-time [CGS Advisory Board](#) member and acclaimed scholar on race, gender, and the law, was [inducted into the National Academy of Medicine](#) on October 13. A few weeks later, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* included her book *Killing the Black Body* in "[The New Canon](#)," a short list of the most influential books of the past 20 years. Congratulations!



[Register to watch the Second International Summit on Human Genome Editing](#)

On November 27-29, scientists and scholars will meet in Hong Kong for the [Second International Summit on Human Genome Editing](#). [Registration](#) for the webcast ends November 12; you can view the draft agenda [here](#). This meeting follows the 2015 [International Summit on Human Gene Editing](#), at which CGS was invited to speak. For assessments of the 2015 summit, check out commentary from [Marcy Darnovsky](#) and [Pete Shanks](#).



CGS COMMENTARY

[DNA Tests: Neither Destiny nor History](#)

By Pete Shanks, *Biopolitical Times* | 10.16.2018

Senator Elizabeth Warren has released the results of a DNA analysis bolstering her family's belief that their ancestry is partly Native American. Unfortunately, promoting such a test is extremely problematic.



["The Eugenics Crusade" on PBS](#)

By Pete Shanks, *Biopolitical Times* | 11.07.2018

PBS has produced a documentary and website about the 20th-century eugenics movement in the United States, which is a valuable, if flawed, resource.



[Death vs Google](#)

By Pete Shanks, *Biopolitical Times* | 11.07.2018

Calico and AncestryDNA have discovered to their surprise that genetics have very little to do with lifespan.



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CGS in the NEWS

[Government using ancestry websites to deport immigrants: lawyer, court documents](#)

[Cites CGS' Katie Hasson]

by Emanuela Campanella, *Global News* | 11.01.2018

"We don't know all of the things that genetic testing information could tell us in the future, or different ways it could be used. It makes it hard to make a truly informed decision about whether you are comfortable taking the risk of having that information out there," said CGS' Katie Hasson.



[Live Episode: Are We Selling Ourselves Out? - The Impact of Genetic Data Collection](#)

[Featuring CGS' Katie Hasson]

by Nicholas Mortensen (host) & Andy Carluccio (producer), *The Global Inquirer* | 10.16.2018

The *Global Inquirer* podcast from University of Virginia hosted a special discussion with CGS' Katie Hasson about the political, social, and privacy ramifications of genetic data collection by private companies. The podcast is available [here](#), and a video livestream of this event is available on [Facebook](#).



[Stephen Hawking Posthumously Predicts Consequences of Superhumans](#)

[Cites CGS]

by Anna Fair, *AltPress* | 10.15.2018

Hawking says genetic modification would start out with curing or preventing genetic diseases but would move on to other things such as boosting

intelligence and lengthening lifespans. “Once such superhumans appear, there are going to be significant political problems with the unimproved humans who won’t be able to compete,” the excerpt reads. These unimproved humans, according to Hawking, would die out or become insignificant.



NEWS

Genomics & Health

Genetic Ancestry Testing

Genetic Selection

Privacy and Genetic Data

Stem Cells

Various

GENETIC SELECTION

► [Sociogenomics is opening a new door to eugenics](#)

by Nathaniel Comfort, *MIT Technology Review* | 10.23.2018

Advocates of sociogenomics envision a prospect that not everyone will find entirely benevolent: health “report cards,” based on your genome and handed out at birth, that predict your risk of various diseases and propensity for different behaviors. It’s a tradition dating back more than 150 years. It has rarely gone well.

► [Designer babies aren’t futuristic. They’re already here.](#)

by Laura Hercher, *MIT Technology Review* | 10.22.2018

If the use of pre-implantation genetic testing grows and we don’t address disparities in access, we risk creating a society where some groups, because of socioeconomic status, opt out of living in community with people with genetic diseases.

PRIVACY AND GENETIC DATA

- News TOP -

► [Most White Americans’ DNA Can Be Identified Through Genealogy Databases](#)

by Heather Murphy, *The New York Times* | 10.11.2018

As more people upload their genetic test results to publicly accessible databases, researchers estimate that 90 percent of Americans of European descent will be identifiable from their DNA in the next two to three years.

► [DNA Testing Can’t Tell Us Who We Really Are. It Can Tell the Cops.](#)

by Max Read, *Intelligencer* | 10.17.2018

Genetic tests no more useful than horoscopes are creating databases for police and corporations that are more useful than mugshots and fingerprints.

► [Supercharged crime-scene DNA analysis sparks privacy concerns](#)

by Ewen Callaway, *Nature* | 10.11.2018

New studies suggest that the genetic sleuthing techniques behind the arrest of the Golden State Killer suspect are set to become vastly more powerful.

► [Trump’s Anti-Trans Memo Opens Door to Escalating State Surveillance](#)

by Cristoph Hanssmann, *TruthOut* | 10.27.2018

The Trump administration’s proposed scheme to redefine sex as “a biological, immutable condition determined by genitalia at birth” relies on a vulgar genetic determinism and is closely tied to other modes of invasive state surveillance.

▶ [Treating 'genetic privacy' like it's just one thing keeps us from understanding people's concerns](#)

by Angela Chen, *The Verge* | 10.31.2018

Genetic privacy is a multifaceted term that can cover different (and often conflated) concepts like confidentiality, security, and control.

▶ [Elizabeth Warren and the Death of Genetic Privacy](#)

by Noah Feldman, *Bloomberg* | 10.15.2018

The only thing that could potentially preserve genetic privacy now would be strict government regulation.

GENOMICS & HEALTH

- News TOP -

▶ [Life span has little to do with genes, analysis of large ancestry database shows](#)

by Sharon Begley, *STAT News* | 09.25.2018

New research out of Google's Calico Life Sciences lab reports that genes account for well under 7 percent of people's life span, suggesting that we won't be able to affect life span through genetic tinkering.

▶ [Regulators just gave DNA-testing startup 23andMe the go-ahead to offer a health product that scientists have called dubious](#)

by Erin Brodwin, *Business Insider* | 11.01.2018

The FDA granted 23andMe a "green light" to offer customers results about how they process medications, including those for depression, cardiology, and infectious disease. But regulators say they may not be accurate, and scientists say the tests aren't worth the money.

▶ [White-people-only DNA tests show how unequal science has become](#)

by Antonio Regalado, *MIT Technology Review* | 10.18.2018

The DNA testing company Color Genomics says that early next year it will offer customers a new type of gene analysis that could tell them if they are at risk of a heart attack. Here's the problem, though: it only works in white people.

GENETIC ANCESTRY TESTING

- News TOP -

▶ [Two Native American geneticists interpret Elizabeth Warren's DNA test](#)

by Krystal Tsosie and Matthew Anderson, *The Conversation* | 10.22.2018

Senator Warren has taken a harmful history of "Indian" blood quantification – meant to dilute the existence of indigenous people – and reduced it to a political ploy. To reduce tribal membership to biomarkers is to threaten the very sovereign status that enables Native American cultural and traditional ways of living.

▶ [The First DNA Test as Political Stunt](#)

by Sarah Zhang, *The Atlantic* | 10.15.2018

"Members of the public have been showing up to tribal-enrollment offices and showing them ancestry DNA tests." Kim TallBear, a professor at the University of Alberta, asks, if you can't find a living relative in a tribe, what connection is there really?

▶ [Was I part British, part Dutch, a little bit Jewish? The oddness of DNA tests.](#)

by Debra Bruno, *The Washington Post* | 11.03.2018

The pie charts and fancy infographics that show little arrows and offer

fascinating stories about human history make for great conversation, but they are actually more like educated guesses than like census documents.

STEM CELLS

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▶ [Global Human Embryonic Stem Cell Laws and Policies and Their Influence on Stem Cell Tourism](#)

by Nishakanthi Gopalan et al., *Biotechnology Law Report* | 10.09.2018
Travel for stem cell treatments to countries where they are under- or unregulated is a growing problem. Stem cell tourism is no longer a country-specific issue; rather, it is a universal dilemma requiring international effort for a resolution.

▶ [He Promised to Restore Damaged Hearts. Harvard Says His Lab Fabricated Research.](#)

by Gina Kolata, *The New York Times* | 10.29.2018
Harvard's five-year investigation of Dr. Piero Anversa's laboratory ended with the university saying 31 papers it produced should be retracted due to "research misconduct."

VARIOUS

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▶ [Use the patent system to regulate gene editing](#)

by Shobita Parthasarathy, *Nature* | 10.23.2018
Governments should use patents to shape the deployment of CRISPR–Cas9 as they have done for past technologies. It would provide more transparency and political legitimacy than individual efforts ever could, by involving government institutions that are explicitly charged with representing the public interest.

▶ [Researchers launch plan to sequence 66,000 species in the United Kingdom. But that's just a start](#)

by Erik Stokstad, *Science* | 11.01.2018
Researchers have announced a "moonshot" to sequence all known species of eukaryotic life—animals, plants, fungi, and protozoa—in a single country. The announcement follows the recent launch of a \$4.7 billion global effort to sequence the genomes of all of Earth's known 1.5 million species of eukaryotes within a decade.

▶ [Editing nature: Scientists call for careful oversight of environmental gene editing](#)

by Yale University, *Press Release* | 11.01.2018
An interdisciplinary group of researchers argues for new global governance to assure a neutral and informed evaluation of the potential benefits and risks of gene editing. Any decision-making process must include local communities that would feel the biggest and most immediate effects.

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