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News&Views

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SPOTLIGHT

THE
GENETIC
LOTTERY
WHY DNA
MATTERS
FOR SOCIAL
EQUALITY
KATHRYN
PAIGE
HARDEN

Yellow Stripes and Dead Armadillos: Trying to Bridge the Gap Between Science and Racism

Pete Shanks, *Biopolitical Times* | 09.15.2021

Kathryn Paige Harden is well on her way to notoriety, following profiles to publicize her forthcoming book, *The Genetic Lottery*. But her attempt at finding a middle way on behavioral genetics between the left and the right falls flat.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Katie Hasson to be CGS Associate Director

We are thrilled to share an important staff change: **Katie Hasson** is moving into the role of Associate Director. Katie joined CGS in 2017 as Program Director on Genetic Justice and quickly took the lead on our heritable genome editing work. She has since become central to the entire team and organization. We feel very fortunate to be moving forward with her in this new role.



Dismantling Eugenics: A Convening, September 26-October 2

Dismantling Eugenics is a free, online series of events that reckons with the history of eugenics and offers space to envision and work towards an anti-eugenics future. The week-long convening will feature thought leaders, activists, artists, and scholars in short presentations, readings, conversations, and artistic interventions. Accessibility has been made a priority throughout the event. Please [register](#) to access complete information — and stay tuned for a soon-to-be-announced panel moderated by CGS' Marcy Darnovsky!

COMMENTARY



On Animal Genomics: People Are Animals, My Friend

[Pete Shanks](#), *Biopolitical Times* | 09.15.2021

The Earth BioGenome Project, a “moonshot for biology,” seems to have sparked a surge of studies demonstrating that animals of many different species are to some extent behaviorally and genetically similar to people. Some of this research may lead to medical applications for humans, and some to misguided interventions in the environment.

WHAT WE'RE READING

GENE THERAPY | HERITABLE GENOME EDITING | ASSISTED REPRODUCTION |
EUGENICS | GENOMICS | STEM CELLS | VARIOUS

GENE THERAPY

Stem cell ‘magical miracles’ possible — but at a hefty price

[David Jensen](#), *Capitol Weekly* | 09.13.2021

California’s stem cell agency is mandated to “establish and oversee” programs to help make stem cell and gene therapies “available and affordable” for all Californians. This effort could become influential nationally and even globally. But the agency is badly behind schedule for this difficult and vitally important task.

Breakout ‘CRISPR platform’ company Mammoth Biosciences is officially a unicorn

[Emma Betuel](#), *TechCrunch* | 09.09.2021

The company, co-founded by Jennifer Doudna, has reached a billion-dollar valuation. Executives see Mammoth as a platform providing a CRISPR toolbox for in-vivo applications, roughly comparable to the technology platforms provided by Intel and Microsoft.

CRISPR-Based Therapeutics Blaze an In Vivo Path to the Clinic

[Ashleen Knutsen](#), *Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology News* | 09.01.2021

Several companies are showing that CRISPR systems can be tucked inside delivery vehicles and injected locally or systemically to treat disease. The first systemically delivered CRISPR-Cas9 therapy has entered clinical trials, and other preclinical studies with rodents and nonhuman primates are underway.

New gene therapies may soon treat dozens of rare diseases, but million-dollar price tags will put them out of reach for many

[Kevin Doxzen](#), *The Conversation* | 08.31.2021

We may soon see cures for rare diseases like sickle cell disease, muscular dystrophy, and progeria. The problem is these and other possible gene therapies will carry enormous price tags.

HERITABLE GENOME EDITING

Kazuto Kato: the ethics of editing humanity

[Gary Humphreys](#), *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* | 09.01.2021

Kato, a bioethicist who was a member of the WHO advisory committee on human genome editing, believes that regulators need to consider establishing international agreements and possibly an enforceable international treaty governing limits on emerging technologies, including heritable genetic modifications.

We Haven't Really Cracked the Code of Life

[Jag Bhalla](#), *Issues in Science and Technology* | 09.01.2021

In this skeptical review of *The Code Breaker*, author Walter Isaacson is described as the rare raconteur who can enliven complex science — but that this is unfortunately combined with “hype-laden blather” and “absurdly wishful hand-wave-y thinking” that adds up to “pop science malpractice.”

ASSISTED REPRODUCTION

Pandemic pushing more women into surrogacy

[Priyanka A. Chokani](#), *The Times of India* | 09.02.2021

A Hyderabad clinic has reported an exponential increase in enquiries from women wanting to become surrogates during the pandemic, most because their husbands had suffered a loss of income. But a bill currently in the Indian parliament would ban commercial surrogacy, allowing only altruistic surrogacy involving a close relative of the couple in question.

Japan to allow wider preimplantation genetic testing of eggs in IVF

[Mie Sakamoto](#), *Kyodo News* | 08.29.2021

Genetic testing of IVF embryos will be expanded to conditions that develop after adulthood, the Japan Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology said earlier this year, in a decision already questioned by one disability rights group.

EUGENICS

Strides made but stigmas remain: Japan hesitant in embracing

Paralympics

[Gavin Blair](#), *The Guardian* | 08.30.2021

Television scheduling and audiences for the Tokyo Paralympics show historical attitudes to disability in Japan may be improving, if slowly. It was not until 1996 that Japan repealed the 1948 Eugenics Protection Law permitting sterilization of people with a range of disabilities.

Muir Woods park staff annotates own signs with historical corrections for racism, misogyny

[Ashley Harrell](#), *SFGate* | 08.26.2021

Alterations to a sign with a timeline of the park's history include yellow sticky notes offering information about the original, indigenous managers of the forest as well as the role of women in the creation of Muir Woods. Facts about the existence and impacts of racism and eugenics are also sticky-noted. The reaction to the exhibit has thus far been "very positive."

Why Autistic People Are Worried by Spectrum 10K

[Robert Chapman](#), *Psychology Today* | 08.25.2021

With the expressed aim of increasing autistic well-being, a new research collaboration will examine the DNA of a hoped-for 10,000 autistic participants. But the focus on autistic DNA has worried many autistic people, who are concerned about eugenicist attempts to eliminate autism.

STEM CELLS

What's next for lab-grown human embryos?

[Kendall Powell](#), *Nature* | 08.31.2021

The ISSCR's recent recommendation means that in countries where the 14-day rule is not enshrined in law, lab groups can apply for permission to continue developing human embryos past that point. Such studies could reveal what happens during human development after the embryo would normally have implanted in the uterus. But some researchers and bioethicists have concerns.

Rogue Stem Cell Clinics, CIRM and the Feds

[David Jensen](#), *The California Stem Cell Report* | 08.31.2021

Nearly 1,300 clinics nationwide peddle nostrums that cost thousands of dollars to desperate people. The federal government is finally moving on the clinics, but in California regulators and lawmakers are mired in stasis. The state-funded stem cell agency has produced a short video and other information on questions people should ask before signing up with any clinic.

GENOMICS

Two Scientific Journals Retract Articles Involving Chinese DNA Research

[Sui-Lee Wee](#), *The New York Times* | 09.09.2021

The rare retractions come after several scientists raised questions about how Chinese researchers obtained the full consent of their Uyghur subjects. Both studies analyzed DNA samples from Uyghurs in attempts to recreate a person's features, including face and height.

India's DNA COVID vaccine is a world first – more are coming

[Smriti Mallapaty](#), *Nature* | 09.02.2021

Close to a dozen DNA vaccines against COVID-19 are in clinical trials globally, and at least as many are

in earlier stages of development. DNA vaccines are also being developed for many other diseases. They may represent the future of vaccinology because they are easy to manufacture and typically do not require refrigeration.

The Census Has Revealed A More Multiracial U.S. One Reason? Cheaper DNA Tests

[Hansi Lo Wang](#), *NPR* | 08.28.2021

For about 1 in 10 people counted for last year's U.S. census, a single check box was not enough to report their racial identities. Exactly how big an effect DNA ancestry tests had on census results is difficult to pin down, but they have helped shape the country's ever-changing ideas about the social construct that is race.

VARIOUS

A New Company With a Wild Mission: Bring Back the Woolly Mammoth

[Carl Zimmer](#), *The New York Times* | 09.13.2021

With \$15 million in private funding and George Church as lead scientist, Colossal aims to bring thousands of creatures that resemble woolly mammoths back to Siberia. Other researchers are deeply skeptical that Colossal will pull off such a feat, and concerned about serious ethical questions. Would this be humane? Who gets to decide whether the creatures can be set loose?

Science Alone Can't Heal a Sick Society

[Jay S. Kaufman](#), *The New York Times* | 09.10.2021

It makes sense that political polarization hampers effective pandemic response, but this is where explanatory inference gets trickiest: like everyone else, epidemiologists exist inside the social forces that shape the pandemic. To restore faith in science, there must be faith in social institutions more broadly, and this requires a political reckoning. Science is not some cloistered preserve in the clouds, but is buried in the muck with everything else.

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