

Request to Rename Jordan Hall

February 16, 2019

To: Marc Tessier-Lavigne, President, Stanford University

Persis Drell, Provost, Stanford University

From: Eugenics at Stanford History Project

Dear President Tessier-Lavigne and Provost Drell,

In accordance with the [*Proposed Principles and Procedures for Renaming Buildings and Other Features at Stanford University*](#), this document serves as a request to initiate the renaming of Jordan Hall. Over the past year, the Eugenics at Stanford History Project has worked towards documenting Jordan's — as well as Stanford University's — history with eugenics and the American Eugenic Movement. We present our findings both within this report and within [our website](#). In light of Jordan's racism, ableism, and active support of eugenics, we believe that Jordan Hall should be renamed.

This Request is structured into five main parts. First, we address the history of Jordan's academic research and the presence of eugenic theories within such. Second, we explore the history of eugenics at Stanford University more broadly, examining Jordan's legacy at the University. Third, we examine Jordan's role in the Eugenic Movement through the organizations he founded, supported, and joined with a focus on the material and political impact his eugenic beliefs had on people. Fourth, we look to the larger context of Jordan's actions to question if he was, indeed, a “man of his times” as it is often claimed. Finally, we present our argument for the

renaming of Jordan Hall and the acknowledgement of both Jordan's and Stanford's role in the Eugenics Movement.

Jordan's Beliefs

As an academic, David Starr Jordan studied pedagogy, evolution, ichthyology, and eugenics. Eugenics, the science¹ of improving the human race through selective breeding, was an integral part of political and academic discourse during the early twentieth century in the United States. It was, furthermore, a vital part of Jordan's academic legacy — his research on eugenics is likely second only to his founding of Stanford University in terms of their influence on the world. It is impossible to separate Jordan's legacy from his work on eugenics.

Jordan, a prolific writer, wrote and studied extensively about eugenics and the role of heredity on social issues. Many, if not most, of his written works were about eugenics or contained segments on eugenics and race science. He regularly suggested that the genetic pool of a nation determined its successes: “the blood of a nation determines its history” and “the history of a nation determines its blood.”² For instance, he argued that ancient Rome fell because “the best men were cut off from parenthood, leaving its own weaker strains and strains of lower races to be fathers of coming generations.”³ Similarly, he thought that indigenous Filipinos were incapable of understanding governance, writing that they were “as capable of self-government or

¹ We purposefully use the term science, as opposed to pseudoscience, to emphasize that eugenics was considered — and perhaps even *was* — a scientific pursuit. That does not, however, legitimize any of its findings, scientific or not. For more, see Martin S. Pernick, “Eugenics and Public Health in American History,” *American Journal of Public Health* 8, no. 11 (1997).

² David Starr Jordan, [*The Blood of the Nation: A Study of the Decay of Races Through the Survival of the Unfit*](#) (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1902), 7.

³ David Starr Jordan, “War Selection in the Ancient War,” *The Scientific Monthly* 1, no. 1 (Oct., 1915): 37.

of any other government as so many monkeys.”⁴ For Jordan, blood — that is, heredity — was everything: it could create or destroy any civilization, including the United States. This drove him to study the new science of eugenics in hopes of preventing racial degradation and the fall of American civilization.

Because of this, Jordan, like most eugenicists, believed it was necessary to avoid dysgenic degeneration: the decrease of the racial stock through unwanted qualities. Such qualities included what we would today consider disabilities. For example, Jordan viewed “feeble-mindedness”, referring to a ranking system of mental ability deeply associated with eugenics, as an “evil” which was “handed down as a baleful legacy from generation to generation.”⁵ Another trait Jordan explicitly painted as undesired was pauperism, referring to the “undeserving poor.” Pauperism was a moral defect: due to inherent and hereditary qualities, paupers were lazy, inefficient, and deserving of their squalid conditions. Using the dehumanizing language of parasitism, Jordan presents paupers as social leeches, draining the wealth of society only to reproduce and create more paupers.⁶ The “feeble-minded”, paupers, imbeciles, moral degenerates — these were all threats to Jordan’s eugenic vision of a pure United States.

Identifying these threats, however, was not enough: they had to be eliminated as well. To reach the eugenic ideal, David Starr Jordan promoted the segregation and sterilization of people deemed eugenically unfit. In his view, the end goal of eugenics was “the elimination, by

⁴ David Starr Jordan, [*Imperial Democracy: A Study of the Relation of Government by the People. Equality Before the Law, and Other Tenets of Democracy, To the Demands of a Vigorous Foreign Policy and Other Demands of Imperial Dominion*](#) (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1901), 24.

⁵ See Gerald V. O’Brien, *Framing the Moron: The Social Construction of Feeble-Mindedness in the American Eugenic Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

⁶ David Starr Jordan, *Evolution: A Syllabus of Lecture*, Box 7, Folder 1, David Starr Jordan Papers, Stanford University Special Collections, Stanford University, Stanford.

restriction, of hopeless hereditary feeble-mindedness and of defects.”⁷ In his popular *Heredity of Richard Roe*, an overview of eugenics, Jordan dedicates a large section to quoting Charles Davenport’s, one of the most influential eugenicists in promoting the forced sterilizations of the eugenically “unfit,” arguments in favor of coerced sterilizations.⁸ Jordan himself also explicitly supported the coerced sterilizations of the unwanted, describing the sterilization of innocent “defectives” as a “wholesome act” and a “wise charity” for both the sterilized individual and society as a whole.⁹

A large portion of Jordan’s academic corpus was dedicated to eugenics. Jordan performed some original research on eugenics and heredity. After studying a few famous wars, Jordan concluded war was a dangerous dysgenic influence that ought to be avoided, and he spent much of his academic career researching this supposed phenomenon. Because courageous people died in battle while cowards fled, Jordan thought that war reduced the number of fit men, which had a disastrous impact on the racial health of the nation.¹⁰ Other aspects of Jordan’s writings are what we now might consider popular science: texts presenting eugenics to a layman audience. *Heredity of Richard Roe*, for instance, was intended to spread eugenic concepts to a wider audience, to encourage readers to support eugenic marriages and policies.¹¹ Jordan both popularized eugenics and added to eugenic theory with his research.

⁷ David Starr Jordan, “Aim of Scientific Eugenics,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (San Francisco, CA), Jan. 7, 1913.

⁸ David Starr Jordan, [The Heredity of Richard Roe: A Discussion of the Principles of Eugenics](#) (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1911), 77-82.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁰ See David Starr Jordan, [War and the Breed: The Relation of War to the Downfall of Nations](#) (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1915).

¹¹ See Jordan, [The Heredity of Richard Roe](#).

Scientific racism unsurprisingly pervades Jordan's academic research. In his books, Jordan regularly used a racial hierarchy that placed white races at the very top: the “‘blonde races’ of Europe” were objectively superior to the “lesser races,” for instance.¹² The American white race was uniquely superior for Jordan: after extensive genealogical research, Jordan concluded that most white Americans were descended from powerful individuals such as European kings or Ancient Roman leaders.¹³ Whiteness (specifically Anglo whiteness) was a eugenic trait — a trait to be praised and preserved.

As such, Jordan presented the non-white, “lower races” as a eugenic threat, weakening the overall racial health of the United States. For Jordan, the “introduction of African blood” negatively impacted the United States by diluting pure white blood.¹⁴ Jordan also described black suffrage as an “evil,” arguing that black Americans lacked “the foundation of intelligence” to be good citizens.¹⁵ However, he did believe that there was still hope for the “negro problem.”¹⁶ According to Jordan, the introduction of “white blood” could improve black communities, as “the American mulatto as a whole is superior to the pure African Negro.”¹⁷ Anti-Blackness undergirded Jordan's promotion of racial hierarchies.

Jordan also targeted Mexicans and Indigenous groups with racist and eugenicist rhetoric, similarly portraying them as threats to white America. Viewing Mexicans as a “mongrel race,” Jordan argued that Mexicans were a waste of Spanish and Portuguese blood, “showing few of the

¹² David Starr Jordan, [*War and the Breed: The Relation of War to the Downfall of Nations*](#) (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1915), 33.

¹³ “[Mark Anthony Ancestor of Most Americans of Puritan Stock](#),” *Boston Daily Globe* (1923-1927), Mar 03, 1925.

¹⁴ Jordan, [*War and the Breed*](#), 31.

¹⁵ Jordan, [*The Heredity of Richard Roe*](#), 119.

¹⁶ Jordan, during his time in abroad in Europe, gave a talk on the “negro problem” to a group of London eugenicists. See David Starr Jordan, *The Days of a Man: Being Memoirs of a Naturalist, Teacher, and Minor Prophet of Democracy*, vol. 1 (New York: World Book Company, 1922), 330.

¹⁷ Jordan, [*War and the Breed*](#), 31.

virtues of the European stock” — with Indigenous populations presumably showing even less.¹⁸

To Jordan, these “degenerate, dependent, or alien races” in the United States were “a social problem; a menace to peace and welfare.”¹⁹ Just as Jordan believed that black people lacked the capabilities required for citizenship, so too did he lament that the “Mexican peon” could “never be fit for citizenship,” with Mexican and Indigenous migrants being “the absolute off-scourings of their country.”²⁰ Jordan often argued that Mexican people were incapable of understanding American democracy, describing them as “teeming millions, ignorant, superstitious, and ill-nurtured, with little self-control... lacking, indeed, most of our Anglo-Saxon values.”²¹

Espousing fears of public health, Jordan also identified Mexican immigration as the cause for disease in California, claiming that “the Mexicans have brought with them bubonic plague, small pox, and typhus fever.”²² Jordan’s racial worries led him to work with eugenic committees attempting to limit the immigration of unwanted people through the United States’ southern border.

Immigration was a constant concern for Jordan and other eugenicists. Jordan also wanted to limit the migration of certain Asian populations in the name of eugenics and racial purity. Jordan thought to limit the immigration of Chinese people to the United States (especially working class Chinese migrants), portraying them as pauperish and dirty: “no one wants the lowest class of Chinese, for there is nothing so unutterably bad as the low, uneducated Chinese

¹⁸ Ibid., 29.

¹⁹ Jordan, *Imperial Democracy*, 44.

²⁰ Quoted Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 157; Letter from David Starr Jordan to Charles Davenport, June 1, 1925, Charles B. Davenport Papers, B:D27, American Philosophical Society.

²¹ Jordan, *The Days of a Man*, 638.

²² Letter from David Starr Jordan to Charles B. Davenport, May 7, 1925. Charles B. Davenport Papers, B:D27, American Philosophical Society.

of the lowest type. It is this class that makes up what we call ‘Chinatown,’ and no one wants another Chinatown in any city in this country,” he argued.²³ While Jordan tolerated Japanese migrants more (he told stories of beautiful half-white and half-Japanese women to prove their superiority to other Asian races²⁴), he held a paternalistic attitude to all Asian immigrants, especially those he deemed racially inferior.

Jordan had a complex relationship with Judaism, often praising Jewish culture but ultimately spreading racist and antisemitic ideas. In his publications, Jordan promoted — explicitly or implicitly — antisemitic conspiracies and tropes. For instance, Jordan’s 1912 book *Unseen Empire* argued that Jewish bankers were the cause behind the contemporary wars in Europe, aiming to profit off of global divisions and conflicts. Jordan portrayed Jewish bankers as a selfish cabal, dividing “the world among them[selves].”²⁵ Throughout his life, Jordan obsessed over this conspiracy, filling scrapbooks with information documenting influential Jewish financiers such as the Rothschild family.²⁶ When giving speeches on this subject, he was far more blunt about his claim: “the Rothschilds have been the actual rulers of Europe,” he purported in a 1912 speech to the Stanford student body.²⁷ Many contemporary Jewish organizations and publications saw these claims as dangerously antisemitic, publically asking Jordan to retract or clarify his arguments.²⁸ In response to these accusations, Jordan clarified that, while he did not believe in a vast Jewish conspiracy, he did believe that Jewish people were

²³ [“Beware of Japs.”](#) *San Francisco Chronicle*, Dec 29, 1905.

²⁴ [“Love Indispensable. Asserts Dr. Jordan.”](#) *San Francisco Chronicle*, Feb 8, 1911.

²⁵ David Starr Jordan, *Unseen Empire* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1912), 19.

²⁶ Michael N. Dobkowski, *The Tarnished Dream: The Basis of American Anti-semitism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 190.

²⁷ [“Rothschilds Rule Europe. Declares Dr. Jordan. Who Say Financial Intrigues Prevent War.”](#) *New York Times*, Feb. 9, 1912.

²⁸ G. Dzutsch, [“‘The Invisible Empire’ again.”](#) *The American Israelite*, Mar 01, 1917.; [“Fear of the Jews.”](#) *Jewish Advocate*, Oct 04, 1917.

shrewd and calculating as a racial trait, leading to their successes in finance — another common racist trope.²⁹ Despite this clarification, Jordan's ideas were certainly influential among antisemites: *Unseen Empire* in part inspired Henry Ford's antisemitism, per contemporary Jewish leaders.³⁰ Jordan's academic research on war and eugenics spread antisemitic theories, promoted race science based on Jewish stereotypes, and inspired antisemitism in others.

Jordan's espousal of eugenics and race science was not only found in the books he wrote; it also made its way into Stanford classrooms, to Stanford students. During the first decade of Stanford's existence as an educational institution, Jordan created a class on evolution in which he taught that Indigenous Australians and Black people were closer to apes than their white peers: "blue-gum negroes, blue-gum apes," his syllabus reads.³¹ In another series of lectures on racial degeneration, Jordan blamed the impoverished for ruining the racial stock, suggesting ending most forms of charity and welfare: "The sheltered life leads to inefficiency; the parasitic life, to degradation."³² Furthermore, every year for thirty-three years at both Indiana University and Stanford University, Jordan gave a course of lectures on bionomics, similar to the modern field of ecology, which concluded with a segment on eugenics, the final and perhaps main section of the course.³³ Many of Jordan's textbooks contained sections on eugenics and race science as

²⁹ David Starr Jordan, "[David Starr Jordan, of Stanford University, Denies having made Statement Derogatory to Jews.](#)" *The American Israelite*, Oct 28, 1915. David Starr Jordan, "[Letter to Editor,](#)" *Jewish Advocate*, Dec 30, 1920.

³⁰ Neil Baldwin, *Henry Ford and the Jews: The Mass Production of Hate* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), 49-50; Dobkowski, *The Tarnished Dream*, 197.

³¹ David Starr Jordan, [The Factors in Organic Evolution: A Syllabus](#) (Boston: Ginn and Company Publishers, 1894), 98.

³² David Starr Jordan, *Evolution: A Syllabus of Lecture*, Box 7, Folder 1, David Starr Jordan Papers, Stanford University Special Collections, Stanford University, Stanford.

³³ Jordan, *The Days of a Man*, 298.

well. His co-authored textbook on biology and evolution, for example, portrayed black people physically more similar to apes (see Figure 1).³⁴

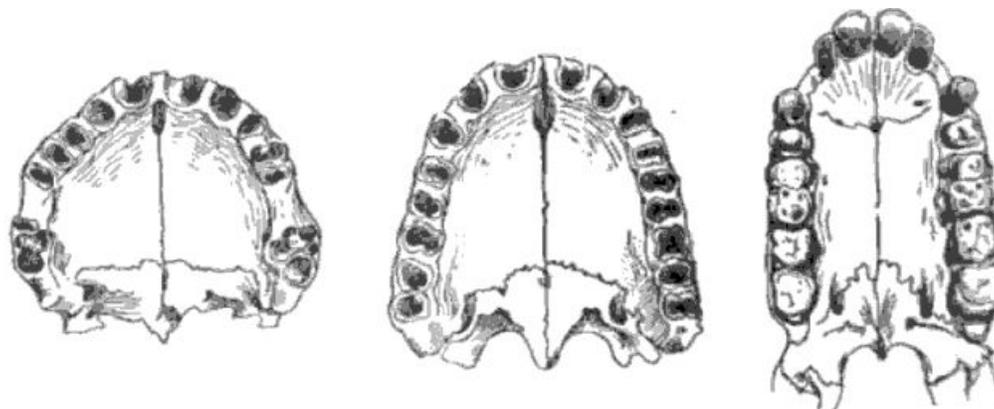


FIG. 282.—Upper teeth of man and the orang-utan: At left, of a Caucasian; in middle, of a negro; at right, of a grown orang-utan. The condition in the negro is between that in the orang-utan and that in the Caucasian. (After Wiedersheim.)

Figure 1: An image used in Jordan's textbook demonstrating how the jaw "in the negro is between that in the orang-utan and that in the Caucasian." From David Starr Jordan and Vernon Lyman Kellogg, *Evolution and Animal Life: An Elementary Discussion of the Facts, Processes, Laws and Theories Relating to the Life and Evolution of Animals* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1907)

David Starr Jordan, eugenics, racism, and Stanford University are all connected during Jordan's reign as president — and beyond. *The Blood of a Nation*, one of his more influential eugenic texts, even started as a speech given at Stanford.³⁵ His beliefs and writings are antithetical to Stanford's Fundamental Standard, ironically written by Jordan himself: scientific racism, eugenics, ableism are in direct conflict with "respect for order, morality, personal honor and the rights of others."³⁶ Believing in the fundamental superiority of the white race and of able people is unrecognizable with any educational institution that claims to care about "the rights of

³⁴ David Starr Jordan and Vernon Lyman Kellogg, [*Evolution and Animal Life: An Elementary Discussion of the Facts, Processes, Laws and Theories Relating to the Life and Evolution of Animals*](#) (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1907), 458.

³⁵ Sheldon Eklan-Olson, *Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Decides?: Abortion, Neonatal Care, Assisted Dying, and Capital Punishment* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 28.

³⁶ "[Fundamental Standard](#)," Stanford University.

others.” The winds of freedom cannot blow where harmful ideologies draped in the illusion of science and objectivity exclude people of color, disabled people, and any one deemed unfit.

Jordan’s School

Jordan’s promotion of eugenics and scientific racism have influenced Stanford University since its very creation. Jordan was far from the only eugenicist to walk the sandstone arcades of the University. Instead, Jordan’s legacy manifests itself at Stanford through a series of Stanford-affiliated eugenicists, many selected and influenced by him, even as recently as the 1970s.³⁷ Key ideas to the eugenic movement that were used to harm unwanted communities such as the IQ test and race suicide theory developed within Stanford’s walls. Even today, controversial gene editing technology is being developed at an ever-growing pace at Stanford, making it more important than ever to reconcile Stanford’s history with eugenics with the politics of the present. This starts with renaming Jordan Hall.

Our education and psychology departments have been haunted by prominent eugenicists who used their positions to further their beliefs in the inferiority of certain groups of people. Lewis Terman and Ellwood Cubberley, professors of psychology and education respectively during the early twentieth century, were deeply influential examples of such. Both were fascinated with the gifted child: the child eugenically born with higher levels of intelligence, the antithesis to the feeble-minded. It was this fascination that led Terman to develop the Stanford-Binet IQ test, a method in which to both weed out the feeble-minded and to locate the gifted. Cubberley (who grants his name to Cubberley Library and Cubberley Auditorium), too,

³⁷ Many also have buildings named after them on campus: Storey, Wilbur, and Cubberley, for example. This report will not deal with potential renamings of these buildings.

promoted an educational focus on the most gifted, denying resources to anyone deemed to be born unintelligent. Of course, these gifted students were always white: Terman and Cubberley's intelligence formulation concluded Mexicans, Black people, and Indigenous Americans were genetically predisposed to stupidity, writing that "their dullness seems racial, or at least inherent in the family stock from which they come."³⁸ Terman believed his IQ test could be a means of locating and helping eliminate the "menace of the feebleminded" through eugenic means.³⁹ The Stanford-Binet scale was used extensively as a way to measure which people ought to be sterilized to protect racial health.

Besides the Stanford-Binet IQ test, race suicide, another keystone of eugenic thought, was also birthed within Stanford's sandstone halls. Race suicide, the fear that the (white) population would become extinct due to a reduce in birth rate and an increase in immigration, was first coined in the late nineteenth century by Edward Ross, an economist at Stanford University. Studying various cases of immigration, Ross concluded that the "principle of unequal death-rates (or birth-rates) is the key... to all manner of fitness in nature."⁴⁰ As such, the birth rates of white Americans suddenly became a very pressing issue for Ross, considering the increasing birth rates of non-white immigrants in the United States. At a 1900 speech in San Francisco, Ross decried the high immigration rates of Asians, portraying them as a threat to the "Anglo-Saxon character of American society."⁴¹ Though he denied it, he was even reported to

³⁸ Lewis M. Terman, [*The Measurement of Intelligence: An Explanation of and a Complete Guide for the Use of the Stanford Revision and Extension of the Binet-Simon Intelligence*](#) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), 91-2.

³⁹ See Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics From the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 39-40.

⁴⁰ Edward Alsworth Ross, "The Genesis of Ethical Elements," *American Journal of Sociology* 5, no. 6 (May, 1900), 761.

⁴¹ Quoted in Laura L. Lovett, *Conceiving the Future: Pronatalism, Reproduction, and the Family in the United States, 1890-1938* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 81-82

have endorsed violent responses to Japanese immigrants, arguing that “should the worst come to the worst it would be better for us to train our guns on every vessel bringing Japanese to our shores than permit them to land.”⁴² Partly because the Stanfords’ railroad industry employed many Asian immigrants, Jane Stanford saw this as an insult to her family’s legacy and ousted Ross from the University. Nevertheless, the harm had been done: alongside the Stanford-Binet IQ test, race suicide had become a main feature of eugenic thought in America.

Stanford professors did not just research eugenics; like Jordan, they also taught it to students. Thomas Storey (who grants his name to Storey House on Stanford’s Campus), taught hygiene and physical education to Stanford students and incorporated eugenics as a major part of his courses. His 1929 textbook, for instance, encouraged students to select a spouse with “the promise of a sound heredity for the children that may come.”⁴³ Storey also taught students that eugenic policies such as sterilization or segregation were beneficial to the race: “the relation of pauperism, mental degeneracy and crime to heredity justifies community interference.”⁴⁴ Similarly, hygienist Andrew S. Stevens used eugenic material promoting coerced sterilization in his class at Stanford during the 1940s.⁴⁵ The teaching of eugenics in Stanford hygiene courses was no doubt due in large part to Jordan’s influence, who often oversaw the department: “if you do the right thing I will stand behind you,” he wrote to one director of hygiene courses, “if you don’t you will have to accept the consequences.”⁴⁶

⁴² Quoted in Lovett, *Conceiving the Future*, 81-82.

⁴³ Thomas A. Storey, *Group Hygiene* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1929), 54.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁵ Andrew C. Stevens to Human Betterment Foundation, April 24, 1942, Box 6, Folder 9, E. S. Gosney Papers And Records Of The Human Betterment Foundation, Archives, California Institute of Technology.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Letter from William F. Snow to Thomas A Storey, March 22, 1906, Box 29, Folder 222, David Starr Jordan Papers, Stanford University Special Collections, Stanford University, Stanford.

Many biologists on Stanford's campus have also taught eugenic theory to their students. Vernon Kellogg, who would later work for the Hoover Administration, was a prominent biologist at Stanford who collaborated with David Starr Jordan on research and textbook writing and wrote prolifically on eugenics. "The most economical and most positive factor in human progress is good breeding. Race-deterioration comes chiefly from its opposite, bad breeding," he wrote in *The Atlantic*.⁴⁷ Another biologist, Leonas Burlingame, regularly used material promoting eugenics (provided by the Human Betterment Foundation, founded in part by David Starr Jordan) in his biology class up until his retirement in the 1940s.⁴⁸ His co-authored biology textbook concluded with a section on the importance of "racial betterment through eugenics."⁴⁹ During his tenure at Stanford, Burlingame also taught a class specifically on the subject of eugenics and heredity, which was so popular that he eventually wrote a textbook based on his lectures: *Heredity and Social Problems*.⁵⁰

These classes on eugenics seem to have been successful: many of the key figures of the American eugenic movement were educated at Stanford University. Paul Popenoe, a member of the Human Betterment Foundation and founder of the American Institute for Family Relations, studied biology at Stanford and was a protege of Jordan, who considered him a "disciple".⁵¹ Popenoe was deeply influenced by his mentor's eugenic beliefs, as he would go on to become one of the more powerful proponents of forced eugenic sterilizations. Lee Raymond Dice,

⁴⁷ Vernon Kellogg, "[Eugenics and Militarism](#)." *The Atlantic*, June 1913.

⁴⁸ Human Betterment Mailing List, 1940, Box 4, Folder 7.1, E. S. Gosney Papers And Records Of The Human Betterment Foundation, Archives, California Institute of Technology.

⁴⁹ Leonas Lancelot Burlingame, Harold Heath, Ernest Gale Martin, George James Pearce, [General Biology](#) (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1922), 534.

⁵⁰ Leonas Lancelot Burlingame, *Heredity and Social Problems* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1940), v.

⁵¹ Jordan, *The Days of a Man*, 298.

another Stanford student who studied evolution and eugenics under David Starr Jordan and Vernon Kellogg, went on to become an influential researcher of heredity, eugenics, and their uses in medical genetics, founding Michigan Heredity Clinic in Ann Arbor. The Heredity Clinic provided eugenic counseling and researched the eugenic consequences of marriage patterns.⁵² Similarly, Herbert Hoover, another student at Stanford University, was inspired by eugenic rhetoric as well, attending and sponsoring the Second International Congress of Eugenics, possibly after working with Vernon Kellogg.⁵³

Many Stanford academics planned a major exhibition on eugenics, the Race Betterment Week during the Panama-Exhibit International Exhibition, in San Francisco in 1915. Alongside Jordan, Paul Popenoe and Herbert R. Stolz, a Stanford professor of hygiene, coordinated the week-long expose on eugenic theory. The goal of the exposition was to start “a progressive battle for bettering our race.”⁵⁴ Crowds flooded the event to watch various eugenicists — many Stanford affiliates — discuss dysgenic traits, the future of the race, and the need for mass sterilization. Thousands of people attended these various talks, making it one of the most successful events overall of the Exhibition.⁵⁵

David Starr Jordan was not the only eugenicist president of Stanford University. The third president of the University, Ray Lyman Wilbur (serving between 1933 and 1943), was drawn to eugenics by his interest in public health. Like many medical professionals of his era, Wilbur encouraged eugenic measures as a method to protect public health, arguing that “there is

⁵² Nathaniel Comfort, *The Science of Human Perfection: How Genes Became the Heart of American Medicine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 108-11, 123-125.

⁵³ Allan Chase, *The Legacy of Malthus: The Social Costs of the New Scientific Racism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 19.

⁵⁴ Quoted in Stern, *Eugenic Nation*, 51.

⁵⁵ See Stern, *Eugenic Nation*, 51-53.

so much we might do if intelligence rather than emotions controlled the quality of the oncoming race.”⁵⁶ Lamenting that humanity focused more on breeding race horses than breeding itself, Wilbur proposed an expansion of eugenic research at universities, a proposal which was praised by many Stanford groups.⁵⁷ Under Wilbur’s presidency, eugenics grew as a subject to be taught and studied at Stanford University.

Even as recently as the 1970s, open and proud eugenicists have taught at Stanford. William Shockley, inventor of the transistor, taught physics at Stanford until 1975. In his free time, Shockley was a eugenicist, obsessing over IQ and authoring articles on how the racial stock of America was decreasing. He sought to teach classes at Stanford about eugenics and dysgenics and advocated theories of racial intelligence. Unsurprisingly, Shockley cited David Starr Jordan as evidence that his ideas were both acceptable and accurate.⁵⁸ While this did cause controversy among the student body, Shockley’s eugenics were symbolic of a wider resurgence in race science during the late twentieth century.

These are simply a few select eugenicists who taught and researched at Stanford, who used their positions of authority to further their eugenic goals. Eugenics is not some distant past for Stanford University — it is more recent, more impactful, and more alive. Some of the same eugenic rhetoric is still used today: the gifted child, an idea at the very core of eugenic thought,

⁵⁶ Ray Lyman Wilbur, “Mental Health as a National Problem,” in *The March of Medicine: Selected Addresses and Articles on Medical Topics, 1913-1937*, ed. Ray Lyman Wilbur. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1938), 174. This address was originally given in 1931 before the Annual Congress on Medical Education, Licensure and Hospitals.

⁵⁷ Ray Lyman Wilbur, “Biology in the University of Tomorrow,” in *The March of Medicine: Selected Addresses and Articles on Medical Topics, 1913-1937*, ed. Ray Lyman Wilbur. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1938), 251-252; “[Importance of Unhampered Education Wisely Stressed at Big Annual Meet.](#)” *Stanford Daily*, Oct. 11, 1935.

⁵⁸ William Shockley, “Playboy Interview with William Shockley, August 1980,” in *Shockley on Eugenics and Race: The Application of Science to the Solution of Human Problems*, ed. Roger Pearson. (Washington, D.C.: Scott-Townsend Publishers, 1992), 251.

still rings true to many students currently attending Stanford. As Edith Mierless, Stanford Class of 1907 graduate and later a popular faculty member, put it, “Jordan was himself the prime Stanford symbol.”⁵⁹ Perhaps this is true: the shadow of eugenics may be central to Stanford’s legacy.

Jordan’s Legacy

Jordan’s eugenic legacies extend far beyond Stanford University and his academic research. Jordan’s eugenics was also political: he sought to eradicate unwanted traits for the sake of the nation through legal measures. Throughout his life, Jordan joined, supported, and founded various groups advocating for eugenic laws and policies. With his networks and connections to sources of funding, Jordan’s support was invaluable to the American Eugenics Movement. The impact of eugenic thought on millions of innocents across the globe is as much a part of Jordan’s legacy as his work at Stanford University.

After its creation in 1909, Jordan served as the chairman of the American Breeders’ Association’s Committee on Eugenics, the first organization to advocate eugenics in the United States using that term.⁶⁰ In 1910, the Eugenics Record Office (ERO) was created under the Committee on Eugenics, with Charles Davenport — perhaps the most influential eugenics in American history — at its head. It was Jordan, a year earlier, who invited Davenport to the Committee.⁶¹ The Committee on Eugenics and the ERO both researched heredity (through, of course, flawed eugenic lenses), supported the sterilization of the unfit, and fought for the

⁵⁹ Theresa Johnston, “[Meet President Jordan](#),” *Stanford Magazine*, January/February, 2010.

⁶⁰ Mark H. Haller, *Eugenics: Hereditarian Attitudes in American Thought* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1963), 62.

⁶¹ Letter from David Starr Jordan to Charles Davenport, October 29, 1908, Charles B. Davenport Papers, B:D27, American Philosophical Society.

restriction of unfit immigrants.⁶² Jordan, alongside Davenport, participated in the National Committee for Mental Hygiene, first created in 1909. The Committee, fearing mental degeneration of the racial stock, reported eugenics as a way to cure America's mentally ill populations and encouraged the mass sterilization of this vulnerable population.⁶³

In 1928, Jordan, alongside E. S. Gosney and Paul Popenoe (Jordan's earlier student), founded the Human Betterment Foundation (HBF) in Pasadena. Created to educate America on the importance of eugenic sterilization, the HBF extensively promoted the coerced sterilization measures already occurring in California, in hopes of encouraging similar policies in other states. Their publication *28 Years of Sterilization in California* presented the statistics gathered by the group showing the apparent success of California's eugenic sterilization policy. This and other HBF publications were sent to lawmakers and schools (including Stanford and Palo Alto High School) to inform about the supposed success of such eugenic policies.⁶⁴ As a member of the Board of Directors, Jordan had a direct hand in the birth and development of the HBF, cementing his position as a central figure in the Eugenics Movement.

The support of people like David Starr Jordan and organizations such as the HBF and ERO directly influenced state eugenic laws mandating the sterilization of unwanted populations. During the twentieth century, the United States performed upwards of sixty thousand forced or coerced sterilization procedures in the name of eugenics. California was responsible for one-third, or twenty thousand, of these procedures, no doubt due in part to the influence of the HBF.⁶⁵

These laws targeted incarcerated and/or disabled people for sterilization, a form of

⁶² Haller, *Eugenics*, 62-72.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁶⁴ Human Betterment Mailing List, 1940, Box 4, Folder 7.1, E. S. Gosney Papers And Records Of The Human Betterment Foundation, Archives, California Institute of Technology.

⁶⁵ Stern, *Eugenic Nation*, 84.

state-endorsed violence against the undesired segments of society. People of color were unproportionally targeted: in California, for instance, those of Mexican origin were targeted at elevated rates due to the anti-Mexican rhetoric of eugenicists such as Jordan.⁶⁶ Even as recently as the 1970s, African American, Native American, and Puerto Rican women have faced the threat of involuntary sterilization for eugenic influenced reasons as recently a mere few generations ago by federal programs masquerading as social welfare and public hospitals.⁶⁷ These acts of state violence against the unwanted are not ancient history. They are recent, they are horrific, and they are a direct result of the eugenic rhetoric used by David Starr Jordan and the organizations he worked alongside.

Jordan's legacy also influenced the greatest manifestation of white supremacy and eugenics in human history: the Holocaust. It is not difficult to draw connections from Jordan's eugenic rhetoric — the blood of a nation determines its development, sectors of the population are parasites on society, devastating wars were influenced by Jewish bankers — with Nazi eugenic rhetoric. The connection is more than rhetorical: the Human Betterment Foundation, of which Jordan was a founding member, also had direct ties to Nazism. Prominent Nazi affiliates praised the work done by the Foundation. In 1937, Frintz Lenz, a German geneticist and member of the Nazi Party, corresponded the Human Betterment Foundation on the matter of forced sterilizations, thanking the Foundation for sending pamphlets and statistics to Nazi Germany.⁶⁸ Another prominent Nazi, Georg Gyssling, the German consul to the United States, applauded the HBF's work, going so far as to claim the HBF's statistics played a role in German's "National

⁶⁶ Ibid., 114.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 225.

⁶⁸ Fritz Lenz to E. S. Gosney, June 10, 1937; Box 7 Folder 8, E. S. Gosney Papers And Records Of The Human Betterment Foundation, Archives, California Institute of Technology.

Hygiene Legislation.”⁶⁹ Human Betterment Foundation regularly published its findings in German, and pro-sterilization statistics provided by the HBF were frequently cited by Nazi officials as an argument for eugenic policies in Germany.⁷⁰ Members of the HBF were quite happy with this relationship: Paul Popenoe, for instance, saw German sterilization laws as perfected versions of California policy and would later lament that “eugenics” became a dirty word after the Holocaust.⁷¹ Jordan’s rhetoric and the HBF helped lay the basis for the mass sterilizations in Germany and the Holocaust, the mass killing of over 10 million people in the name of eugenics.

Jordan was not merely a member of these eugenic organizations; this is not simply guilt by association. Jordan was a leader in the movement. On top of his role in securing funding for various eugenic research centers,⁷² eugenicists regularly reached out to him for assistance in organizing events or with publicity, and many of the most influential, such as Charles Goethe and Charles Davenport, were admirers of his work.⁷³ Jordan’s work on the feeble-minded population in France, for example, encouraged the ERO to support the sterilization and segregation of the feeble-minded in the United States. As historians have argued, Jordan’s influence and wide networks played a large role in the successes of the ERO in spreading eugenic sterilization laws across the nation.⁷⁴ Likewise, Jordan greatly aided the HBF with his academic and intellectual networks — easily finding external support and resources for the

⁶⁹ G. Gyssling to Paul Popenoe, March 34, 1936, Box 8 Folder 13, E. S. Gosney Papers And Records Of The Human Betterment Foundation, Archives, California Institute of Technology.

⁷⁰ Stefan Kühl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and National Socialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 43-45.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁷² Stern, *Eugenic Nation*, 85.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 50, 56.

⁷⁴ Stern, *Eugenic Nation*, 84-5.

newly created group.⁷⁵ David Starr Jordan was key to the success of eugenics in the United States as one of the most influential eugenicists in American history.

Jordan's Time

Some will say that “David Starr Jordan was a man of his time” and thus cannot be criticized by people living today.

Beyond the rather tautological aspects of such a statement, David Starr Jordan was not just a man of his time — he *created* his time. Jordan was not born in a world where eugenic thinking was the norm. Using his influence, his research, and his position at Stanford University, Jordan helped *create* a world where eugenics was the norm. He was there from the start, as a member of the very first organization in the United States that used the term “eugenics” (the Committee on Eugenics).

Furthermore, even during the height of eugenic thought in America, there were always critics who rejected the racist science and its flawed findings, even among white and abled populations. Certain academics such as Franz Boas pushed back against biological essentialist theories of race, for instance. There were even dissenters at Stanford University. During the 1920s, Stanford student Mary Conway Kohler worked alongside Lewis Terman during his research on IQ. While working with Terman, Kohler became disillusioned with IQ and its eugenic application, coming to dislike Terman, his research, and his attempts to improve the race. After graduating from Stanford Law School, Kohler worked in juvenile law and was responsible for submitting “feebleminded” women with IQs under 75 for sterilization. Kohler refused and avoided sending female delinquents to sterilization. Even at Stanford, in the

⁷⁵ Eklan-Olson, *Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Decides?*, 41.

proverbial belly of the beast, people saw eugenics and scientific racism for what it truly is.⁷⁶

These are the names that deserve to be honored, not Jordan.

We are all people of our time: slavers and abolitionists, racists and anti-racists, eugenicists and anti-eugenicists. If we are to learn lessons from the horrors of history — of which the Eugenics Movement was surely one — then moral judgement is just as necessary as historical analysis. If we are to end the lasting harms of eugenics and race science, then moral judgement is the first step towards reconciling this history. If we are to truly address the realities of eugenics in Stanford's history, we must rename Jordan Hall.

Jordan's Name?

Based on the evidence provided, we believe that Jordan Hall ought to be renamed. For the rest of this report, we will present our argument in favor of renaming, focusing on each point of discussion present in the *Principles*:

The centrality of the person's offensive behavior to his or her life as a whole

Eugenics was central to Jordan's academic and political legacies. Jordan was a eugenic researcher; his academic legacy and his eugenic legacy are one and the same. He served as a kingpin for the early Eugenic Movement, ensuring the rise of eugenic organizations in the United States. Furthermore, as this report has demonstrated, Jordan's eugenic legacy is directly tied to Stanford University, which aided in the continuation of Jordan's eugenic project even after his retirement.

Relation to the University history

⁷⁶ Stern, *Eugenic Nation*, 210.

David Starr Jordan was the first president of Stanford University, and he played a major role in shaping the University during its early formative years. Per the *Principles*, he is extremely close to Stanford history, and we believe that this report and the historians cited within have supplied such evidence.

The *Principles* portray renaming as connected to erasing history. With all due respect for the effort placed into crafting these procedures, this is not the case. History is not taught by statues or the names of buildings: it is taught in museums, in libraries, in oral traditions, in digital spaces, in classrooms. We have yet to encounter a single person who has learned history from the name of a building. Uncritically honoring a man, however, who played a major role in one of the greatest moral crimes of American history *is* erasing history. If Stanford University cares about erasing history, Jordan Hall must be renamed, and his legacy must be critically examined in a non-honorific setting.⁷⁷

Harmful impact of the honoree's behavior

As this report has repeatedly shown, Jordan played a leading role in the American Eugenics Movement whose beliefs and institutions deeply influenced the demonization of immigrants to the United States, the mass sterilization of upwards of sixty thousand “unwanted” persons by state governments, and even the Holocaust. The horrors of coercive sterilization are not phenomena of the distant past, but of the recent few decades, with women of color being

⁷⁷ We would also suggest that Stanford University rethink the phrasing in the *Principles* referring to “erasing history.”

sterilized as recently as the last decade in prison.⁷⁸ They are part of the recent cultural memory of many communities of color and disabled communities.

Stanford University cannot prioritize honoring an undeserving man over remembering and honoring the victims of his rhetoric and actions. Let us remember Jordan, for his actions do not deserve to be forgotten. But let us do it critically somewhere else.

Community identification with the feature

We find it difficult to imagine anyone identifying with David Starr Jordan in a purely positive manner. While it is true that he supported some honorable goals, these accomplishments were both inspired and overshadowed by his racist, eugenic, and harmful beliefs.

Maintaining and identifying with Jordan's name is detrimental to the Stanford Community's position as an academic research institution to be taken seriously. Stanford University stands at the forefront of genetic engineering and medical genetics — fields with roots in eugenic thought. Throughout the twentieth century, eugenicists founded many of the institutions responsible for genetic research and counseling.⁷⁹ As historian Nathaniel Comfort argues, it is possible to separate medical genetics from the more insidious aspects of eugenics and to recognize its ability to improve the lives of individuals. However, to do so, we must first be aware of its eugenic past and reconcile it with our present motives — and the first place is to stop uncritically honoring eugenicists such as Jordan. Stanford University cannot, in good

⁷⁸ Corey Johnson, "[California Was Sterilizing Its Female Prisoners as Late as 2010.](#)" *The Guardian*, November 8, 2013.

⁷⁹ For a more detailed history of this, see Comfort, *The Science of Human Perfection*; Alexandra Minna Stern, *Telling Genes: The Story of Genetic Counseling in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).

conscience, simultaneously develop the ability to engineer the very genome of humanity while honoring a man who would have used that very technology to eradicate unwanted people.

Strength and clarity of the historical evidence

The evidence, as presented in this Report and in other works by historians of eugenics, is strong and clear. Historians have documented Jordan's role in the Eugenic Movement, and it is now time for Stanford University to act.

The University's prior consideration of the issues

Jordan Hall was named in 1917 by University President Ray Lyman Wilbur. If Wilbur considered Jordan's eugenic beliefs, he would likely admire Jordan more for them, being a eugenicist himself. Beyond that, we are unaware of any other reconsiderations of Jordan's eugenic legacy. This is the perfect opportunity for a reconsideration.

Possibilities for mitigation

We see no possible mitigation. David Starr Jordan's legacy is clear. A temporary plaque explaining this legacy is a step towards reconciling this history, but it cannot be the final step.

Based upon the evidence provided in this Report, we are requesting the Stanford Administration takes three steps:

- A) Public recognition of David Starr Jordan's role in the Eugenic Movement, as well as the role Stanford University played in the development and spread of eugenic thought

B) Contextualization of David Starr Jordan's harmful legacy within Jordan Hall

C) Initialization of a renaming procedure on the subject of Jordan Hall

Acknowledgement of both Jordan's and Stanford's role in the rise and spread of eugenics in the United States is the first step that must be taken by Stanford University: to grapple with difficult histories, we must first be honest and open about it. Second, Jordan's legacy must be contextualized within Jordan Hall. A prominently displayed plaque discussing the harm caused by his actions and the lasting legacies of eugenics in the United States, for instance, is necessary within Jordan Hall. Finally, this report serves as a request to begin the renaming procedure of Jordan Hall, per the *Proposed Principles and Procedures for Renaming Buildings and Other Features at Stanford University*. We look forward to working with the Stanford Administration further to this end.

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