

LESSON: Racial “Science” and Law in Nazi Germany and the United States: Timeline Extension

HANDOUT: Group B Primary Sources

Leon Bass

[Audio Clip](#)

“My family’s roots go back to South Carolina. That’s where my parents were born around the turn of the century. My father was born in 1891 and my mother 1895, and you know that was a very critical time. I think it was not too far from the Emancipation Proclamation signing and it was just before, about a year before, the Plessy vs. Ferguson decision of the Supreme Court, which said that “separate but equal” was the way of life in this country. So it was that kind of environment when they were born and they experienced a great deal of pain and trying to survive during that period. But they did, and they managed somehow...He knew that what was in South Carolina was not for him and he had to get out of there, so he came to Philadelphia to fulfill his dreams and make life worthwhile for his family. So we were all there in Philadelphia trying to experience the good life. Needless to say, separate but equal was still pervasive, it was as operational in the north as it was in the south, and I went to an all-black elementary school, and that was by design, it wasn’t by accident, it was by design. It was a good school, and that saved the day.”

“ I went to this school where they always taught us to care and love each other but to also have love of country. We pledged allegiance to the flag every day just like every other young person in the city of Philadelphia would do. And we said “with liberty and justice for all” just like everyone else, only to find as we matured that that was not so. Liberty and justice wasn’t for everybody. It didn’t exist, I felt, for me and mine, as I found out when I went to the theater. I went to a local theater and bought my ticket and I was directed to the balcony. Not that there was anything wrong with sitting in the balcony, I could see just as well but it was mandated that I go there, because I wasn’t good enough to go down on the main floor. So I began to get insight into the society, and how society viewed me, a person of color.”

“I was 18, and that’s when I became part of the military.”

“How did you become part of the military, did you volunteer or were you drafted?”

“Yes, I volunteered, and I was to go out with the next group. And when I went down to the induction center, institutional racism smacked me in the face. Because the sergeant was there and he told me to go one way when I went through the door and told my white friends to go another way. Because my country practices, promulgated, promoted institutional racism, and the military was one of the largest to do just that. And so I went into an all-black unit, save for the officers, they were white. But all of my comrades in arms at the time were black.”

Oral history interview with Dr. Leon Bass, March 16, 1988.

US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Gift of the Holocaust Resource Center of Kean University,
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Eugenics Chart

MARRIAGES.- FIT AND UNFIT

1. PURE + PURE:-
CHILDREN NORMAL
2. ABNORMAL + ABNORMAL:-
CHILDREN ABNORMAL
3. PURE + ABNORMAL:-
CHILDREN NORMAL BUT TAINTED;
SOME GRANDCHILDREN ABNORMAL.
4. TAINTED + ABNORMAL:-
CHILDREN $\frac{1}{2}$ NORMAL BUT TAINTED
 $\frac{1}{2}$ ABNORMAL
5. TAINTED + PURE:-
CHILDREN: $\frac{1}{2}$ PURE NORMAL
 $\frac{1}{2}$ NORMAL BUT TAINTED
6. TAINTED + TAINTED
CHILDREN: OF EVERY FOUR, 1 ABNORMAL
1 PURE NORMAL AND 2 TAINTED.

* PURE - NORMAL AND TRANSMITTING ONLY NORMAL.
TAINTED - NORMAL BUT CAN TRANSMIT ABNORMALITY.
ABNORMAL - SHOWING THE ABNORMALITY.

HOW LONG

ARE WE AMERICANS TO BE SO CAREFUL FOR THE PEDIGREE OF OUR PIGS AND CHICKENS AND CATTLE, - AND THEN LEAVE THE ANCESTRY OF OUR CHILDREN TO CHANGE, OR TO "BLIND" SENTIMENT?

UNFIT HUMAN TRAITS

SUCH AS FEEBLEMINDEDNESS, EPILEPSY, CRIMINALITY, INSANITY, ALCOHOLISM, PAUPERISM AND MANY OTHERS, RUN IN FAMILIES AND ARE INHERITED IN EXACTLY THE SAME WAY AS COLOR IN GUINEA-PIGS. IF **ALL MARRIAGES WERE EUGENIC** WE COULD **BREED OUT** MOST OF THIS UNFITNESS IN **THREE GENERATIONS.**

THE TRIANGLE OF LIFE

YOU CAN IMPROVE YOUR EDUCATION, AND EVEN CHANGE YOUR ENVIRONMENT; BUT WHAT YOU REALLY **ARE** WAS ALL SETTLED WHEN YOUR PARENTS WERE **BORN.** SELECTED PARENTS WILL HAVE BETTER CHILDREN **THIS** IS THE GREAT AIM OF EUGENICS

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Health exhibits at state fairs were one of many methods used by supporters of eugenics to teach families about this "science" and how their marriage decisions could lead to the births of "normal" and "abnormal" American children. This chart was one of several on display at the Kansas Free Fair Eugenic and Health exhibit in 1929. It sought to educate audiences about which individuals were "fit" for reproduction and which were "unfit."

[Eugenics Charts from the Kansas Free Fair](#)

American Philosophical Society Library, Mss.575.06.Am3, American Eugenics Society Records