



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on June 26, 2012

## Eugenics Becomes Hot Political Issue in Europe

Eugenics is a system of controlling life through sterilization of unwelcome members of a species or through the destruction of those unwelcome members. In modern parlance, the species is generally considered to be the human race. In the last century eugenics had some heady supporters. The Nazis, as most people know, practiced eugenics via the Holocaust and other methods. Other people, whose names are not normally associated with totalitarianism, supported eugenics too: Winston Churchill, Teddy Roosevelt, George Bernard Shaw, and H.G. Wells, among others.



Almost no one objects to eugenics practiced for agricultural or horticultural purposes. The selective breeding of livestock and of grains, vegetables and fruits — and even the cross-breeding of these forms of life — has been a significant method of advancing human prosperity and health. Dog shows, state fair competitions, and garden shows all incorporate the best breeding of pets, pigs, and petunias.

Human eugenics, however, is a different process entirely. It implies that some of us are able to judge into extinction less worthy members of our species. One of the most odious chapters of government intervention in human life during our nation's history was the period in which poor blacks were sterilized, often without their knowledge, as a means of diminishing the numbers of "undesirable" Americans. When Hitler began his campaign to judge life worthy of perpetuation, he chose what seemed to him to be the types of life best to snip off at the bud: retarded people, the congenitally handicapped, and human carriers of genetically transmitted diseases. Today in Europe eugenics is back in vogue, although using different methods and new technology. Ultrasound examinations of unborn babies can reveal much about the child, and other tests provide more information. It is fairly easy, for example, to determine the sex of a child, so to families in China and India, where boys are much more welcome than girls, prenatal infanticide can prevent the baby girl from ever entering the world.

Now as [CyberNewsSystem](#) reports, in Europe, the killing of unborn children with health problems is becoming a major political issue. Anita Kruzmane of Latvia gave birth in June 2002 to a girl with Down syndrome and she is arguing that the failure to detect that illness, which would have given her enough information to choose to abort the child, was a failure in the health care system to provide adequate "prenatal care." In France, where that sort of screening is routine, 96 percent of all babies in the womb with Down syndrome are aborted.

The European Center for Law and Justice (ECLJ) is an affiliate of the American Center for Law and Justice. It is planning a meeting on June 28 to review just how far eugenics has penetrated European society and law. Gregor Puppink, director of the organization, said that this meeting "is intended to raise the awareness of institutions about the eugenic current of European society." He noted that: "This is the first time that so many organizations, dedicated to persons with Down syndrome and disabilities, have mobilized at the European level to denounce eugenics and discrimination. Under European and



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international law, States have an obligation to protect the life and health of every person, in particular people with disabilities. People with disabilities, like other categories of people in other times, today have an obligation to demonstrate their humanity in order to enjoy the protection of human rights. Faced with this, we must work, not only to humanize our view of disability, but also to ‘rehumanize’ human rights, because there is a tendency to develop a very abstract and disembodied idea of man, an idea which may finally prove inhuman, as demonstrated by the consecration of a ‘right to eugenics.’”

ECLJ has specifically cited Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights, which states:

Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

The National Down Syndrome Society reports that in the United States one in every 691 live births is a child with Down syndrome and more than 400,000 people in the U.S. have Down syndrome. It also notes the progress that has been made in ameliorating the effects of the disease:

Life expectancy for people with Down syndrome has increased dramatically in recent decades — from 25 in 1983 to 60 today. People with Down syndrome attend school, work, participate in decisions that affect them and contribute to society in many wonderful ways.

Columnist George Will and Governor Sarah Palin both have experienced firsthand being the parent of a child with Down syndrome. The Palin family knew in advance that Trig would have Down syndrome and Governor Palin did not think for a moment of aborting her unborn son. George Will and his wife did not know — the testing was not as good or as consistent — but Will has movingly described the joy of his son, who was born on Will’s own birthday and who turned 40 years old last month. Will describes Frederick as the best “birthday present” he could have wished to receive.

What will happen in Europe, where the birth of the wrong sort of child is considered by some to be a curse and not a blessing? The answer to that question will also answer other questions about whether or not Europe can survive in the 21st century.

*Photo: [Portrait of beautiful young girl](#) via Shutterstock*



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