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## **Eugenics - I**

**Lead:** In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, theories about the way to improve the human condition spawned the pseudo-science of eugenics. Unfortunately, optimism about making mankind better degenerated into the darkness of racism.

**Intro.:** *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

**Content:** Sir Francis Galton confessed to having had a happy childhood. His upper-class parents gave him a Cambridge education

though he never took his degree, and left him sufficient inherited funds so that he could avoid work and indulge his great love of travel. From 1845 to 1853 Galton explored parts of the Middle East and Africa, including a very careful but ultimately fruitless expedition from West Africa in search of Lake Ngami, which is in Botswana, north of the Kalahari Desert. After his marriage he turned to more scholarly pursuits producing books on a wide variety of subjects including fingerprinting, calculus, genetics and weather prediction. Galton is best known, however, for his advocacy of improving the human species through selective parenting, a process he called eugenics.

**Francis Galton was a cousin of Charles Darwin and was one of the first to recognize the importance of Darwin's theories for human development. He suggested that, in the same way that, for centuries, species of plants and animals had been improved through selective breeding, humanity could be improved by the careful selection of parents who would seek out partners of superior intellect, ability and strength. Galton's typical upper class British prejudices have opened him to the charge of racism, but his interests focused primarily on improving the entire human race rather than a racial subdivision. After Galton passed from the scene, however, eugenics began to take a much darker**

**and destructive course. Next time:  
Eugenics, racism and the final  
solution.**

**At the University of Richmond,  
this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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