

The new eugenics movement

“The ultimate ideal sought,” wrote Harvey Ernest Jordan in 1912, “is a perfect society constituted of perfect individuals.” Jordan, who would later be dean of medicine at the University of Virginia, was speaking to the importance of eugenics in medicine—a subject that might seem tasteless and obsolete today. Yet nearly a century later, in 2008, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, the biomedical research institute on Long Island’s north shore, published a book titled *Davenport’s Dream*, which shows that eugenic visions persist. Charles Davenport, a colleague and friend of Jordan’s, had directed Cold Spring Harbor for the first third of the 20th century, turning it from a sleepy, summertime marine-biology laboratory into a center for genetics research—and the epicenter of American eugenics.

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