There's a long history of people misusing genetics research to justify societal inequalities.

Relying on conceptions of “hard heredity” — which (incorrectly) assumes that genes determine outcomes regardless of environmental factors — some have used genetic research to argue that social inequality is due to immutable genetic differences. And because poverty and life outcomes are hardwired in each person’s genes, the logic goes, social policies are futile.

In response to this historic misuse, many people and organizations with egalitarian values have chosen to ignore, degrade, or ban funding for research on genetic and biological differences.

[Dr. Kathryn Paige] Harden takes the opposite stance. Despite — or perhaps because of — this historic misuse, she argues that people interested in equality cannot ignore genetic differences. To do so would allow the misinterpretation and abuse of genetic research to go unchallenged.

Instead, genetics should be used as a tool for positive change and increasing equality.

“...If we care about inequality that is tied to accidents of people’s birth, the kind of stroke of luck over which they have no control, then we should care about genetic inequality,” Harden told Big Think. “Because it is one of the main sources of inequality in this country.”

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