

HOW EUGENICS LED TO THE T-4 PROGRAM AND THE FINAL SOLUTION

LESSON PLAN

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of National Archives and Records Administration, College Park.

INTRODUCTION

How did Germany, a developed and civilized nation, become one of the most egregious perpetrators of mass murder in the 20th century? Nazi policy was steeped in eugenics, the belief that some types of people are genetically superior to others, and in the Nazi pursuit to create the perfect Aryan race, they systematically destroyed all others they deemed inferior based on this pseudoscience. This lesson utilizes primary and secondary sources to help students explore the eugenics movement and how it shaped Nazi policies and laws, led to the destruction of the mentally and physically disabled, and led to the development of gas chambers, which were used to commit mass murder during the Holocaust.

OBJECTIVES

By analyzing a series of primary and secondary sources, students will be able to:

- ♦ Examine the eugenics movement and how it impacted government policies
- ♦ Analyze how the T-4 involuntary euthanasia program was impacted by the eugenics movement, and how it shaped the Final Solution
- ♦ Determine the long-term consequences of the T-4 program

GRADE LEVEL

9–12

TIME REQUIREMENT

One 90-minute class period with extension options and options for shorter class periods

MATERIALS

- ♦ Copies of The T-4 Program to the Final Solution Overview Essay
- ♦ Copies of Gallery Walk Note Sheet.

ONLINE RESOURCES

ww2classroom.org



Collection of Propaganda Posters

Accommodation Resources for Students

STANDARDS

COMMON CORE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.3

Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

HIGH SCHOOL CIVICS (LOUISIANA)

C.6 Use a variety of primary and secondary sources to (a) analyze social studies content, (b) evaluate claims, counterclaims, and evidence, (c) compare and contrast multiple sources and accounts, and (d) explain how the availability of sources affects historical interpretations.

C.7 Construct and express claims that are supported with relevant evidence from primary and/or secondary sources, social studies content knowledge, and clear reasoning and explanations to (a) demonstrate an understanding of social studies content, (b) compare and contrast content and viewpoints, (c) analyze causes and effects, and (d) evaluate counterclaims.

HIGH SCHOOL US HISTORY (LOUISIANA)

US.15 Explain the causes, course and consequences of World War II.

(j) Explain the use of violence and mass murder as demonstrated by the Nanjing Massacre, the Holodomor, the Holocaust, and the Bataan Death March and the treatment of US prisoners of war.

(k) Analyze the Holocaust, including the suspension of basic civil rights by the Third Reich, concentration camp system, antisemitism, persecution of Jews and non-Jews, Jewish and non-Jewish resistance, the role played by the United States in liberating Nazi concentration camps, immigration of Holocaust survivors, and the Nuremberg trials. immigration of Holocaust survivors, and the Nuremberg trials.

HIGH SCHOOL WORLD HISTORY (LOUISIANA)

WH.10 Analyze the causes and effects of global and regional conflicts in the world from 1300 to 2010.

WH.13 Analyze the origins, consequences, and legacies of genocides that occurred in world history from 1914 to 2010.

WH.26 Analyze the causes and effects of the movement of people, culture, religion, goods, diseases, and technologies through established systems of connection.

PROCEDURE

Pre-Reading:

Independently or together as a class, students will read and annotate the overview essay, **The T-4 Program to the Final Solution**.

1. This lesson will begin with a “do now” (sometimes called a bellringer) activity. The teacher will project the first propaganda poster from Collection 1 of the Propaganda Posters. The teacher will ask students to share their observations, thoughts, and questions about this poster in a class discussion. The teacher can lead the class to discuss the following questions:

- ♦ What do you see? What stands out to you about this poster?
- ♦ What do you think is happening in this poster? What do you think is the message of this poster?
- ♦ What does this poster make you wonder? What questions do you have about this poster?

2. After discussing student responses to the “do now” activity, the teacher will share with students the following definition of eugenics from the Personal Genetics Education Project:

The social movement to “improve” society by encouraging or discouraging people to have babies. Eugenics promoted reproduction by people or groups that had what were considered to be “positive” qualities and discouraged or sometimes forcibly stopped reproduction by groups that had what were considered to be “negative” qualities.

The teacher will explain that in today’s lesson, students will learn more about the eugenics movement and the role it played during World War II and the Holocaust. To further introduce the concept of eugenics and how it influenced Nazi policy, show Episode 1, “The Rise of

Eugenics in America” (5:54), from the PBS documentary *The US and the Holocaust*- www.pbs.org/video/rise-eugenics-america-xtbjcc/

3. After watching the documentary episode, the teacher will begin with a gallery walk of **propaganda posters (Collection 1)**. This collection of posters includes both American and Nazi Germany posters. Students will examine each of these posters and write down notes using the **Gallery Walk Note Sheet**. The teacher will instruct students to write down their observations, thoughts, and questions about each poster in each of the four boxes. Students can complete this gallery walk independently, in partners, or in small groups.
4. After students have completed the gallery walk of Collection 1 of propaganda posters, the teacher will ask the whole class to share their observations from the posters, especially what they thought were positive messages about eugenics. After students have shared their observations, the teacher will ask the class: Could this ideology have a dark side? Students will discuss this question with a partner or in small groups.
5. The teacher will then post the **propaganda posters from Collection 2**. This collection of posters includes Nazi Germany posters about eugenics and the T-4 program. Students will examine each of these posters through a gallery walk and write down notes using the **Gallery Walk Note Sheet**. The teacher will instruct students to write down their observations, thoughts, and questions about each poster including the concerns each poster raises that they find troubling. Students can complete this gallery walk independently, in partners, or in small groups.
6. After students have completed the gallery walk of the second collection of propaganda posters, the teacher will ask the whole class to share their observations from the posters, especially the differences they noticed between the first and second collection of posters.
7. If needed, the teacher will create space for students to decompress as needed through quiet time or written reflection. One option for written reflection is to ask students to write their own definition of the eugenics movement in the middle box of the Gallery Walk Note Sheet.
8. Exit Ticket: Students will write a short response to the following question: “What was the eugenics movement, and how did it impact the T-4 program in Nazi Germany?”

DIFFERENTIATION AND EXTENSIONS

DIFFERENTIATION

Instead of separating the propaganda posters into two collections, the teacher can select a few of each for students to examine in one gallery walk with a focus on the similarities and differences.

EXTENSIONS

For more information about Nazi Euthanasia Program and Aktion T4, access the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Holocaust Encyclopedia page- encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/euthanasia-program

Students may listen to oral histories about the Nazi Euthanasia Program and Aktion T4 at the following site through the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Holocaust Encyclopedia: <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/oral-history/benno-mueller-hill-antje-kosemund-paul-eggert-and-elvira-manthey-describe-the-euthanasia-program>

After listening to the oral histories, direct students to discuss what stood out to them the most from the oral history excerpts and how does this further their understanding of the T-4 program.

Teachers guide students through the German citizens' response to the T-4 program through analysis of Bishop Clemens von Galen's Sermon on the T-4 Program on August 3, 1941- https://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/English82_.pdf

Teachers instruct students to write a response to the question, "How has society changed in their perspective and treatment of individuals living with disabilities?", by having students make connections to the US Civil Rights Movement, as well as the fight for inclusion of Americans living with disabilities.

ABOUT THE LESSON AUTHORS

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STUDENT WORKSHEET

GALLERY WALK NOTES SHEET

Observations	Questions
Definition	Thoughts

Eugenics

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PROPAGANDA POSTERS

COLLECTION 1



Image: Wellcome Collection.

PROPAGANDA POSTERS

COLLECTION 1

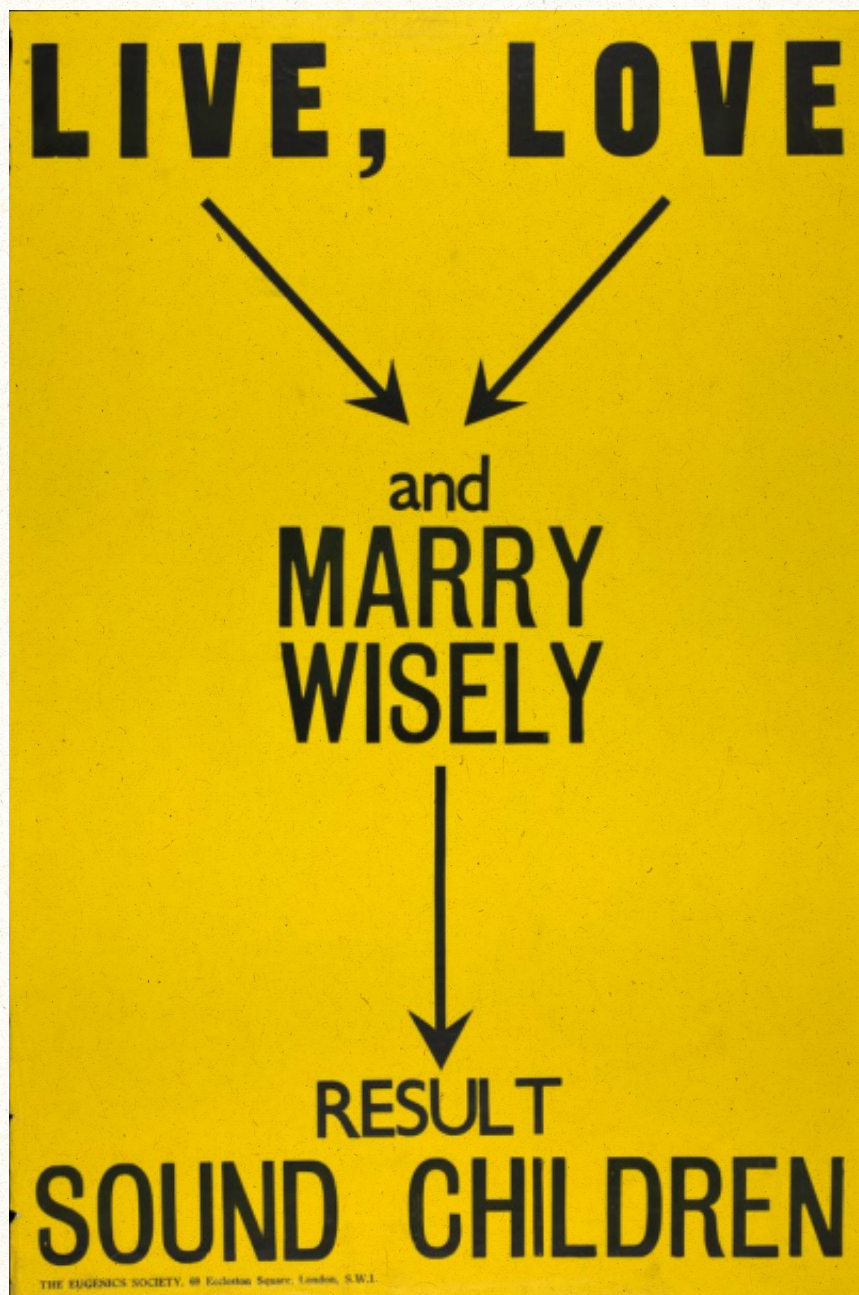


Image: Wellcome Collection.

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PROPAGANDA POSTERS

COLLECTION 1



Image: Wellcome Collection.

PROPAGANDA POSTERS

COLLECTION 1

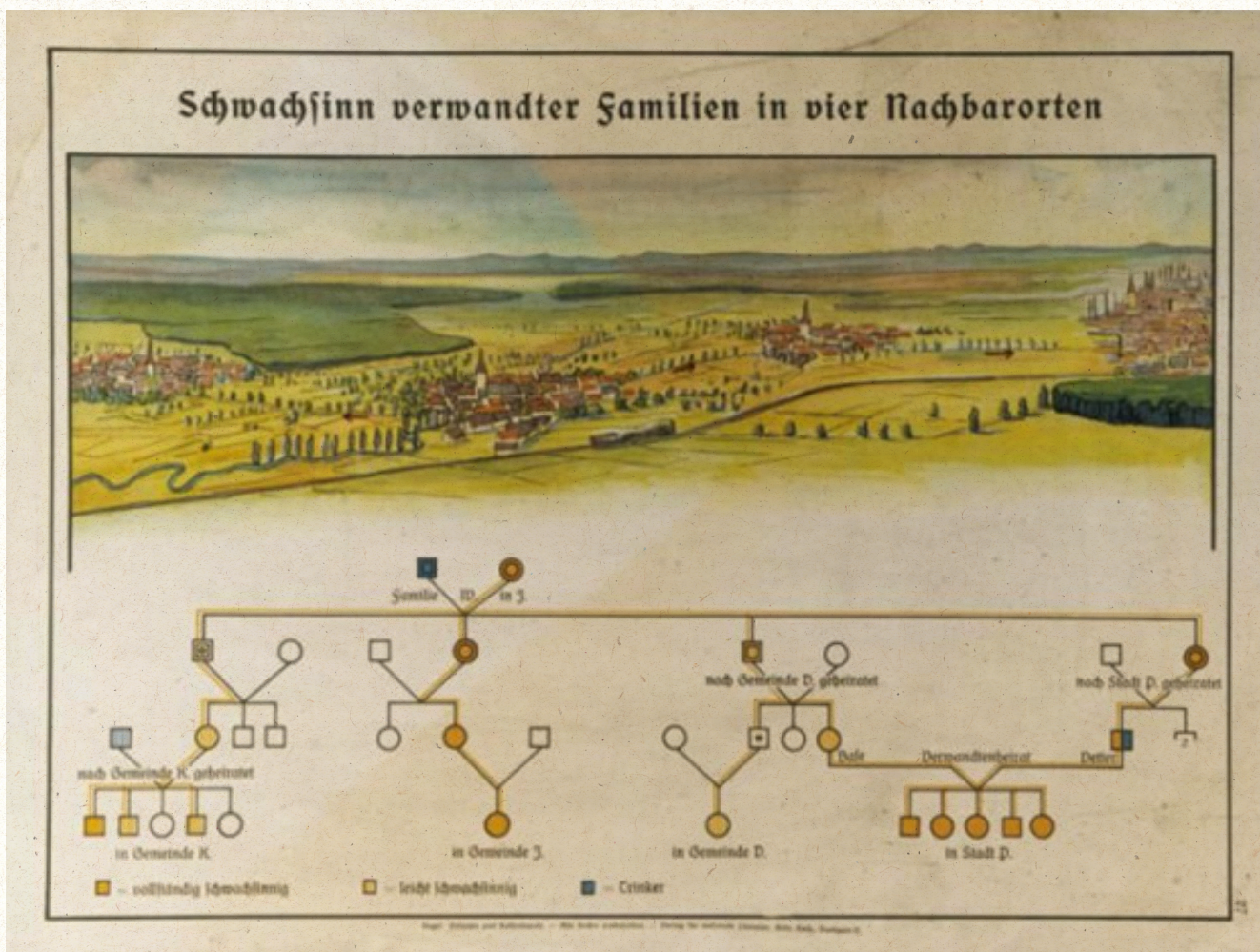


The eradication of the sick and weak in nature.

Image: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

PROPAGANDA POSTERS

COLLECTION 1



Feeble-mindedness in related families in four neighboring towns

Image: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

PROPAGANDA POSTERS

COLLECTION 1



Image: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

PROPAGANDA POSTERS

COLLECTION 1

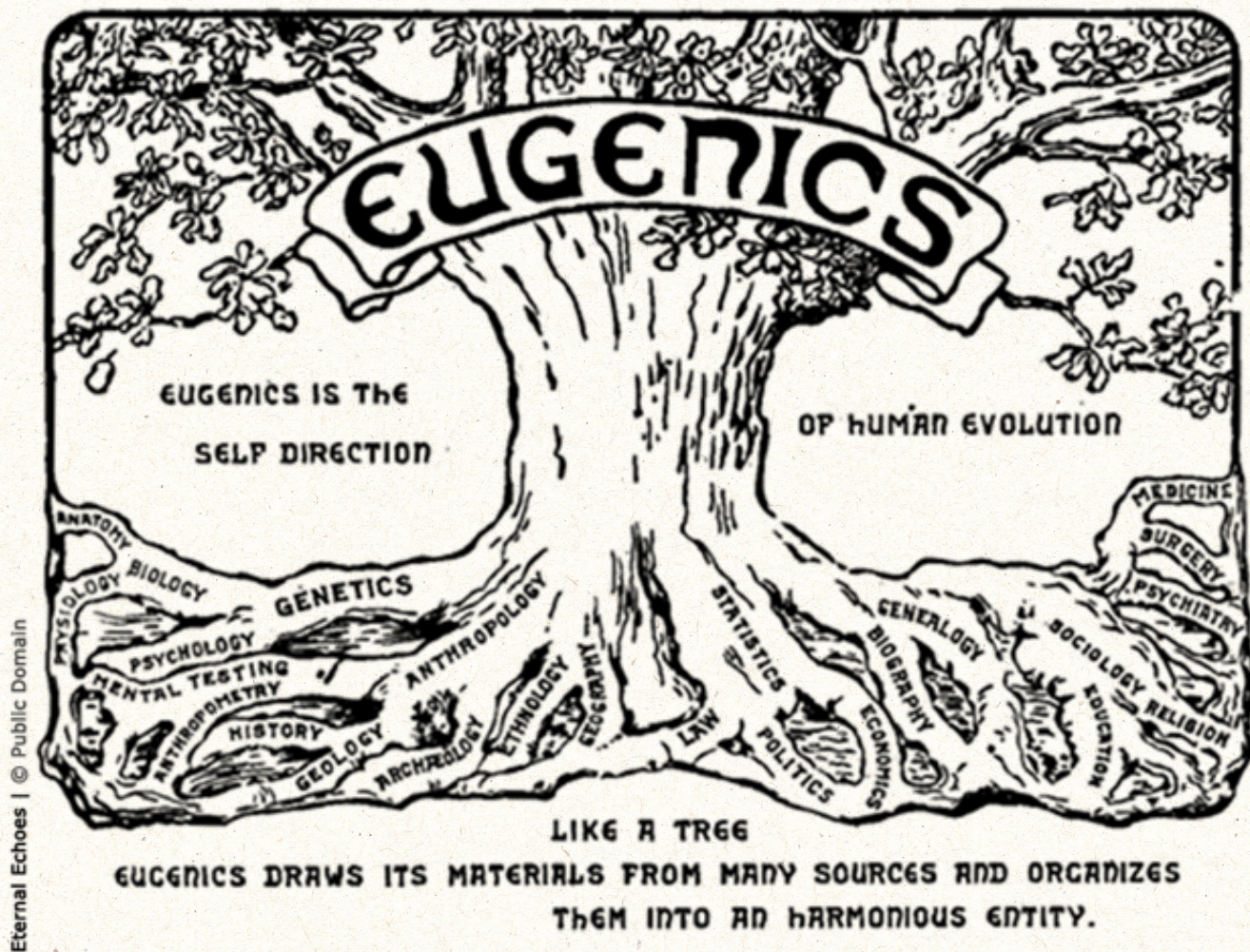


Healthy parents – Healthy children! Read the explanatory literature about population policy produced by the National Socialist People's Welfare!

Image: Imperial War Museum.

PROPAGANDA POSTERS

COLLECTION 1

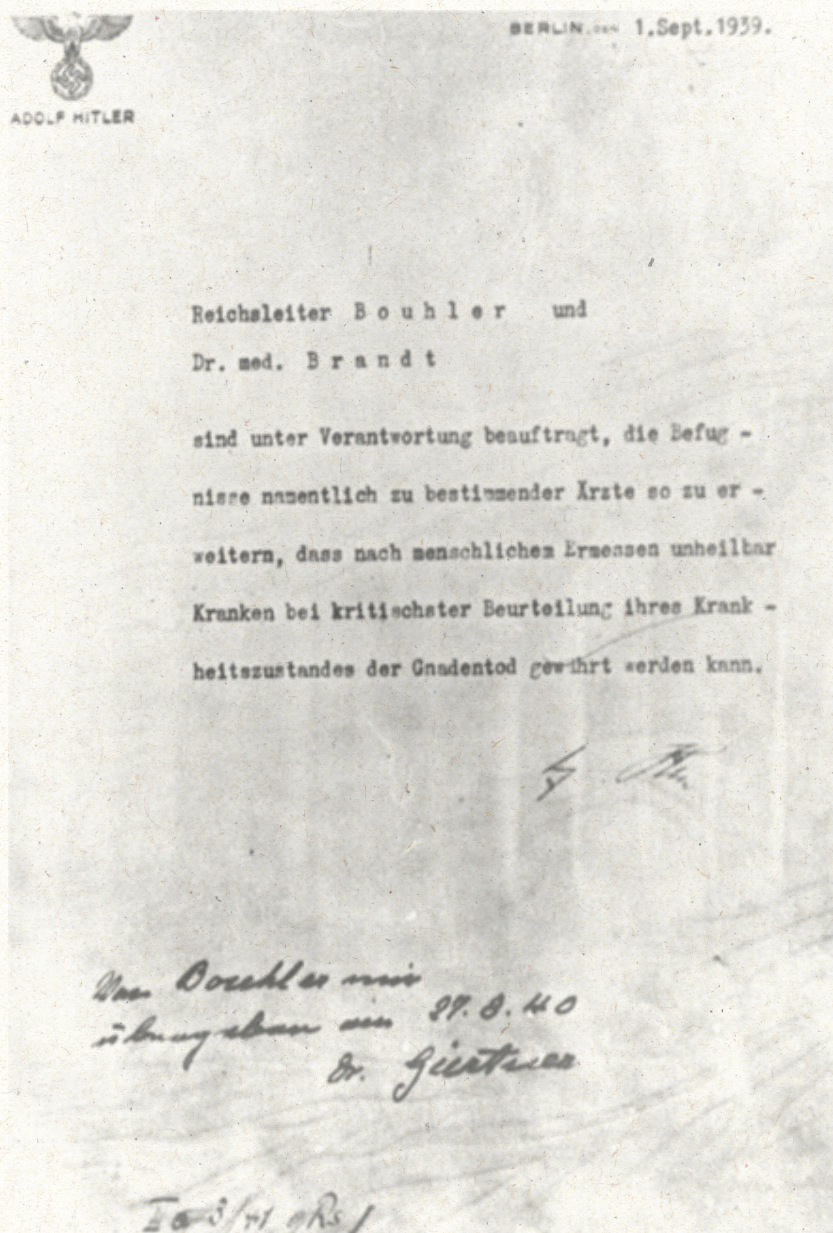


Logo of the Second International Congress of Eugenics, 1921.

Image: Eternal Echoes.

PROPAGANDA POSTERS

COLLECTION 2



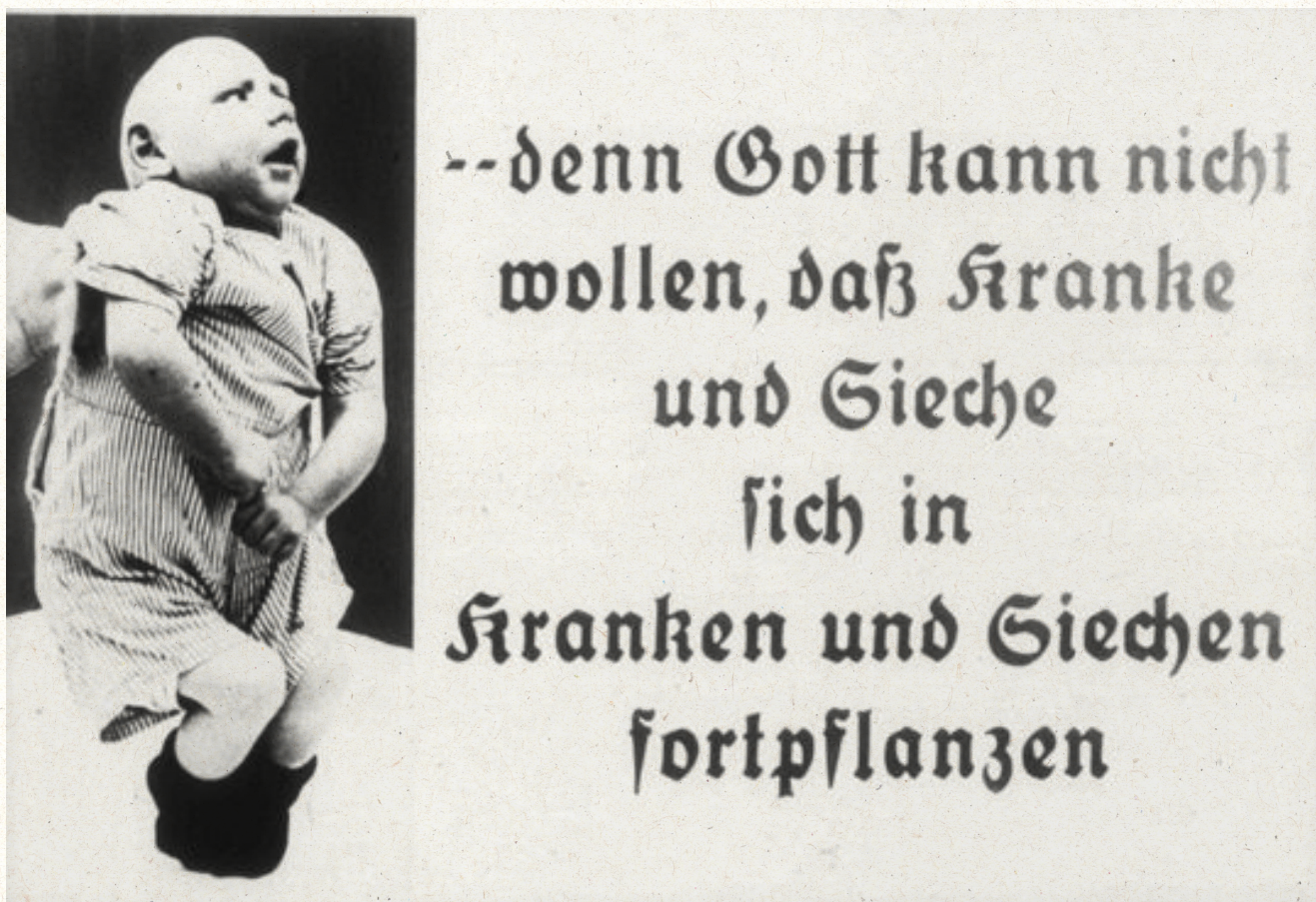
ADOLF HITLER'S AUTHORIZATION FOR THE EUTHANASIA PROGRAM

Adolf Hitler's authorization for the Euthanasia Program (Operation T4), signed in October 1939 but dated September 1, 1939.

Image: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

PROPAGANDA POSTERS

COLLECTION 2



PROPAGANDA FOR THE NAZI EUTHANASIA PROGRAM

Photograph with the caption: "...because God cannot want the sick and ailing to reproduce." This image originates from a film, produced by the Reich Propaganda Ministry, that aimed through propaganda to develop public sympathy for the Nazi Euthanasia Program.

Image: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

PROPAGANDA POSTERS

COLLECTION 2



PROPAGANDA FOR THE NAZI EUTHANASIA PROGRAM

This image originates from a film produced by the Reich Propaganda Ministry. It shows patients in an unidentified asylum. Their existence is described as "life without hope." The Nazis sought, through propaganda, to develop public sympathy for the Euthanasia Program.

Image: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

PROPAGANDA POSTERS

COLLECTION 2



SCENE FROM A FILM PRODUCED BY THE REICH PROPAGANDA MINISTRY

This photo originates from a film produced by the Reich Propaganda Ministry. It shows two doctors in a ward in an unidentified asylum. The existence of the patients in the ward is described as "life only as a burden." Such propaganda images were intended to develop public sympathy for the Euthanasia Program.

Image: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

PROPAGANDA POSTERS

COLLECTION 2



NAZI PROPAGANDA SLIDE PROMOTING EUTHANASIA

Slide to indoctrinate youth taken from a Nazi propaganda filmstrip. Promoting "euthanasia," it was prepared for the Hitler Youth. The caption says: "Mentally ill Negro (English) 16 years in an institution costing 35,000 RM [Reichsmarks]." Place and date uncertain.

Image: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

PROPAGANDA POSTERS

COLLECTION 2



POSTER PROMOTING THE NAZI MONTHLY PUBLICATION NEUES VOLK

Poster promoting the Nazi monthly publication Neues Volk. Jews were not the only group excluded from the vision of the "national community." The Nazi regime also singled out people with intellectual and physical disabilities. In this poster, the caption reads: "This hereditarily ill person will cost our national community 60,000 Reichsmarks over the course of his lifetime. Citizen, this is your money." This publication, put out by the Nazi Party's Race Office, emphasized the burden placed on society by those deemed unfit.

Image: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

PROPAGANDA POSTERS

COLLECTION 2

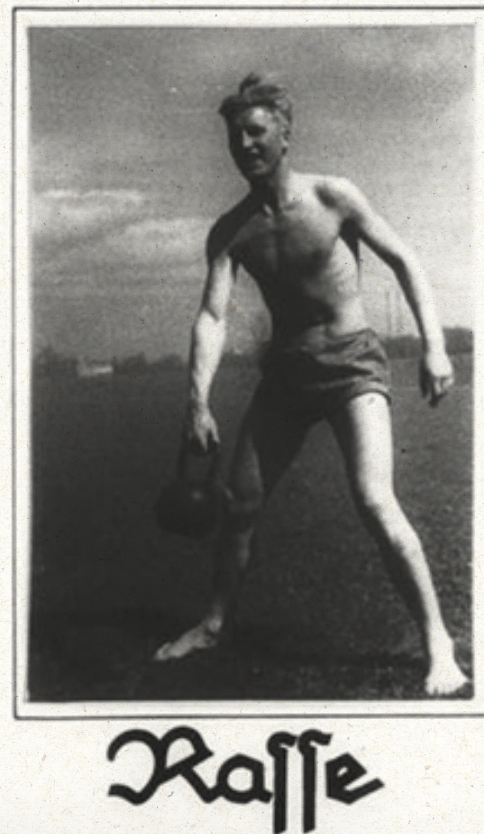
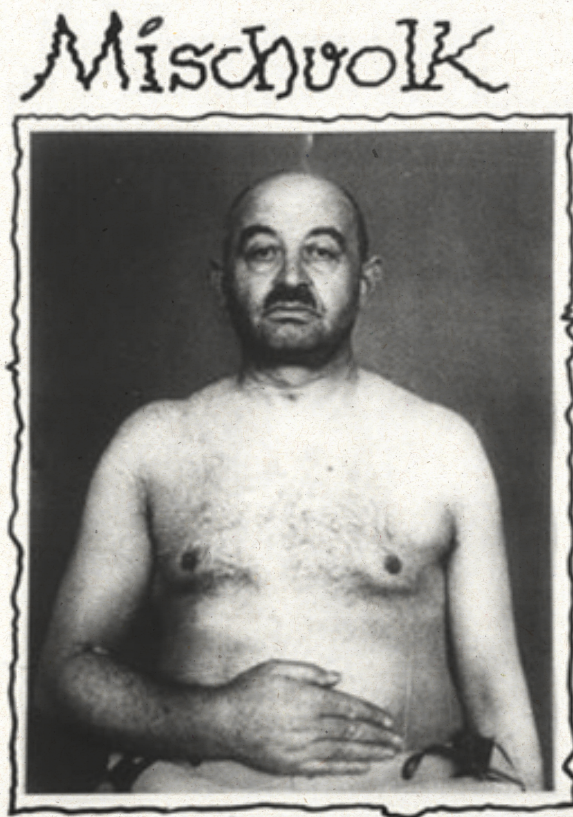


Propaganda slide produced by the Reich Propaganda Office showing the opportunity cost of feeding a person with a hereditary disease. The illustration shows that an entire family of healthy Germans can live for one day on the same 5.50 Reichsmarks it costs to support one ill person for the same amount of time. Dated 1936. Nazis defined individuals with mental, physical, or social disabilities as “hereditarily ill” and claimed such individuals placed both a genetic and financial burden upon society and the state.

Image: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

PROPAGANDA POSTERS

COLLECTION 2



Propaganda slide which contrasts a person of mixed race (left) with a healthy "Aryan" youth (right).

Image: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.