



THE HISTORY OF THE HEALTH SCIENCES LECTURE SERIES

THREE GENERATIONS, NO IMBECILES: VIRGINIA EUGENICS AND BUCK V. BELL

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**Tuesday, April 23, 2002
5:00 – 6:00 p.m.**

THE SIXTH ANNUAL KENNETH R. CRISPELL MEMORIAL HISTORY LECTURE

Wilhelm Moll Rare Book and Medical History Room
Health Sciences Library Ground Floor

The United States Supreme Court decision in the Case of *Buck v. Bell*, widely considered one of the most infamous decisions in Supreme Court history, is focused on the family of Carrie Buck of Charlottesville. The case is generally remembered for the Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. line asserting, “Three generations of imbeciles are enough,” and endorsing Virginia’s Eugenical Sterilization Act of 1924. The law allowed the state to surgically sterilize patients thought likely to produce children whose hereditary “defects” might render them “socially inadequate.” Carrie Buck was the first person sterilized under the 1924 law. Subsequent scholarship has demonstrated that the Sterilization Act was based on the now discredited and false science of eugenics. May 2, 2002 will mark the 75th anniversary of the Buck decision, which made it possible for states to legally sterilize some 60,000 Americans. German eugenicists applauded the decision and some of the earliest enactments of the Nazi regime were comparable legislation for enforced sterilization. The Virginia General Assembly has already expressed its profound regret over the Commonwealth’s role in the eugenics movement in this country and the damage done in the name of eugenics.

**Faculty, house staff, students, alumni, and the public
are cordially invited to attend**

This lecture is funded by the University of Virginia Health Sciences Library History Fund

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