



News Release

301 Gervais St. • Loading Zone D • Columbia SC 29201
Phone (803) 898-4921 • Fax (803) 898-4969
publicrelations@scmuseum.org or visit southcarolinastatemuseum.org

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Contact: Tut Underwood or
Katie McLean

ULast Weeks for Important Eugenics Exhibit at State Museum

Columbia, S.C. --- A large and fascinated audience has met the South Carolina State Museum’s exhibit *Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race* since its opening in August. This audience for the exhibit, which depicts the efforts of Nazi Germany to create a “master race” and the support the twisted theories of “eugenics,” or “racial hygiene” received from doctors in Germany, recently included more than 100 students from the University of South Carolina School of Medicine.

As the exhibit enters its final weeks, the dean of the medical school expressed high praise for the important lessons the exhibit imparts.

“It absolutely is an important exhibit, because it puts in perspective the eugenics movement and the Holocaust,” said Dr. Richard Hoppmann, the school’s dean. “The ethical issues it raises are pertinent to today, such as subjects’ rights in medical experimentation, the role of the physician with respect to the treatment of the disabled, and the physician’s role when political decisions are made that are contrary to the code of the medical profession.”

Eugenics theorists used Darwin’s concept of “survival of the fittest” as their rationale for seeking the ideal human being. When Hitler came to power, German government officials and scientists decried the expense of keeping the “unfit” alive longer through improved medicine while the “fit,” educated and “productive” classes

were marrying later and having fewer children. This would result, according to eugenics proponents, in a “degeneration” of the population.

The eugenics movement was not unique to Germany, but was widespread in western nations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, though the Germans took its concepts to a gruesome extreme. Hoppmann believes there was nothing of medical value that any of the experiments produced, but that it is “important to see, as unpleasant as it is to see, watching doctors take a point of view to foster conclusions. Things went terribly wrong.”

However, the medical dean concluded, “we cannot forget this happened,” adding “the story that is told is well researched, including documents and even instruments from the period. The photographs and video-clip interviews are very powerful. The exhibit provides a link to the past that has some very important lessons for all of us. I think this is especially true for our medical students.”

Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race can be seen in the State Museum’s 401 Gallery through Feb. 14.

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CUTLINE FOR DEADLY MEDICINE

More than 100 University of South Carolina medical students, nurses and administrators recently viewed the South Carolina State Museum's sobering but important exhibit *Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race*. The exhibition examines the German medical profession's role in supporting the concept of "eugenics" or "racial hygiene," which was used to attempt to promote the "fit" while oppressing the "unfit" classes of the German population during the Nazi era.

[Click here to view/download hi-res photo](#)

Photo by Charise Bell/ courtesy USC School of Medicine, S.C. State Museum

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