WHAT’S IN A NAME?
CHARLES M. GOETHE, AMERICAN EUGENICS, & SACRAMENTO STATE UNIVERSITY

A Report Prepared By

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Division of Social Work
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“These pages … are recorded, too, in a native-Californian’s deep appreciation of these blue-eyed, blonde empire-building Nordics.”
(C. M. Goethe, introduction to What’s In A Name, 1949)

“Good blood will tell.”
(C. M. Goethe, Eugenics Research Association Presidential Address, 1936)

“Would that there were more men like Dr. Goethe.”
(Guy West, President of Sacramento State College, 1965)

“Fifty years ago, C. M. Goethe had the courage to propose, and promulgate and defend his ideas when they were very unpopular. He did so at the cost of being labeled a racist. I intend to show that he was unjustly maligned.”
(Rodger Bishton, CSUS Professor of Education, 1970)

“I am the spirit that always denies.”
(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Faust, 1808)

“The past is everywhere.”
(David Lowenthal, introduction to The Past Is A Foreign Country, 1985)
About The Author

Tony Platt is professor emeritus of social work at California State University, Sacramento (CSUS), where he has taught since 1977. Previously, he taught at the University of California (Berkeley) and University of Chicago. He was educated at Oxford University, where he received his BA degree (1960-63), and at the University of California, Berkeley, where he received his doctorate in criminology (1963-66). He has been a member of the editorial board of Social Justice since its inception in 1974. Platt has published several books and many articles in the areas of U.S. history, race relations, criminology, sociology, welfare and social policy. He is currently a book reviewer for the Los Angeles Times.


Platt has received three meritorious performance awards for teaching and research at California State University, Sacramento. He was also the first recipient of the President's Award for Research and Creative Activity (1990). In 1995-6 he was the recipient of the annual Scholarly Achievement Award at CSUS.

In the summer 1999, Platt was a fellow at The Huntington Library, San Marino. In 2003, he was a consultant to English playwright David Edgar for his two-play cycle on American politics, “Continental Divide.” His current research focuses on the history of eugenics in California.

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I worked on this project for six months from September 2003 to February 2004. The research involved archival and library investigation, and interviews with people who have direct information about Sacramento State University’s relationship with Charles M. Goethe. For a list of resources and interviews, see the Bibliography at the end of this study.

I am grateful to all the people who gave me their time and recollections. A variety of people made this project possible. My special thanks to Alex Stern, University of Michigan historian, for generously sharing her knowledge and insights about Goethe, and for commenting in detail on the manuscript. To my assistant, Becky Gieck, for invaluable help with research. To Betty Moulds for helping me to navigate the university bureaucracy. And to Kurt Kuss and Julie Thomas in the CSUS Department of Special Collections and University Archives for their expert guidance and interest in the project.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I  INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II C. M. GOETHE &amp; THE EUGENICS MOVEMENT</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Background</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Human Betterment Foundation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Nazi Connection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Fatherland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Defense of Nazi Eugenics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nordic Internationalism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>III C. M. GOETHE &amp; SACRAMENTO STATE UNIVERSITY</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Founding Father</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vague Matters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow the Money</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpreting the Will</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic Amnesia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IV THE GOETHE COLLECTION</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Library</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Biography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salvaging the Collection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V  ENGAGING THE PAST</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History and Memory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VI BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Archives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary Sources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary Sources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>World Wide Web</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. INTRODUCTION

“Some preservers believe they save the real past by preventing it from being made over. But we cannot avoid remaking our heritage, for every act of recognition alters what survives. We can use the past fruitfully only when we realize that to inherit is also to transform.”

(David Lowenthal)

I backed into this investigation through a related research project. For the past two years I have been studying and writing about eugenics in the United States. Anybody who does any serious research on this topic inevitably comes across Charles Matthias Goethe (1875-1966). Based all his long life in Sacramento, where he was born and died, Goethe loomed large in eugenics in California and was an influential figure in national and international eugenic circles. Recently, historians have begun to explore his significance within the American and international eugenics movement prior to World War II.

Every time that I drive through the main entrance to Sacramento State University, I am taken aback by the signage that announces the “C. M. Goethe Arboretum.” As a longtime faculty member, I know that Goethe played an important role in the university’s formative years and continues to have a symbolic and material presence in the life of the campus. But because I’ve been doing research on eugenics, a now discredited science popular in the 1920s and 1930s, I also know that in his 1936 presidential address to the Eugenics Research Association, he publicly defended Nazi Germany’s “honest yearnings for a better population.”

Why would my university, with its strong commitment to multicultural values, pay homage to somebody devoted to breeding a master race? Maybe back in the 1950s and 1960s, when California State University, Sacramento (CSUS) -- then know as Sacramento State College -- developed its ties with Goethe, nobody knew about his views on race or maybe Goethe led two lives: a public life as a “successful land developer and noted philanthropist,” in the words of a recent university publication; and a shadowy life as a “Nazi agitator,” as charged in Edwin Black’s recent book.

I decided to do my own investigation of Goethe’s relationship to his adopted alma mater. What I discovered was that in the 1950s and 1960s, when Goethe was being courted for his money and prestige, the university turned a blind eye to his racism and treated him with all the pomp and reverence of a founding father: awarding him an honorary degree, celebrating his...
birthday, naming a building and park in his honor, and appointing him chairman of the university’s advisory board. “Would that there were more men like Dr. Goethe,” noted Guy West, the university’s first president (1947-1965), about “Sacramento’s most remarkable citizen.” All the attention that was showered on Goethe paid off: when he died in 1966, CSUS received the largest share of his $24 million estate.

Goethe’s rightwing agenda was no secret, for he was proud of his views, which he widely publicized. He spent over a million dollars of his own money writing and promoting tracts on race and immigration. A prolific correspondent with a full-time, personal secretary, he fired off thousands of letters to newspapers, colleagues, and public figures. At CSUS, many people were well aware of Goethe’s unsavory provenance. In April 1965, students protested the decision to name a new building in his honor. Two years later, the faculty voted to remove Goethe’s name from the Science building and the administration quietly complied. By the early 1970s, Goethe’s huge eugenics library, annotated with his racist scribbling, and hundreds of his more inflammatory letters, including correspondence with his Nazi counterparts, had mysteriously disappeared from the university’s archives.

Once Goethe’s well-documented bigotry became a public embarrassment to the university, especially in the context of the anti-racism movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the administration tried to distance CSUS from his reputation by practicing strategic amnesia. This has been the policy for the last thirty years. There are polite references to Goethe in official documents and the university continues to fund projects in his name. But his symbolic presence on campus has eroded, much like the rotting plaque erected in the arboretum in 1962 in memory of his wife by the local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. The administration quietly removed his name from his residence in September 2000, resurrecting it as a memorial to its architect, Julia Morgan. There has even been discussion of renaming the arboretum that greets visitors entering the campus.

But it is hard to purge an institution of its ghosts without an honest reckoning. In the 1960s, the university took a fawning, celebratory approach to Goethe. Now we practice calculated amnesia. It is time to try a different approach, to engage the past, not erase it.

We should face the fact that Sacramento State’s uncritical relationship with a wealthy benefactor compromised our obligation to speak out on issues of social injustice. The university’s silence made it easier for Goethe to promote racist policies in immigration, real estate, and family planning that victimized untold thousands. Rather than treating Goethe as an embarrassment to be managed, the university should welcome a transparent, public debate about his legacy, including full disclosure of the financial handling of Goethe’s multi-million dollar bequest.

As a public institution of higher education, we have a responsibility to learn from our experience. We need to understand why the eugenics’ movement exercised such widespread influence and how its assumptions persist today in the demonization of immigrants, in

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7 Letter from Guy West to Harold Severaid, March 24, 1965. CSUS, Severaid Collection. The second, widely cited quote is in Craft, p. 132.
government efforts to restrict the birthrate of poor women, and in growing support for the genetic “enhancement” of the future children of wealthy families.

The focus of this report is on CSUS and Goethe: How the university became involved with him and who benefited from the relationship. Who knew about his role in eugenics. What happened to the money, residence, library, and papers, which he bequeathed to CSUS. How the university has remembered him and what should be done today about his financial and symbolic legacies. Before addressing these issues, I will provide some general background information about the American eugenics movement and Goethe’s role within it. In the conclusion, I will make some suggestions about how the university community might address its troubling past, which “is not simply back there, in a separate and foreign country,” but is here and now in “an ever-changing present.”

8 Lowenthal, p. 412.
II. C. M. GOETHE AND THE EUGENICS MOVEMENT

Background

The eugenics movement, which emerged in many countries around the world at the turn of the last century, was designed, in the words of one of its founders, Francis Galton, to give “the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable.” In the United States, eugenics enjoyed wide support between the world wars and drew upon a variety of ideological views, from the birth control movement to rightwing nativism. For Progressive activists and liberals, eugenics was tied to programs designed to promote infant and maternal health and to uplift the economic conditions of impoverished families. C. M. Goethe, on the other hand, was associated with what Laura Briggs calls the “hard-line” position, a tendency which dominated the eugenics agenda in the 1930s.

Charles Matthias Goethe was born in Sacramento on March 28, 1875, and died in Sacramento on July 10, 1966. His father Henry, who was involved in real estate, a bank, and other business ventures, left Charles a sizable estate after his death in 1928. Charles M. Goethe completed high school in Sacramento in 1891 and passed the bar in 1900 but never practiced law. He worked in his father’s business, leading a self-disciplined life, observing his family’s conventional Lutheran religiosity, bred for success. In 1903, he married Mary Glide and into one of the wealthiest families in Sacramento. Until her death in 1946, the Goethes traveled the world and were very active in a variety of civic causes. Through shrewd investments and real estate deals, their wealth steadily accumulated. By the time of his death in 1966, his estate was valued at $24 million.

Goethe was a public activist in the tradition of Progressive philanthropists who used their wealth for hands-on projects that had significant social consequences. He was interested in conventional politics, but it was not the love of life. He tended to support candidates and politicians who had a reputation for rightwing views on race and communism. He was an early supporter of Richard Nixon, even giving him advice on how to maintain good relations with the press. Nixon thanked him for his “expression of confidence” after the “Checkers” speech in 1952.

In the late 1950s, when Goethe lobbied Congress about putting racial restrictions on immigration, Strom Thurmond let him know that “I appreciate your comments, as I am also opposed to opening up our immigration floodgates.” Goethe was also on the mailing list of Georgia Governor Marvin Griffin, who fiercely resisted integration, believing that “the white race are the only people able to perpetuate the Christian religion.” Griffin sent Goethe a copy

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9 Quoted in Kevles, p. xiii.
10 For a thoughtful analysis of how eugenics was “all over the political map,” see Briggs, pp. 99f.
11 Briggs, p. 102.
12 Biographical details of Goethe’s life are taken from Andrew Schauer, Charles Matthias Goethe, 1875-1966.
13 Schauer, p. 100.
14 See letter from Nixon to Goethe, September 11, 1951. Goethe Collection, unfiled materials.
17 Quoted in Bledsoe, p. 99.
of the notorious 1957 photograph, taken at the Highlander Folk School gathering in Tennessee, which purported to show the influence of communists on the civil rights movement.\textsuperscript{18}

But it was to a variety of civic rather than political causes that Goethe was devoted -- protecting wilderness areas, conserving redwoods, launching the interpretive park’s movement, building playgrounds for urban youth, and supporting research in genetics and plant biology -- all of which, as historian Alexandra Stern has pointed out, were framed within his passion for eugenics.\textsuperscript{19} He was an influential member of the most important eugenics associations and invested at least one million dollars of his own money in writing about and promoting publications dealing with eugenics.\textsuperscript{20} In the early 1920s, he formed the Immigration Study Commission in order to lobby government to prevent an influx of “low-powers,” especially from Mexico, into California.\textsuperscript{21} In 1924, he successfully lobbied the Commonwealth Club of California, an elite fraternal society based in San Francisco, to create a Eugenics Section.\textsuperscript{22} In Sacramento in 1933, he organized, funded, and led the Eugenics Society of Northern California, which he administered out of his office, and in 1936 he served as president of the national Eugenics Research Association. In sum, Goethe was a leader of campaigns to restrict Latin American immigration and to increase sterilization of the “socially unfit.”\textsuperscript{23}

The rightwing supporters of eugenics promoted “Anglo-Saxon” societies as the engine of modern civilization and advocated policies of apartheid in order to protect the “well born” from contamination by the poor, mentally ill, and “socially inadequate.” Its leaders believed that a variety of social successes (wealth, political leadership, intellectual discoveries) and social problems (poverty, illegitimacy, crime, mental illness, and unemployment) could be traced to inherited, biological attributes associated with “racial temperament.”

Under the banner of “national regeneration,”\textsuperscript{24} tens of thousands, mostly poor women, were subjected to involuntary sterilization in the United States between 1907 and 1940.\textsuperscript{25} And untold thousands of women were sterilized without their informed consent after World War II.\textsuperscript{26} As a result of California’s sterilization laws, actively supported by Goethe, at least 20,000 Californians in state hospitals and prisons had been involuntarily sterilized by 1964. California, according to a recent study, “consistently outdistanced every other state” in terms of the number

\textsuperscript{18} The photograph, which includes Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks, is annotated on the back with names and communist affiliations. Goethe Collection, unfiled materials. For the story behind the photograph, see Bledsoe, p. 84f.

\textsuperscript{19} See Alexandra Stern’s forthcoming book, Eugenic Nation. In War Profits and Better Babies (1946, p. 74), Goethe notes that “extinction always fascinates eugenicists. The near-extinction of the sea otter, its comeback under a biologically-sound conservation policy, can be paralleled as to the precious American pioneer stock. At present that stock is race-suiciding.”

\textsuperscript{20} Schauer, p. 125.

\textsuperscript{21} Stern, p. 216.

\textsuperscript{22} Stern, p. 142-144.


\textsuperscript{25} Carlson, p. 215. The number typically used is 60,00 to 65,000. Ordover (p. 134) estimates that 70,000 people “are known to have been sterilized” between 1907 and 1945.

\textsuperscript{26} For example, by the 1980s an estimated one-third of Puerto Rican women of childbearing age was sterilized, many as a result of coercion and trickery by social work and public health agencies. See Briggs p.143.
of eugenic sterilizations. In the 1910s and 1920s, men were as likely to be sterilized as women were, but by the 1930s restrictions on reproductive choice were disproportionately aimed at women of color. One of Gray Davis’ last acts as governor was to issue a public apology to these victims. “Our hearts are heavy for the pain caused by eugenics,” he noted in a statement marking “a sad and regrettable chapter” in California’s history.

The grounds for sterilization included such vague classifications as “excessive masturbation,” “immorality,” and “hereditary degeneracy.” In 1926, for example, the superintendent of Riverside’s Bureau of Welfare and Relief advocated sterilization of “feebleminded,” unmarried women as a means to halting the “menace to the race at large.” At the Sonoma State Home, sexual activity by single women was perceived as evidence of mental defect, irrespective of whether or not a patient met medical or psychological standards of “feeblemindedness.” Under the leadership of F. O. Butler as superintendent of the Sonoma State Home, typically patients were not paroled to their families unless sterilized prior to their release. “Dr. Butler has always had a strong weapon to use in getting consents for sterilization,” wrote Paul Popenoe of Pasadena’s Human Betterment Foundation to eugenicist John Randolph Haynes in 1930, “by telling the relatives that the patient could not leave without sterilization.”

Sterilization represented only a small part of the eugenics agenda. Eugenics was also a cultural vehicle for expressing anxiety about the “degeneration” of middle-class “Aryans,” perceived as resulting from a declining birthrate and, in the words of two leading eugenicists, the “evil of crossbreeding.” For eugenicists, sterilization was not so much a technical, medical procedure to enhance physical and mental health, as it was a way to cleanse the body politic of racial and sexual impurities. Eugenicists strongly supported restriction on welfare benefits to poor families, bans on interracial marriage or “miscegenation,” and limits on immigration from non-European countries.

Human Betterment Foundation

Goethe was a founding board member of the Pasadena-based Human Betterment Foundation (HBF), the most influential eugenics think tank in California. The HBF, established in 1929 as a non-profit organization, was created and funded by Ezra S. Gosney, a philanthropist with a penchant for social engineering and conservative politics. Born in Kentucky in 1855, Gosney practiced law in Arizona where he made his fortune in sheep and cattle breeding. In 1905 he moved to Pasadena and invested in citrus farming and real estate. “Perhaps,” observed the editors of Eugenics, “his association with the live stock industry” gave him the idea that people “were just as capable of improvement as were their species of domesticated animals and cultivated plants.”

27 Black, p. 398.
29 Letter from J. H. Dodge to E. S. Gosney, July 26, 1926, E.S. Gosney Papers, 16.5.
31 Popenoe and Johnson, p. 301.
In Pasadena, Gosney linked up with biologist Paul Popenoe, director of the Institute of Family Relations in Los Angeles. Together they established the Foundation, with Popenoe as its executive director, and recruited a board of California luminaries, including C. M. Goethe, Nobel prize-winning scientist Robert Millikan, Stanford’s chancellor David Starr Jordan, publisher Harry Chandler, professors from Berkeley and the University of Southern California, and members of the board of trustees of San Marino’s Huntington Library, one of the country’s most exclusive archives.

For a small think tank with few full-time staff members, the HBF had considerable influence through its network of patrons, political allies, and academic supporters. It had two main functions: to lobby governments in support of sterilization policies; and to promote eugenics in public discourse. It was more involved in distributing and publicizing the results of research than carrying out scientific investigations. The Foundation claimed to have sent out one of its twelve-page pamphlets to nearly half a million contacts in universities and government agencies around the world.

Goethe was a financial supporter of the HBF and long-time admirer of its executive director, to whom he would later dedicate one of his books. Goethe learned about Paul Popenoe’s “valuable work” and research on sterilization during a visit to Goethe’s home in 1926. When Gosney recruited Popenoe to the Human Betterment Foundation in 1929, the self-made expert on biology already had achieved a national reputation in eugenics. With co-author Roswell Hill Johnson, he wrote one of the most widely read textbooks, *Applied Eugenics*, published by Macmillan in 1918, reprinted in 1926, and revised in 1933. In the 1926 edition, Popenoe sounded the alarm about how “race suicide [was] proceeding more rapidly among the native whites than among any other large section of the population.” Too much democracy, argued Popenoe and Johnson, is responsible for “race degeneracy.” Good government is best served by an “aristo-democracy,” administered by experts who recognize that “poverty is in many ways eugenic in its effect.” Liberal proposals for a minimum wage, old age pensions, and trade unions are “dysgenic” in that they interfere with natural selection and cultivate “the increase of the inferior part of the population at the expense of the superior.”

On matters of race, Popenoe was a frankly outspoken supporter of white supremacy. Differences in “racial temperament” between Blacks and Whites, he argued, are based on constitutional, inherited tendencies. How else can we explain why the “Negro race in Africa has never, by its own initiative, risen much above barbarism.” Or why Negroes “when placed side by side with the white race, … fails to come up to their standard, or indeed to come anywhere near...

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34 “This organization is not designed to take up original scientific research, but rather to investigate the results and possibilities for human betterment by a safe, conservative application of the discoveries made by scientists, and to give this information to the public.” Popenoe and Gosney, 1938, p. 40.
36 He dedicated War Profits and Better Babies (1946) to Popenoe, “author, scientist, and idealist.”
37 Letter from Goethe to H. J. Perkins, August 10, 1926. Laughlin Papers, C-4-1: 2.
38 Popenoe did not have a graduate degree in biology, but presented himself to the public as a biologist. See Ludmerer, p. 148.
39 Popenoe and Johnson, p. 257.
41 Ibid, pp. 374-389.
it.” Is there any other conclusion, asked Popenoe, other than “the Negro lacks in his germ-plasm excellence of some qualities which the white race possess, and which are essential for success in competition with the civilizations of the white races at the present day?”

Popenoe’s call for maintenance of “the color line” and legal sanctions against “miscegenation” was backed up by his belief that Negroes were not only “eugenically inferior,” but also characterized by sexual impulsiveness and weak inhibitions. He advocated a similar policing of the nation’s borders against immigrants from eastern and southern Europe, who threatened to pollute the country with the “evil of crossbreeding.” His views were not remarkably different from his peers, but his candor was unusual. Discussing the dangers posed by the unregulated birth rate of African Americans, Popenoe had a simple solution: use them as fodder in war. “One sees that in many nations there are certain races which are more valuable on the firing line than in industries at the rear; and it appears that they should play the part for which they are best fitted. … In the United States are millions of negroes who are of less value than white men in organized industry but almost as valuable as the whites, when properly led, at the front.”

By the time that the HBF dissolved in 1942, Paul Popenoe had reinvented himself as a marriage guidance counselor and director of the American Institute of Family Relations in Los Angeles. The Institute was based on programs that had been set up in Germany in the 1920s to identify and train compatible individuals for marriage. With Popenoe as its director, the Institute promoted traditional gender roles and railed against the pathology of homosexuality. Goethe was an enthusiastic supporter of the Institute and, according to historian Wendy Kline, one of its main financial backers. By 1962, four years before Goethe’s death, the Institute had a staff of seventy and seven branches in the Los Angeles area. The Institute was one of the primary beneficiaries of Goethe’s will on condition that Popenoe was director “at the time of my death.”

The Nazi Connection

The eugenics movement had followers in Europe as well as the United States, and gained increasing support in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century. Eugenics exploited popular fears about the declining birthrate of the educated and elite, and “a rise in the proportion of ‘inferiors’ within the population.” The idea of sterilizing certain categories of “degenerate” was supported in medical circles long before Hitler came to power. In 1932, Hitler’s party advocated compulsory sterilization. Once in power in 1933, the Nazis quickly introduced legislation, the ground well prepared by “experts.”

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44 Ibid, p. 301.
46 C. M. Goethe will, June 19, 1963, copy provided by CSUS Foundation attorney, Robert Murphy; Kline, pp. 141-145, 153-154, 161. According to Schauer, p. 200, the American Institute of Family Relations initially received close to $80,000 from Goethe’s estate, perhaps over $100,000 by the time of the final disbursement.
47 Kershaw, p. 79.
48 Kershaw, p. 411.
The Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring was adopted in Germany on July 14, 1933, the same day that laws targeting Eastern Jews (withdrawal of citizenship, ban on immigration, etc.) were passed. The new law authorized the sterilization of anybody suffering from supposedly hereditary diseases, including feeble-mindedness. The decision to sterilize was based on medical examinations and intelligence tests, and required authorization by special health courts. About two hundred thousand people were sterilized in Germany between July 1933 and the end of 1937. For the Nazis, it was the top of a slippery slope that would lead to the sterilization of 400,000 victims, the killing of 100,000 mentally ill patients by 1941, and then on to the mass-produced, rationalized butchery of millions.\(^4^9\)

Prewar Nazi actions against Jews, including passage of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, were “widely reported in the American press and repeatedly denounced at all levels of American society,” notes Peter Novick.\(^5^0\) But there were also powerful individuals and institutions in the United States that looked very favorably upon Nazi experiments in scientific racism. California had its racial visionaries, who, like their Nazi counterparts, wanted to protect Aryan progress from degeneracy. Until the United States entered the war against Germany in 1941, several important members of California’s brains trust, including C. M. Goethe, actively promoted ideas that paralleled Nazi policies. They supported sterilization of the racially unfit, segregation in education and housing, restrictions on immigration and inter-marriage, and the search for the biological basis of Nordic supremacy.

In the early 1930s, the Nazis looked to the circle associated with the Human Betterment Foundation for practical models and endorsement of their racial policies.\(^5^1\) When the Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring was published in the German government’s legal journal in July 1933, it included a flattering reference to the Foundation and a commentary on California’s sterilization policy as a “practical and essential step to prevent racial degeneration.”\(^5^2\) California had come to the attention of German eugenicists through its compulsory sterilization of 6,255 patients by 1929, almost twice as many as all other states combined.\(^5^3\) An “essential basis” for the development of the 1933 Nazi law, according to a German historian, was Popenoe and Gosney’s *Sterilization for Human Betterment*, published in a German edition in 1930. Another Foundation pamphlet, *Human Sterilization*, was distributed in Germany by Dr. Herbert Linden, an influential Nazi at the Reich Ministry’s Health Department and, later, administrator of a program that exterminated more than 100,000 mentally ill patients.\(^5^4\)

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49 Friedländer, pp. 39, 40, 208-209, 331. The first step towards a euthanasia policy was taken in the fall 1938. Plans were made in the first months of 1939 when Hitler authorized “the mass murder of handicapped children and of mentally ill adults.” See Friedländer, pp. 209, 331.
50 Novick, pp. 20-21. Deborah Lipstadt (pp. 57-62) agrees that there was widespread press coverage in the United States of the passage of the Nuremberg Laws, but argues that this coverage was uneven and tended to minimize the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism in Germany.
51 For the influence of American eugenics on German sterilization policies, see Kühl, 1994.
52 Letter from George Dock to E.S. Gosney, January 31, 1934. Attached to this letter is Dock’s translation of Germany’s 1933 Sterilization Law, which includes these comments. Gosney Papers, 21.7.
54 Kühl, pp. 43-44.
George Dock, a Pasadena physician and founding supporter of the Foundation, was so impressed with the German law of 1933 that he suggested to Gosney that the Foundation could benefit from its influence on the Nazi regime. “I think the reference to the California work, and the work of the Foundation,” wrote Dock, “is a very significant thing. The matter has given me a better opinion of Mr. Hitler than I had before. He may be too impulsive in some matters, but he is sound on the theory and practice of eugenic sterilization.” The Foundation let its supporters know in 1933 that the German Minister of Justice “has recently sent out a copy of the German law for general distribution, to which is appended a German translation of one of the pamphlets of the Human Betterment Foundation.”

When C. M. Goethe returned from his visit to Germany in 1934, he commended the HBF for its influence on Nazi eugenics. “You will be interested to know,” Goethe wrote Gosney, “that your work has played a powerful part in shaping the opinions of the group of intellectuals who are behind Hitler in this epoch-making program. Everywhere I sensed that their opinions have been tremendously stimulated by American thought, and particularly by the work of the Human Betterment Foundation. I want you, my dear friend, to carry this thought with you for the rest of your life, that you have really jolted into action a great government of 60 million people.”

The Foundation actively defended Nazi sterilization policies in the United States. When Paul Popenoe submitted an article on the 1933 law to the Journal of Heredity, he enclosed a large photograph of Hitler to illustrate the text, which included several favorable quotations from Mein Kampf. It was welcome news to the American scientist that Hitler’s “hopes of national regeneration [rested] solidly on the application of biological principles to human society” and that Germany’s policy “will accord with the best thought of eugenicists in all civilized countries.” He reassured his colleagues that the Nazi government was “avoiding the misplaced emphasis on their earlier pronouncements on questions of race” and increasingly relying on the expert opinion of “scientific leadership,” such as that provided by Dr. Arthur Gütt. But Popenoe failed to mention that Gütt was a staunch advocate of “racial hygiene,” who had been active in Hitler’s “volkisch” movement in East Prussia in the mid-1920s and had joined the Nazi party in September 1932. Gütt courted the new government in 1933 with a document on “State Population Policy” that framed his eugenics proposal in racist imagery. For this he was rewarded with an appointment to a senior post in the medical department of the Reich Ministry of the Interior in May 1933.

In June 1933, the Ministry of the Interior established a “Committee of Experts for Population and Race Questions,” chaired by Gütt. This twelve-member commission, praised by

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55 Letter from George Dock to E.S. Gosney, January 31, 1934, Gosney Papers, 21.7.
57 Quoted in Kühl, p. 58 and Black, p. 277. The letter from Goethe to Gosney is reproduced in the HBF’s annual report, February 12, 1936.
58 The article was published without the photograph. Paul Popenoe, “The German Sterilization Law, Journal of Heredity vol. 25, no. 7, July 1934, pp. 257-260. The original article, with a space for Hitler’s photograph, is in the Gosney Papers, 21.7.
60 On Gütt’s ideas and rise to power, see Kershaw, p. 487; and Jeremy Noakes, “Nazism and Eugenics: The Background of the Nazi Sterilization Law of 14 July 1933,” in R.J. Bullen, H. Pogge Von Strandmann, and A.B. Polonsky (eds.), pp. 75-94.
Popenoe and the HBF, included only one person who had any genuine expertise on the topic. The rest of the “recognized leaders of the eugenics movement,” to use Popenoe’s ingenuous description, were Nazi hacks, including Hans Günther, the notorious professor of “Racial Science” at Jena, and Gerhard Wagner, leader of the Nazi doctors’ association who would become a key architect of the Nuremberg Laws.

The following year, Dr. Bruno Gebhard, eugenicist and director of a “Racial Hygiene” Museum in Munich, was invited by the American Public Health Association to attend its annual convention in Pasadena. On the same day -- August 24, 1934 -- that the Reich Commission of National Health advised Germans to “choose only a wife of the same or of Nordic blood [and] keep away from aliens of non-European racial origin,” public health officials in New York organized a reception for Gebhard before he departed for the west coast. At the Pasadena conference, Gebhard’s display on “Public Health and Eugenics in New Germany,” side by side with the HBF’s display on “Eugenic Sterilization,” was the “chief attraction” in the civic auditorium’s exhibit hall. It was “suggested and approved by Adolf Hitler himself,” said Gebhard, “and comes to Pasadena as an illustration of the method by which Der Führer hopes to build up the health and strength of the German people.”

Daniel Kevles argues that most eugenicists in the United States “could not know -- and likely did not want to imagine -- that a river of blood would eventually run from the sterilization law of 1933 to Auschwitz and Buchenwald.” But by 1934 researchers and supporters associated with the Human Betterment Foundation knew and approved of the racial politics that guided Nazi policies. The Los Angeles Times published a long defense of Nazi sterilization policies in 1935. The author blamed Communists and Marxists for equating sterilization with anti-Semitism. The Nazis “had to resort to the teachings of eugenic science,” argued Dr. Burchardi, because Germany is “deprived of her colonies [and] blessed with many hundreds of defective racial hybrids as a lasting memory of the colored army of occupation, and dismembered all around.”

Not one person associated with the Foundation, including Goethe, issued a single public statement before or after the war condemning the abuse of eugenics in Germany. Popenoe assured a colleague in 1934 that “not even Hitler proposes to sterilize anyone on the grounds of racial origin.” Two years later, he wrote to Ottmar Freiherr von Verschuer, a leading Nazi eugenicist, asking for statistics to rebut what he considered negative propaganda in the United

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61 Official Program of the Sixty-Third Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, Pasadena, September 3-6, 1934, p. 31.
64 Kevles, p. 118.
66 There is no evidence, as suggested by David Valone in his wishful introduction to Caltech’s collection of the Gosney Papers, that Gosney issued a “condemnation of German eugenic theory.” See Valone, “Eugenic Science in California,” viii.
67 Letter from Paul Popenoe to geneticist L.C. Dunn, January 22, 1934, quoted in Ludmerer, p. 118.
States about Germany’s sterilization program. “We are always anxious to see that conditions in
Germany are not misunderstood or misrepresented.”

Late in 1938, with war on the horizon, Gosney tried to privately distance the Foundation from Nazi policies. Despite this disclaimer, however, eugenicists associated with the Foundation enthusiastically shared the same cultural and political assumptions as their Nazi counterparts: belief in the genetic superiority of Nordic and Aryan civilizations over “backward” peoples; anxiety about the degeneration of the white population through miscegenation; and concern over the growing disparity between the high birth rate of the “socially inadequate” and low birth rate of the “Northern European type of family.”

From its founding in 1929 to its demise in 1942, the Human Betterment Foundation promoted a technocratic defense of sterilization policies as a vehicle for its racial discourse. In this sense, they had much in common with their Nazi counterparts, with whom they shared information and propaganda. Even prior to the July 1933 Sterilization law, Wilhelm Frick, Minister of the Interior and, later, a co-signer of the Nuremberg Laws, was publicly making a connection between the problem of “hereditary defectives” and the dangers of “race-mixing.” Frick drew attention to the “great danger of immigration of foreign eastern stock. In Berlin alone approximately 4,000 immigrants from the East were naturalized in 1930, these were mostly of foreign stock and to a great extent eastern Jews.” By the end of Frick’s speech, his comments on the need to increase the birthrate of healthy Germans and return “the woman back to the hearth” had segued into a defense of “race-purity” and the dangers of “miscegenation.”

If American biologists had any doubts about the racial motivation of the sterilization legislation of 1933, a year later they could not plead ignorance. In February 1934, the New York Times reported that German eugenicists were advocating the sterilization of all “Negroid children in the Rhineland and Ruhr districts,” irrespective of their mental and emotional abilities. “We have enough non-Aryans in Germany already,” said a Nazi spokesman. At about the same time, Frick gave a short speech on “The Race Law of the Third Reich,” in which there were fourteen disparaging references to Jews. An English translation of the speech was kept in the files of the Human Betterment Foundation. The main goal of the German Revolution, noted Frick, was “Germany for the Germans and under German leadership.” The only internal threat to

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68 Letter from Popenoe to von Verschuer, July 16, 1936, quoted in Black, p. 342.
69 “We have little in this country to consider in racial integrity. Germany is pushing that. We should stay clear of it lest we should be misunderstood.” Letter from Gosney to Mr. Reid, September 9, 1940, Gosney Papers, 1.2.
71 The Human Betterment Foundation also promoted a gendered and patriarchal vision of the family. See Kline, 2001.
72 “Address by Reichminister for the Interior Dr. Frick Before the First Meeting of the Expert Council for Population and Race Politics,” Berlin, June 28, 1933. An English translation of this speech was printed in Germany and sent to the Human Betterment Foundation. A copy of the speech is in the Gosney Papers, 22.1.
73 At this point in the English translation of Frick’s speech, there are asterisks, indicating that his further comments on “eastern Jews” were omitted.
75 “The Race Law of the Third Reich, Speech of Reich Minister Dr. Frick,” February 15, 1934, Gosney Papers, 22.2.
this goal came from “a race which was foreign to the German people [who] obtained power through the party and parliamentary system and, above all, with the aid of their money: the Jews.” Germans, continued Frick, “are not prepared to bend the knee permanently to the power of an alien race that is scattered all over the world, and hence adopts an international standpoint, but, at the same time, holds together in all the countries of the world, and pursues its own interests at the cost of all peoples in the world with extreme tenacity, at all costs and with complete ruthlessness.”

Frick’s speech linked the April 1933 Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service -- under whose notorious “Aryan Paragraph” Jews were fired from the civil service -- with “the promotion of hereditary fitness and race hygiene,” as embodied in the sterilization law passed three months later. Both laws were necessary, claimed Frick, in order to protect the “Nordic race” and the “great Indo-Germanic family of nations who were also called Aryans in earlier times.” Who are the “typically Nordic peoples?” asked Frick. “In addition to ourselves, [they] are the Scandinavians, the Dutch, the English and the North Americans, all of whom we can describe collectively as Germanic.” Anybody reading Frick’s speech understood that purging the “national body corporate” of “useless and unhealthy parts” was a racial project, aimed primarily at Jews.

While the Nazis worried about the pollution of Aryan stock by infiltrators from the east, the Human Betterment Foundation projected their racial anxieties south. “Africa and South America,” commented Popenoe, “in spite of the fact that they lie considerably in the tropics, really owe their backward condition to the character of the people who inhabit these regions. After all, that territory we now call the United States was not in a very advanced state of civilization up to the time of the European invasion.” If the United States was going to maintain its superiority in the world, observed Popenoe in a speech written for the Foundation in 1933, it needed to limit the birthrate of Mexican “peon type” families and look to the history of Scotland, Switzerland, and Holland for “abundant proof that a superior people will wrest from the most hostile environment a worth-while destiny and civilization.”

The Fatherland

Charles M. Goethe closely followed developments in Germany and was in regular contact with Nazi racial scientists. Until recently, it has been difficult to reconstruct Goethe’s views about the Hitler regime because his correspondence and notes on this topic are missing from the Goethe collection at CSUS. But now we have the benefit of research done in other countries and collections. Moreover, I have been able to extract new information from Goethe’s travel diaries, which are in the CSUS collection.

Goethe retained strong ties to Germany throughout most of his life, in part through his paternal origins, in part as a matter of cultural preference, as well his later political affinities with

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76 See Kershaw, pp. 474-475.
79 What happened to this important part of the Goethe Collection will be discussed later in this report.
80 The diaries, written in tiny and almost indecipherable script, are primarily a record of places visited, sights seen, and nature observations. But occasional comments about eugenics can be gleaned from them.
the Nazi movement. Goethe’s grandfather, Matthias Goethe, a Lutheran minister, left Germany in the 1840s and eventually settled in Australia around 1857. He and his English-born wife, Harriet Wells, moved to Sacramento in 1867 and established the Evangelical Lutheran Church, ministering primarily to German immigrant families. Matthias moved to Mexico City in 1875 and died a year later. Charles’ father, Henry John Goethe, was born in Australia in 1850 and moved to California in 1868 to join his father. Five years later, he married Louisa Denger, whom he had met at a Red Cross benefit for Germans wounded in the Franco-Prussian War. About this time, Henry started to teach at the German Lutheran School, where his father served as principal. Louisa also worked at the school until Charles Matthias was born in March 1875. Charles’ father remained as principal of the German Lutheran School until it closed in 1881, then continued teaching German until 1883.81

Charles grew up speaking German and as a young adult confessed his loyalty to his homeland. “I am a true American,” he wrote in his diary in August 1902, “and yet I am false to the land of my birth when I feel a thrill of emotion and there is an intensely German feeling comes over me when I sing in the tongue of the Fatherland the old war songs…. Ah, there’s generations of that behind a fellow….82 During his travels around the world, which ceased after the death of his wife in 1946, he visited Germany at least four times – in 1912, 1925, 1929, and 1934.83

During his visit to France and Germany in 1934, Goethe was impressed by the Nazi government because it was doing what was necessary to rebuild the country into an international force. By May 1934, while traveling in France, it was clear to Goethe that Hitler was now “as permanent as Mussolini” and that “Jews are being eradicated.”84 A few weeks later, crossing into Germany reminded him of the work being done on eugenics and sterilization by Ezra Gosney and Paul Popenoe, his colleagues at the Human Betterment Foundation in Pasadena. Stores that were trying to follow Hitler’s ideas about food and diet immediately impressed him. “There is an atmosphere of idealism about these shops that is fascinating,” he wrote in his diary. “They have some thing of the admirable SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST spirit. They aim to reform [through] diet and claim [Hitler’s] clarity … is due to his vegetarianism.”85

In June 1934, Goethe returned to Berlin for the first time since 1912, where he “received the Hitlerian salute” and saw “Brown shirts” and photographs of Hitler “everywhere.” “As I interpret it,” wrote Goethe, “HITLERISM is a surging forward of IDEALISM. It is amazing that a VEGETARIAN should have consolidated behind him the PUBLIC OPINION of what were overweight, corpulent GERMANS of a 1/4 century ago.”86 He was impressed by “NAZI bands everywhere, trucks of NAZIS singing hymns.”87

Goethe was sympathetic to authoritarian political leaders with anticommunist credentials. Prior to Hitler’s rise to power, Goethe noted in his diary, governments “were changing weekly

81 Schauer, pp. 2-6.
82 C.M. Goethe diary, August 5, 1902, quoted in Schauer, p. 204.
83 Schauer, pp. 44, 49, 50. See, also, Goethe’s passports in Goethe Collection, 85F7.
84 Diary entry, May 20, 1934. Unless otherwise noted, Goethe’s travel diaries are in Goethe Collection, 85F7.
85 Diary entries, June 8, 1934. On Hitler’s vegetarianism, see Kershaw, pp. 261-262, 343, 345.
86 Diary entries, June 9, 1934.
87 Diary entry, June 10, 1934.
and confidence was lost.” Under Hitler, he observed in July 1934, there were no general strikes. Meanwhile, back home in the United States, labor organizing was under way in 38 states, “all because the longshoremen object to any use of talent in labor…. It is the very opposite of SCRIPTURE,” he concluded. He was clearly attracted to the discipline and populist base of Hitler’s regime. “Again I study the faces of the NAZI. One is impressed with their idealism.”

Goethe paid close attention to the Jewish Question. He saw “Jews everywhere, no signs of persecution.” They could be found “at big hotels, conspicuous spenders.” He took note when a Berliner told him that he had been forced to abandon his business in New York “because of JEW boycott of all [Germans] as Nazi.” Goethe learned how “HITLER has eliminated from POPULATION-MASS about 1/10 of the wealthiest [Jews], who, at commencement of Nazi movement, were removing their CAPITAL to other lands.” He was told that Jews were behind the communist movement. He also learned about “Hebrew ownership of BROTHELS throughout Poland, Russia as well as [Germany].” One Jew, Goethe was informed, had “made 5 million marks here [through] commercialized VICE” and “maintained expensive quarters in our hotel.” German confidantes confirmed his view that “Jews are COSMOPOLITES knowing no allegiance to nation but to money.”

On his return to Europe in the summer of 1939 -- four years after passage of the Nuremberg Laws and a few months after Kristallnacht -- he showed no sympathy for Jews under increasing attack in Germany. His anti-Semitism remained intact, unshakeable. In France he discussed the “Jewish problem” with several contacts, including a professor who told him that “despite the anti-semitism [in France] we have no such Jewish problem as you have [in the USA].” He gave Goethe a “diagnosis of our [American] inexperience from our swallowing the Melting Pot propaganda and our allowing the Hebrews to control our anthropological thought.”

His visit to France convinced Goethe that French anti-Semitism was “based upon the tragic failure of the Jewish Premier Leon Blum,” the leader of the Socialist Party, who became the first Jewish Prime Minister in May 1936. Blum, Goethe believed, was responsible “for the enormous accumulation of debt during his administration” and “a real loss of the French empire in Africa.” As a result of Blum’s “characteristic Jewish clannishness,” his government had “favored Hebrews as against Arabs constantly [in Algeria and Morocco]. As a result all Islam became inflamed.”

In Defense of Nazi Eugenics

Goethe’s interest in the Nazi government was not motivated by a nostalgic yearning for his biological and cultural roots. He was neither a sentimentalist nor a fifth columnist for the Nazis. He admired Hitler’s regime because it had the courage to carry out its eugenics agenda,
beginning with its sterilization legislation (The Law for the Prevention of Genetically Diseased Offspring), passed on July 14, 1933. “The sterilization statutes,” Goethe observed in 1934, “electrified into action by the Hitlerian signature last midsummer, are a force to be reckoned with.” Goethe’s politics were rooted in race more than nationalism. He had little patience for “Melting Pot foolishness” in the United States, which he regarded as an effort by “the hyphenate lobby” to dilute the purity of “Nordic homogeneity.”

On his return from what he grandiosely described as “another six months’ European study of Population Pressure and of Immigration Control,” Goethe sent out one of his many briefings. “However much one abhors dictatorship, one is also impressed that Germany, by sterilization, and by stimulating birthrates among the eugenically highpowered [sic], is gaining an advantage over us as to future leadership.” Goethe was convinced that the US needed to “pass a Quota Act against Latin America, register all aliens, [and] deport, like France, aliens to make jobs for the old American stock.”

Some time in 1934, Goethe sent his views about Hitler’s eugenics program to Harry Laughlin, director of the Eugenics Research Office in Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island. While acknowledging the possibility that the Nazis might be mobilizing for war, he asked his colleague to consider that Germany might be the first example of “the modern world’s first eugenic program, having behind it the tremendously powerful force of sixty two millions welded into an efficient unit under a dictatorship.” Goethe recognized in Germany “the determination to take every possible step to insure Nordic race purity,” an effort comparable to, but much more impressive than legislation in the 1920s in the United States to stop “the menace of a colossal migration from war-weary Europe.”

To stay competitive with Germany in the world, Goethe advocated “speeding up the highpowers’ [sic] birth rate” and “sterilization of those undoubtedly socially inadequate.” The Nazi government had the right idea. “Seldom has any propaganda ever been released more convincing than the Nazi pictures of the imbecile, the moron compared with the flower of German youth. The contrasts are dramatic.” Germany was setting an example for how to deal with the problem of the declining birthrate in the United States of “Harvard graduates and of Mayflower descendants,” and the growing birthrate of “our negro group” and other “non-Nordics,” observed Goethe. “[T]he Germans are at least in action about it.”

Evoking an apocalyptic vision of racial degeneracy, accelerated by “moves toward hybridization,” Goethe lamented that “much cannot be undone” in the United States. “If however, we study Hitler’s methods, accept what is gold, reject the dross, we may make America Germany’s successful rival. Germany plans sterilization of 400,000 lowpowers [sic] soon. We will not proceed [sic] with such speed. We can however, commence to think of positive

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95 C.M. Goethe, “P.G.” [Pan-Germanism], c. 1934. Truman State, Harry Laughlin Collection, C. M. Goethe Correspondence D-2-4:3. (Hereafter cited as Goethe, “P.G.,” 1934.)
97 C. M. Goethe newsletter, untitled, January 12, 1935. Truman State, Laughlin Collection, C. M. Goethe Correspondence D-2-4:3.
eugenics, of multiplying our highpower [sic] strains, while we consider working out a common-sense sterilization program.”

Through the 1930s, Goethe remained a firm and steadfast supporter of Nazi eugenics. As the media began to sound the alarm about Hitler’s racial policies and reputable scientists withdrew their support, Goethe stuck to his initial impressions, writing off criticism as the propaganda of liberals and Jews.

In a letter to Ellsworth Huntington, written eleven days after the Nuremberg Laws were rubber-stamped by Hitler’s Reichstag on September 15, 1935, Goethe noted: “Contact with the eugenic movement in Germany, particularly in 1934, convinced me that, like them, we should try to be intensely practical.” Goethe believed that if the US followed similar policies, with respect to sterilization and immigration restrictions, “we would then have the manpower and public opinion to proceed to clean up our own population mess.” Goethe told Huntington that he was impressed by “the sane and cautious manner in which the German sterilization program is proceeding.”

Back in Sacramento, Goethe gave a speech to the Twenty-Thirty Club, praising Hitler for making eugenics into an “applied science,” protected by the rule of law and due process in eugenics courts. “These try social inadequates as to their fitness for parenthood. Please do not think these trials are based on race hatreds. Whatever else may happen in the Reich, the eugenics trials proceed with fully as much caution as if they were held in the United States. Germany has cross-card-indexed her people until she has located all her probable weaklings…. Her plan is: Eliminate all low-powers to make room for high-powers. And thereby ALSO SAVE TAXES.”

In his 1936 Presidential address to the Eugenics Research Association, Goethe defended the Nazi sterilization program as “administered wisely, and without racial cruelty,” while blaming “propagandists here” in the United States for “misrepresenting Germany’s honest yearnings for a better population.” He dismissed as misinformation reports that “German sterilization is used to hound one group [Jews].” Until Hitler came to power, Goethe told the audience, California “had led all the world in sterilization operations. Today even California’s quarter-century record has, in 2 years, been outdistanced by Germany.” Privately, he noted in his diary that Latin American governments had much to learn from Nazi Germany. Brazil, for example, needed a “dictator” such as “a HITLER who understands STERILIZATION! Why when the 21st century opens Brazil will have as many NEGROIDS as Africa.”

In 1936, Goethe was one of only three delegates from the United States to attend and participate in the annual meeting of the International Federation of Eugenic Organizations, held in Scheveningen, the Netherlands. Fifteen delegates from Germany, who reported on the latest

100 C.M. Goethe, Eugenic Pamphlet no. 12, no date, quoted in May Second Committee, “Sacramento State’s Own Doctor Strangelove,” April 1965, Goethe Collection, CSUS, 85:D9.
102 Goethe, diary entry, April 15, 1936.
development in “racial hygiene” campaigns, dominated the conference. A few years later, he recalled that he had been “amazed at their profound research.”

Throughout 1937 Goethe remained an enthusiastic booster of Nazi eugenics. He told one of his many correspondents that he was impressed that “the Germans are forging far ahead of us in this matter of accumulated data. They say they have already 4 Nobel prizes to 1 of ours, population considered, and that if we don’t adopt their methods, they will run away from us with world leaders.” To learn more about Germany’s programs he contacted Ottmar Freiherr von Verschuer, founder of Frankfurt University’s Institute for Hereditary Biology and Racial Hygiene, and a steadfast supporter of Hitler’s racial policies. Goethe introduced himself to von Verschuer in April 1937 as the president of the U.S. Eugenics Research Association, asking if it would be possible to visit the Frankfurt Institute. “I feel, because of the violent anti-German propaganda in the United States, our people know almost nothing of what is happening in Germany.”

In December 1937, Goethe sent von Verschuer apologies for his inability to visit Germany, praising him for his “marvelous work…. I feel passionately that you are leading all mankind therein. One must exercise therein the greatest tact. America is flooded with anti-German propaganda. It is abundantly financed and originates from a quarter which you know only too well [Jews]…. However, this ought to not blind us to the fact that Germany is advancing more rapidly in Erbbiologie than all the rest of mankind.”

Goethe continued to lavish praise on von Verschuer’s program into 1938, again commending “the marvelous progress you and your German associates are making.” A few days after the pogroms of Kristallnacht, Goethe commiserated with von Verschuer: “I regret that my fellow countrymen are so blinded by propaganda just at present that they are not reasoning out regarding the very fine work which the splendid eugenicists of Germany are doing…. I am a loyal American in every way,” continued Goethe. “This does not, however, lessen my respect for the great scientists of Germany.”

Even after the war, when von Verschuer sought to rehabilitate himself with the occupation forces by disassociating himself from his protégé, Josef Mengele, Goethe and his

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103 Kühl, p. 30.
104 C. M. Goethe, Seeking to Serve, 1949, p. 142.
105 Letter from C.M. Goethe to James G. Eddy, October 27, 1937. Truman State, Laughlin Collection, C. M. Goethe Correspondence D-2-4: 3.
106 According to Edwin Black (pp. 338-340), von Verschuer played a leading role in integrating eugenics into “the normal course of studies of medical students.” Hitler, according to von Verschuer, was “the first statesman to recognize hereditary biology and race hygiene.” By the late 1930s, von Verschuer was arguing that “our position in the race question has its foundation in genetics” and that “the complete racial separation between Germans and Jews is therefore an absolute necessity.”
107 Letter from Goethe to von Verschuer, April 15, 1937, quoted in Black, p. 343.
109 Letter from Goethe to von Verschuer, February 26, 1938, quoted in Black, p. 344.
110 Letter from Goethe to von Verschuer, November 22, 1938, quoted in Black, p. 344. Kristallnacht took place on November 9-10. See Friedländer, p. 270.
colleague Paul Popenoe at the Human Betterment Foundation came to his defense. Popenoe was glad to hear from him in July 1946 since he had been “very anxious about my colleagues in Germany… I suppose sterilization has been discontinued in Germany?” he asked von Verschuer. Popenoe sent him a packet of food. When Goethe heard directly from his German colleague in April 1948, he replied that he was “thrilled” to be in contact with him again.

Before, during, and after the war, Goethe kept faith with the Nazi eugenics program. As with his fellow eugenicists at the Human Betterment Foundation, Goethe never issued a public apology for the views that he had expressed. Moreover, I have not found in his personal papers any sense of remorse or doubt that Germany’s “applied eugenics” had been misused for crimes against humanity. After the war, while some of his former colleagues turned to population control and marriage counseling, and others rejected eugenics as too extreme, Goethe stuck to his racial convictions.

Nordic Internationalism

Despite Goethe’s defense of Nazi eugenics, it is not accurate, in my view, to call him a “Nazi agitator,” as Edwin Black does. Goethe remained loyal both to the United States and to a crude vision of global white supremacy. Nazi Germany was to be admired, Goethe believed, because it offered a eugenics model for the preservation of “high-power” people in the United States and around the world. The key to Goethe’s worldview lies in his perspective on race, which transcended the Nazi regime. “Nordics of the world unite” could have been his favorite slogan.

Goethe’s ideas about eugenics changed little in his long life, and were immune to important new developments taking place in genetics and anthropology. The ideas that he formulated in the 1920s -- when he was in his mid-40s and the eugenics movement was in its most influential phase -- remained core beliefs until the day that he died. In 1935, Goethe complained to fellow eugenicist, Ellsworth Huntington, that the government was spending far too much on “relief, which at least here, goes, overwhelmingly to alien morons.” Close to the end of his life, he was still preoccupied with the fact that “the U.S.A., with our ‘American Know How’ has too many morons. Unfortunately they father many, when college professors have 2, even 1.”

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111 Due to his relationship with Mengele -- who was assigned to Auschwitz in 1943 to carry out his notorious medical experiments --- von Verschuer was investigated for war crimes but never prosecuted. With the support of his American colleagues, in 1950 von Verschuer joined and later became dean of the Institute of Human Genetics at the University of Münster. He died in a car accident in 1969. Black, pp. 344-366, 376, 379-380.
113 Letter from Goethe to von Verschuer, April 16, 1948, quoted in Black, p. 379.
114 In War Profits and Better Babies (1946), there is a cryptic reference (p. vii) to the “diabolical Nazi scheme to accelerate the depopulation of agriculturally-rich France,” but no mention of Nazi eugenics or the holocaust.
115 Personal communication from Alexandra Stern, February 14, 2004.
116 Black, p. 379. See, also, Edwin Black, “Eugenics and the Nazis – the California Connection,” San Francisco Chronicle, November 9, 2003, p. D 1.6, where Black repeats the charge, but does not use this term.
117 Letter from Goethe to Ellsworth Huntington, September 26, 1935. Goethe Collection, unfiled materials.
Goethe’s views were rooted in a typology of racial categories that he regarded as distinct, fixed, and organized along a hierarchical continuum. To Goethe, “Nordic” was a “scientific concept” that required constant use and defense. On his travels through Australia and New Zealand in 1926, Goethe was glad to find the populations “98% Nordic. They have of course their share of low-powers, but they have racial homogeneity.” In the late 1920s, Goethe was in touch with Jon Mjoen, a leading Norwegian eugenicist, who had considerable influence on the right wing of the American eugenics movement. Goethe complained that due to “Jesuit control of our press,” the “vast Nordic masses” lacked “race-consciousness.”

In 1928, Goethe urged fellow eugenicist Harry Laughlin to “boldly agitate further use of such words as ‘Nordic,’ ‘Alpine,’ ‘Mediterranean,’ ‘Amerind.’” My studies in “the Orient and over much of Africa,” he continued, “make me believe passionately that in conserving our Nordic blood, we are discharging a great world responsibility.” For Goethe, the term crystallized “that sense of scrupulous business honor of the Nordic race dating back to the time of the Crusades.” Goethe was preoccupied with the fear that the Nordic tradition of “nOBLESSE OBLIGE” was being diminished in the United States due to “the coming of heterogeneity.” Nordic homogeneity needed to be preserved, “not from racially selfish reasons, but because of their unique contributions to all mankind.” What was required, noted Goethe in 1928, was a “movement of Nordic internationalism.”

In 1936, Goethe was still defending the use of “Nordic” as a “very definite scientific concept,” despite efforts by publishers to edit out the word, no doubt due to its association with Nazi concepts of Aryan supremacy. “Ought we not be alert to any tendency to limit freedom of speech, of the press?” asked Goethe, suggesting that it would be better policy to replace the current emphasis on “race prejudice” with an emphasis on “race consciousness.” “Today,” he wrote in 1936, the fourth year of the Nazi regime, “we understand, with new clarity, that good blood will tell.”

Goethe conceived of “Nordic” as a longstanding genetic type that had survived earlier civilizations to now populate “Scandinavia, Great Britain, Saxon America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa where Nordics dominate.” “The Nordic strains in ancient Greece, in ancient Rome, as also in ancient Gaul gave their population a steadying strength,” he wrote the editor of a Canadian newspaper in 1928. “In these countries they were eliminated by hybridization.” In the past, according to Goethe’s racialized history of the world, Nordics or their equivalent fuelled the engine of progress in ancient civilizations, such as Athens, whose decline can be traced to the decision “to admit to citizenship the immigrant mongrels of Asia

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119 Letter from Goethe to H. R. Hunt, February 18, 1926. Laughlin Papers, C-4-1: 2.
120 Letter from Goethe to Jon Alfred Mjoen, December 14, 1928. Laughlin Papers, C-4-1: 2.
121 Letter from Goethe to Harry Laughlin, November 27, 1928. Laughlin Papers, C-4-1: 2.
122 Goethe, Immigration Study Commission newsletter, October 29, 1928. Laughlin Papers, C-4-1: 2.
123 In Seeking to Serve, 1949, p. 185, he reiterates the scientific merits of “Nordic.”
126 Letter from Goethe to Jon Alfred Mjoen, December 14, 1928. Laughlin Papers, C-4-1: 2.
127 Letter from Goethe to Editor, Tribune, Winnipeg, May 7, 1928. Laughlin Papers, C-4-1: 2.
Minor, of Africa…. “128 Unless countries such as Canada and the USA took measures to stop “a rotting hybridization” and preserve “the precious Nordic strain,” warned Goethe, they would face the same decline as previous great empires. 129

In Goethe’s crude racial typology, “Nordics” constituted the “principal European race,” the others being “Alpine” and “Mediterranean.” 130 But, noted Goethe in a letter to Harry Laughlin, the “Mediterranean-Alpine elements do not measure up, either in intelligence or in their ability to absorb democracy, with the Nordics.” 131 Asian groups operated somewhere in the middle of his human hierarchy. By the mid-1920s, Goethe had stopped selling real estate to Japanese immigrants and was issuing warnings about the “Chinafication of our country.” 132 In the 1940s, he funded racist, anti-Japanese campaigns 133 and in the 1950s railed against the “Oriental penetration” of the United States. 134

Goethe’s most vitriolic statements were aimed at groups that he considered occupying the lowest ranks of humanity, those targeted for exclusion through immigration restrictions, sterilization, and birth control. They constituted a significant proportion of people in the world: Africans and people of African descent, indigenous peoples, and most Latin Americans, especially Mexicans. He routinely expressed contempt for people of color and impoverished whites: “Negroids” in Brazil, the “lowpower Portuguese x negro hybrid” [sic]. 135 and African Americans. Goethe told the audience who came to hear his presidential address to the Eugenics Research Association in 1936 that the eugenics movement’s progress was slow but steady. “We are moving toward the elimination of humanity’s undesirables like Sambo, husband to Mandy, the ‘washer-lady,’ … whose unfitness to propagate is most glaring.” 136 Ten years later, he complained that “the hillbilly, the Sicilian of the slums, [and] the ‘plantation negro’ … breed like rabbits.” 137

Goethe regarded Mexican immigrants -- whom he typically called “peons” and “Amerinds” -- as the greatest danger to California. “We must recognize,” he wrote in 1926, “that the intelligence tests indicate that they have a mentality lower than the Japanese and Chinese, and approximating that of the Negroses and certain Mediterraneans. We must resolutely face the fact that we have here, perhaps, the beginning of another polution [sic] of the old American stock that, unchecked, in time may be as troublesome as the Negro problem.” 138 Mexico, claimed Goethe, was the refuge of “low-powered, docile peons” because “the Conquistadors practically exterminated the Aztec intellectual castes, i.e. the priest and the warrior.” 139 Intelligent Mexicans of “white stock” no longer came to the United States, only the

129 Letter from Goethe to Editor, Tribune, Winnipeg, May 7, 1928. Laughlin Papers, C-4-1: 2.
130 C. M. Goethe, Seeking to Serve, p. 135.
131 Letter from Goethe to Harry Laughlin, March 15, 1926. Laughlin Papers, C-4-1: 2.
132 Goethe, undated newsletter from Florence, Italy, June 1926. Laughlin Papers, C-4-1: 2.
133 Carey McWilliams, “Racism on the West Coast,” New Republic, 110, May 29 and June 12, 1944.
135 Goethe, Immigration Study Commission newsletter, March 21, 1929. Laughlin Papers, C-4-1: 2.
138 Letter from Goethe to Ethel Richardson, February 19, 1926. Laughlin Papers, C-4-1: 2.
139 Goethe, Immigration Study Commission newsletter, c. 1927, Laughlin Papers, C-4-1: 2.
“peon” with “an average intelligence quotient of only 60.” The United States needed to defend itself against the influx of Amerinds: “Eugenically as low-powered as the Negro, the peon is, from a sanitation standpoint, a menace. He not only does not understand health rules: being a superstitious savage, he resists them.”

By 1926, Goethe had stopped selling real estate to Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans, his “most troublesome” customers -- “a very undesirable class of installment purchasers.” He instructed his brokers “to make no more sales to them…. They cannot grasp the theory of contracts, as do even the negroes who are coming in to California from the South in considerable numbers.”

Goethe’s ideas about race remained fixated in a Social Darwinist classification system. One of his earliest diary entries, written in 1902 when he was 27 years old, commented on the differences between “the Anglo Saxon and the Latin races,” and between “Teutonic progressiveness [and] South-of-Europe decadence.” Sixty-two years later, he was alarmed that California might follow in the footsteps of Hawaii, “our first Buddhist state,” where “pure bloods are practically extinct.” One of his last donations, made three months before his death, went to the Northern League, a white supremacist organization in the Netherlands working to build “cooperation between all the Nordic Peoples” -- “the best, most intelligent and highest cultured Peoples of the world” -- against “worthless peoples of Africa and Asia…. We would wish,” wrote the League’s Secretary to Goethe in April 1966, “that we had some more men like you among our members.”

The Northern League was not the only organization to court C. M. Goethe in the last years of his life. Some time in the mid-1950s, Sacramento State College began to make overtures to Goethe, described in a 1965 university-authored brochure as “a man who has a profound love for God and man, a deep concern for human welfare, and a compelling desire to elevate mankind.”

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140 Goethe, Immigration Study Commission newsletter, March 27, 1928. Laughlin Papers, C-4-1: 2.
142 Letter from Goethe to Harry Laughlin, March 15, 1926. Laughlin Papers, C-4-1: 2.
143 Letter from Goethe to S. W. Ward, February 26, 1926. Laughlin Papers, C-4-1: 2.
144 In Seeking to Serve (1949, p. 186), he concedes that there are “desirable qualities in any race,” but then warns of the danger of “wholesale human hybridization.”
145 Diary entry for May 10, 1902, quoted in Schauer, p. 137.
146 Letter from Goethe to First Covenant Church, May 4, 1964, quoted in Schauer, p. 144.
147 Letter from J. Kruls to Goethe, April 9, 1966. Goethe Collection, 85C: 14.
III. C. M. GOETHE & SACRAMENTO STATE UNIVERSITY

Founding Father

From late 1950s until his death in 1966, Sacramento State College cultivated the aging Goethe and elevated him into the status of a founding father. Guy West, the university’s first president (1947-1965) and Rodger Bishton, professor of education (1955-1980) took responsibility for recruiting Goethe, with Bishton serving as the university’s emissary. It was a relationship based on obsequious groveling, beginning in 1955 with the awarding to Goethe of an honorary Master of Science degree.149 And in the end, all the attention that was showered on Goethe paid off. In 1963 he changed his will to make CSUS his primary beneficiary, bequeathing his residence, library and papers, and an estimated $653,000 to the university.150 In addition, he left thousands of dollars and much of his silver collection as personal gifts to President West and to Rodger Bishton. If the university’s motivation was essentially pecuniary, it did not hurt that Goethe also gave the young college an invented pedigree, with ties to old Sacramento and mythic roots in nineteenth century pioneer California.

By his own account, Rodger Bishton was Goethe’s “closest friend during the last years of his life.”151 Goethe in turn regarded Bishton as “my very dear friend, who knows so much of my affairs.”152 Bishton got to know Goethe in the mid-1950s and became, in many ways, his “surrogate son.” He was always positive in his recollections about Goethe, says his friend Terry Hay, “very loyal to Goethe’s memory, said nothing remotely negative.”153

Bishton and Goethe met regularly and kept up a prolific correspondence, despite living only a few miles apart. Goethe’s letters are filled with advice and philosophical ramblings, Bishton’s with fawning flattery. “You are the most thoughtful and considerate man God ever put breath in,” wrote Bishton in typical style.154 “We see eye to eye on the subject of eugenics,” he wrote in another letter. “We must find a way to keep free enterprise the keynote of our economy.”155 Bishton worried that some of his colleagues considered him “bigoted,” given his relationship with Goethe, but he expressed more concern about Goethe’s reputation. “There is not a shred of truth,” Bishton wrote Goethe in the summer 1963, “to similar accusations that have been made in ignorance about you.”156

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149 This award is mentioned in the Sacramento State College Bulletin, March 15, 1965, p. 4. CSUS, Severaid Collection. Goethe was awarded the degree at the college’s 8th annual commencement event. Information provided by university archivist, Kurt Kuss.
150 Information about Goethe’s will is based on copies of documents received from Robert Murphy, CSUS Foundation attorney, and Donna Parenti, CSUS Foundation Director of Finance.
152 Letter from Goethe to Albert Delisle and Harold Severaid, April 9, 1965. Goethe Collection, Goethe Correspondence.
153 Bishton died in 2003. His friend Terry Hay was also the executor of his will. Interview with Terry Hay, December 16, 2003. Similarly, his colleague Terry Thomas, reported that Bishton was “very defensive of Goethe’s reputation, very loyal to him.” Interview with Terry Thomas, December 15, 2003.
154 Letter from Bishton to Goethe, April 26, 1965. Goethe Collection, Goethe Correspondence.
155 Letter from Bishton to Goethe, December 21, 1963. Goethe Collection, Goethe Correspondence.
Bishton also shared confidential gossip with Goethe about personnel matters, in particular how he was “quietly” working behind the scenes to make sure that faculty of a certain “persuasion” -- that is, Marxists or political radicals -- did not get a footing in Education. He had discussed the matter with “our Mutual Friend [Guy West] who is indeed caught in the squeeze” and with a former chairman of his department, who had promised to “do whatever was possible to prevent the mistake of bringing ‘one’ into the Education Division again.”

In the early days of the university, it was hard to raise money for anything but instruction and administration, so West welcomed Goethe’s ideas about fundraising and his enthusiastic interest in research. “It is the basis of our American Know-How,” Goethe wrote in a memo to the State College Foundation, the university’s entity for handling its business affairs. “It is going to decide in our favor the present unequalled contest between ourselves and the Communists.”

By 1960, Guy West also was taking a personal interest in cultivating Goethe, for whom he had “deep respect and affection,” in the hope that “he might leave a bequest to the Foundation.”

During his lifetime, Goethe was honored at CSUS but he was also very active in campus affairs. He served on the Foundation’s governing board and was appointed to the university’s advisory board as its first chairman, later its chairman emeritus. An arboretum on campus was established in Goethe’s name in 1959 and formally dedicated to Goethe in a March 1961 ceremony, “organized personally” by President West to mark Goethe’s 86th birthday. A plaque was installed: “Good friend of man and nature and preserver of the best in both through generous contributions of his time, his talents and his material resources.”

In March 1962, the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Confederacy donated a sundial and benches to the Arboretum “in memory of Mary Glide Goethe, Native Virginian.”

In a precedent-breaking decision by the California State College Board of Trustees, the university announced in 1965 that a new $4.7 million building then under construction would be named the Charles M. Goethe Science Building. This was the first time in the statewide system that a building was to be named after a living person. The honor was in recognition of Goethe’s “service and support to education” and his generosity to the university.

The university was very involved -- with leadership provided by Bishton, West, and others -- in organizing a huge celebratory event on March 28, 1965, as a “national recognition day” of Goethe’s 90th birthday. “Would that there were more men like Dr. Goethe,” commented Guy West in preparation for the event. He is a “wise and widely read gentleman.”

Bishton

158  C. M. Goethe, “Reactions to Dr. West’s Suggestions for this year’s solution of the perennial problem of raising funds,” c. 1960. CSUS Foundation, Goethe Permanent Records, “Goethe Misc. Correspondence.”
160  Unless otherwise noted, Goethe’s activities on campus are from Schauer’s 1976 profile of Goethe.
161  Craft, p. 253.
162  Craft, p. 253.
164  The announcement was made through the Sacramento State College Bulletin, March 15, 1965, pp. 4-5. CSUS, Severaid Collection.
wrote and published an elaborate biographical sketch, lauding Goethe as a man with a “rare talent for inspiring others to carry through with concepts which have sprung forth from his fertile mind -- often a half century ahead of his time.” In the brochure, Goethe is recognized as a scientist, conservationist, educator, and religious and civic leader, without any mention of his life-long commitment to eugenics.¹⁶⁶

Goethe was too ill to attend the gala, but letters of praise arrived from around the country, a portrait was commissioned, and a banquet held at the Hotel El Dorado. Newton Drury, executive secretary of the Save-the-Redwoods League, gave the keynote speech.¹⁶⁷ Even after his death in 1966, a group of faculty and administrators continued to celebrate Goethe’s birthday as one might mark a founder’s day.¹⁶⁸

Today, there are still vestiges of this celebratory view of Goethe in university documents and memorials. His name appears prominently at the entrance to the arboretum. The university’s web site identifies Charles M. Goethe as “a philanthropist and educator,” identified by former President Guy West as “Sacramento’s most remarkable citizen.”¹⁶⁹ The most recent annual report of the CSUS Foundation alludes to Goethe as “a successful land developer and noted philanthropist.”¹⁷⁰ And a 1987 history of CSUS skirts the issue of Goethe’s racist views: “Enigmatic, eccentric, warm and generous, a kind-hearted proponent of eugenics, Goethe was a self-made man and a product of his times. … While his connections to CSUS remain somewhat controversial because of his social Darwinist beliefs, Charles Goethe made a lasting contribution to the university.”¹⁷¹

Sacramento State University was not the only public institution to elevate Goethe into the pantheon of California heroes. Goethe figures prominently in the iconography and memory of official Sacramento and California history. The entrepreneur and investor was a major benefactor of redwood conservation, the interpretive parks’ movement in California, and the first supervised playground in his home town. For these activities, he was widely recognized and honored.

The University of the Pacific awarded him an honorary doctorate in 1955, the National Park Service made him an “Honorary Chief Naturalist,” and a plaque acknowledges “the central role of the Goethes in creating the naturalist program at Fallen Leaf Lake near Lake Tahoe.” There is a Goethe room at the California Academy of Sciences, in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park, a tribute to Goethe’s financial support of the Morrison planetarium.¹⁷² In 1976, the Save-

¹⁶⁸ “… The Annual Commemoration of Dr. Goethe’s Birthday… Postponed Until April 1, 1967,” campus announcement. CSUS, Warner Marsh Collection.
¹⁷² Stern, pp. 210, 214.
the-Redwoods League posthumously honored one of their earliest benefactors by naming a 40-acre grove after Goethe in the Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park in Humboldt County.\textsuperscript{173}

Locally, a middle school in Sacramento carries Goethe’s name.\textsuperscript{174} Mayor James B. McKinney proclaimed March 31, 1962, as “Dr. Charles M. Goethe Day” in recognition of the 87\textsuperscript{th} birthday of “one of Sacramento’s most outstanding citizens” and “as a tribute to one who has worked zealously to preserve the beauties of nature for the people for all time, and in recognition of the many contributions and philanthropies he has made during his lifetime on behalf of human betterment.”\textsuperscript{175} Three years later, the county’s boards of supervisors acknowledged Goethe as “Sacramento’s most illustrious citizen” and renamed the American River Parkway South in his honor, C. M. Goethe Park.\textsuperscript{176}

In February 1965, the California State Assembly added its congratulations through a resolution.\textsuperscript{177} And in June, the Sacramento Bee carried a tribute to Goethe, sponsored by American Savings. He was recognized as a “devoted Sacramentan who has brought national recognition to his city through a lifetime of unlimited contribution.” He has “made Sacramento a better place to live….\textsuperscript{178}”

When Sacramento State University feted Goethe in 1965, tributes poured in from dignitaries nation-wide. President Lyndon Johnson sent a telegram of congratulations, commending “an American whose life has been so richly dedicated to the service of humanity” and describing Goethe as a leader of “distinction, integrity and unceasing energy.” From Earl Warren, chief justice of the Supreme Court, came recognition of a “remarkable career of public service.” Stewart Udall, Secretary of the Interior, acknowledged Goethe’s “contributions to conservation and particularly to the interpretation of America’s natural, historic and scenic wonders in the national parks,” while Governor Edmund Brown sent birthday greetings to “our number one citizen.”\textsuperscript{179}

\textsuperscript{173} Documentation for both Goethe groves -- the one dedicated for his wife in 1948 and the one dedicated to him in 1976 -- is in a binder titled “Save-the-Redwoods League Dedicated Groves” (undated, unpublished), provided by Ranger Brent Critch, Prairie Redwood Creek Visitors Center, January 10, 2003. According to Alexandra Stern (p. 213) Goethe was “a principal actor in the naming of three memorial groves” -- the Jedediah Smith Grove, the Lizzie H. Glide and Mary Glide Goethe Grove, and Drury Brothers Grove. He also “participated actively” in the founding of several other redwoods groves, including the Madison Grant Forest and Elk Refuge.

\textsuperscript{174} Sacramento City Unified School District, “Charles M. Goethe Middle School,” retrieved from www.scusd.edu/middleschools/charlesgoethe/ October 5, 2003

\textsuperscript{175} “Dr. Charles M. Goethe Day,” Proclamation issued by Mayor James McKinney, March 28, 1962. CSUS, C. M. Goethe Collection, unfiled materials.


\textsuperscript{177} “Resolution in Assembly Honors Charles Goethe,” Sacramento Bee, February 19, 1965.

\textsuperscript{178} “American Savings Honors Dr. C. M. Goethe,” Sacramento Bee, June 29, 1965.

\textsuperscript{179} Telegram from Lyndon Johnson to Goethe, March 27, 1965; letter from Earl Warren to Goethe, March 28, 1965; letter from Stuart Udall to Goethe, March 3, 1965; letter from Edmund Brown to Goethe, no date. CSUS, Goethe Collection, 85:1.
Vague Matters

By 1960, Goethe was regularly giving personal gifts and grants directly to faculty members and administrators. In 1961, he donated $500 for Rodger Bishton’s research on “gifted children” and for work on the Arboretum. 180 He “liberally supported a number of our faculty members in a variety of projects” recalled the chairman of Biological Sciences in 1969. 181 He gave $1,000 for a research project in the Psychology department and donated “various funds for research” in other departments. 182 But the “major recipient” of Goethe’s largesse prior to 1966 was education professor, Rodger Bishton who, according to Guy West, received money for “travel and attendance at conferences and other matters. … They seemed to become quite close friends and I am sure that Dr. B. was much closer to Dr. G. than any of us at the College.” 183 The “other matters” that Goethe funded included first-class trips with his wife around the world, as well as to local tourist attractions. 184

Goethe made a habit of mixing grant money with personal gifts to faculty and administrators. In a 1976 report to the Foundation, Andrew Schauer noted that “some persons appear to have taken advantage of this generosity in that rather than educational venture it was merely a paid vacation exchanged for a little attention to a wealthy, lonely, elderly man.” 185 CSUS faculty and officials regularly let Goethe know about trips or outings with the expectation that they would receive a perk. For example, Thomas Gunn, the Foundation’s manager informed Goethe about his upcoming vacation to Utah, and received $20 “for our refreshments along the way.” 186 Martin Britten, a faculty member, let Goethe know without subtlety that he had agreed to become editor of a new journal, “which will be lots of work at no pay.” 187

Bishton was continually pressuring Goethe for money or shamelessly sending him suggestions for gifts he wanted. He once wrote Goethe that he was he hoping to receive an atlas - - “the best that money can buy” -- from his wife for Christmas. No doubt, Goethe bought it for him. 188 Another time, he told Goethe that he was planning to work in the summer so that he could build up a “Travel Fund” for a vacation. “A trip further into Latin America than Mexico is a powerful incentive for having that Travel Fund.” He ended his letter, “I am growing more like you every day, and I am very proud of it.” 189 In response, Goethe routinely bankrolled Bishton’s trips. 190

180 Letter from Goethe to Guy West, November 21, 1961. CSUS, Warner L. Marsh Collection
182 Letter from West to Jack Downey, August 24, 1968. CSUS Foundation, Goethe Permanent Records, “Goethe Misc. Correspondence.”
183 Letter from West to Jack Downey, August 24, 1968. CSUS Foundation, Goethe Permanent Records, “Goethe Misc. Correspondence.”
184 Interviews with Terry Hay, October 14 and December 16, 2003. See, also, letters from Rodger and Eileen Bishton to Goethe, November 18 and 25, 1963. Goethe Collection, Goethe Correspondence.
185 Schauer, p. 77.
186 Letter from Thomas Gunn to Goethe, June 30, 1964. Goethe Collection, Goethe Correspondence.
187 Letter from Martin Britten to Goethe, November 10, 1965. Goethe Collection, Goethe Correspondence.
188 Letter from Rodger & Eileen Bishton to Goethe, November 18, 1963. Goethe Collection, Goethe Correspondence.
189 Letter from Bishton to Goethe, January 17, 1964. Goethe Collection, Goethe Correspondence
190 Interviews with Terry Hay, October 14 and December 16, 2003
Guy West also personally benefited from the relationship. In 1964, Goethe set up a “President’s Public Relations Fund” with an initial donation of $1,000, which West had trouble remembering a few years later.\(^\text{191}\) (Goethe had also donated money to Richard Nixon’s $18,000 slush fund that almost caused him to resign the vice-presidency in 1952.\(^\text{192}\)) Bishton and West even discussed getting Goethe to also establish a “public relations fund for the Chancellor” in order to get the state-wide Board of Trustees to sign off on a proposal to name “a certain building on campus for a certain man. … Dr. West and I,” Bishton wrote Goethe, “want more than anything else to see the name Goethe find a permanent place on the Campus. … It is first on our priority list to accomplish this within your lifetime. We are willing to make any personal sacrifices necessary.”\(^\text{193}\)

It is impossible to reconstruct how much money Goethe gave the university prior to his death because, as President West noted, “official relations through the Foundation were not often highly formalized” and “matters were somewhat vague.”\(^\text{194}\) But the Foundation’s manager let Goethe know in June 1964 that close to $14,000 remained in the accounts established by Goethe in his wife’s memory.\(^\text{195}\) Goethe sent another $1,000 to the Foundation the following year.\(^\text{196}\) Given that Goethe sent in regular donations to the university from 1960 to 1966 -- perhaps much earlier -- and also sent several gifts directly to individuals, we will never know the final amount, but it clearly ran into the tens of thousands, perhaps more.

In 1963, Goethe changed his will to make CSUS his primary institutional beneficiary, and Bishton and West his primary personal beneficiaries. After Goethe’s death, Bishton received a personal bequest from Goethe of approximately $52,000 -- the equivalent of more than a $250,000 in today’s dollars -- and West received approximately $44,000. Goethe also left both men a share of the family silver. At no time did West or Bishton raise as a problem the contradictory demands of their personal relationship with Goethe and their obligations to the university community. And nobody else in the administration expressed any concern over this flagrant conflict of interest.

**Follow the Money**

Upon his death in 1966, Goethe left an estate of approximately $24 million. A portion of that estimate -- an estimated $653,000, plus his library and papers, and his luxurious residence -- was gifted to CSUS through what was then known as the State College Foundation. That Foundation was later incorporated into the CSUS Foundation, which assumed responsibility for

\(^{191}\) Letter from Thomas Gunn, Foundation Manager, to Goethe, June 30, 1964. Goethe Collection, Goethe Correspondence. “I seem to recall only vaguely,” wrote West four years later, “but I believe a small fund provided for official expenses of the President (entertainment, etc., not otherwise provided for by the State).” Letter from West to Jack Downey, August 24, 1968. CSUS Foundation, Goethe Permanent Records, “Goethe Misc. Correspondence.”

\(^{192}\) Schauer, p. 126.

\(^{193}\) Letter from Bishton to Goethe, January 14, 1964. Goethe Collection, Goethe Correspondence.

\(^{194}\) Letter from West to Jack Downey, August 24, 1968. CSUS Foundation, Goethe Permanent Records, “Goethe Misc. Correspondence.”

\(^{195}\) Letter from Thomas Gunn, Foundation Manager, to Goethe, June 30, 1964. Goethe Collection, Goethe Correspondence.

\(^{196}\) Letter from Thomas Gunn to Goethe, August 11, 1965. Goethe Collection, Goethe Correspondence.
administering the Goethe funds.\textsuperscript{197} I estimate that today the Goethe gift to CSUS is worth about $3.6 million and perhaps reached $4.2 million in 2000.

It is difficult to trace the financial history of the Goethe bequest because very few records are available for the years 1966-1994. The Foundation has not kept pre-1994 records of how the money was distributed and used.\textsuperscript{198} I have estimated the original amounts through a 1969-1970 document that itemized Goethe’s gifts to the Foundation.\textsuperscript{199}

In his extraordinary complicated, baroque will, through various codicils added in the last years of his life Goethe specified thirteen different gifts to CSUS. It took Crocker National Bank, as trustee of Goethe’s estate, ten years and fifteen audits to complete the final accounting of assets. The distribution of assets began in 1968, accelerated in the 1970s, and continues today.\textsuperscript{200} From the 1960s to the present, over a forty-year period, the Foundation invested the funds, which grew significantly during the economic boom of the 1970s and 1980s.\textsuperscript{201}

How the money was distributed on campus prior to the 1990s is something of a mystery, but it is known that the Foundation eventually set up nine accounts to administer the gifts. Four accounts were designated for projects in Biological Sciences, one for student loans in biology, one for library acquisitions, one to maintain Goethe’s residence, and two for Bishton’s projects. The will did not prohibit spending the principal, but with the exception of Bishton’s projects, the Foundation has primarily used income from investments and interest to fund projects.\textsuperscript{202}

The Goethe gift to the university was its first large bequest and the Foundation had no experience handling this kind of complicated transaction. Goethe’s wording was not always clear and the Foundation wanted to avoid probate challenges. As their legal adviser warned, “you will constantly have people looking over your shoulder and Monday morning quarterbacking.”\textsuperscript{203} When the Foundation was preparing in the summer of 1968 to set up accounts to administer Goethe’s gifts, a member of the board consulted Guy West, the former CSUS president, who retired in 1965 and was now living in Dallas. The university’s records, John Downey wrote West, were unclear and it was difficult to decipher Goethe’s intentions.\textsuperscript{204} Did West have any advice?

West told the Foundation that the record keeping had been erratic and that “there are many things about which I know very little or nothing.” Goethe had a tendency, West wrote, to

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197 Marion O’Leary and Joyce Hendricks Lopes, “Goethe Funds in Biological Sciences,” CSUS Foundation Board Minutes, December 5, 2003.
198 Interview with Elroy Littlefield, Executive Director, and Donna Parenti, Director of Finance, CSUS Foundation, February 9, 2004.
200 According to Donna Parenti, the Foundation now receives less than $1,000 per annum in Goethe gifts from residual investments in oil and gas. Interview with Parenti, December 15, 2003.
203 Letter from William Collard to Eugene Morris, December 18, 1970. Goethe Collection, Goethe Correspondence.
204 Letter from John Downey to Guy West, August 21, 1968. CSUS Foundation, Goethe Permanent Records, “Goethe Misc. Correspondence.”
\end{flushleft}
communicate directly with professors, librarians, and foundation managers. The best person to advise the Foundation on these matters was Rodger Bishton, who “probably could be of great help to you.” 205 The Foundation appears to have taken this recommendation, for Bishton’s name appears regularly in the board’s dealing with the Goethe accounts. Bishton was so influential in how Goethe’s gifts to the university were interpreted and used that a former member of the Foundation’s board thought that he was the executor of Goethe’s estate. 206 The Foundation regularly consulted Bishton about Goethe’s intentions and “what to do with the money willed to CSUS,” recalls another former member of the Foundation’s board. 207 According to a current member of the board, Bishton was “the guardian of a particular version of Goethe’s memory.” 208

As soon as the trustee of the Goethe estate began to distribute funds in late 1968, Bishton and the biology department successfully staked their claims to a large part of the money. In April 1969, the chairman of the department of Biological Sciences requested that the Foundation make “no allocation” of Goethe funds until his department had the opportunity to make proposals. “Mr. Goethe,” wrote Marlin Bolar, “had a vital interest in the Department.” 209 The next day, Rodger Bishton instructed the university president that three of Goethe’s bequests to CSUS were designated for him, primarily so that he could write a biography of his benefactor. The grants, he told Robert Johns, should “be placed in a fund to be designated ‘The Goethe Fund for Research under Dr. Bishton,’” to be drawn upon by Bishton “for research projects.” 210 Bishton appeared before the Foundation Board of Governors in June, where he was authorized to receive an initial grant of $15,000 to carry out his biography of Goethe. 211

Bishton’s main claim to the money was to write the biography, but (as I will discuss later) he abandoned this project in 1970. He then shifted his interest to the recruitment and training of intellectually gifted high school students. He drew upon the Goethe accounts to support the work of Terry Thomas, a professor of education who directed the Academic Talent Search and, later, Accelerated College Entrance projects. After he retired from the university in 1980, Bishton served as a paid consultant to Thomas. 212 Two of the accounts, set up in Rodger Bishton’s name, showed a fund balance of “at least $614,000” in the late 1990s. By 2002, nothing remained in these accounts.

As of June 2003, four accounts designated for the Biology Department reported a balance in excess of $500,000. The library account is a little over $7,000, the residence account is about $48,000, and the student loan account about 1.1 million. In total, the accounts report a balance of $1.6 million. 213 Prior to spending down the principal in Bishton’s projects, the balance was more

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205 Letter from West to Jack Downey, August 24, 1968. CSUS Foundation, Goethe Permanent Records, “Goethe Misc. Correspondence.”
207 Interview with Terry Thomas, December 15, 2003.
208 Interview with Marion O’Leary, October 6, 2003.
211 Minutes of Foundation Board of Governors, June 18, 1969. CSUS Foundation, Goethe Permanent Records, “Goethe Biography Bishton.”
212 Interview with Terry Thomas, December 15, 2003.
than $2.2 million. This year, an estimated $19,000 is expected as income from investments and interest on the remaining principal.\textsuperscript{214}

In 1999, the Foundation Board of Directors approved a $1 million “inter-company loan” from the Goethe student loan fund and Biology account to rehabilitate the Goethe house at 3731 T Street. The loan, which bears a five-percent annual interest rate, will be repaid over time to the Goethe accounts. Meanwhile, interest on the loan -- approximately $50,000 per year -- can be used for student loans.\textsuperscript{215} The home was placed on the National Registry of Historic Places in 1982. Extensively renovated by the Foundation, it was reopened for use in September 2000. It is available for public functions for $2,000 per day between May and October, $1,000 per day during the rest of year.\textsuperscript{216} The value of the property is now estimated at $2 million.\textsuperscript{217}

Interpreting the Will

Charles M. Goethe was very specific in his will about how he wanted CSUS (formerly known as Sacramento State College) to use his gifts. In several articles, however, he gave the university flexibility and discretion in how to implement his intentions. The gifts that he made to the university while he was alive were always accompanied by suggestions, but his “rule,” as he put it in 1961, “always is ‘no restrictions’.\textsuperscript{218} After his death, however, the Foundation made the decision to interpret the will narrowly and rigidly. For example, article 13 of the codicil, dated January 1963, designates a fund “to be used for loans, without interest, to students of Sacramento State College as may be deemed wise by the Board of said Sacramento State College Foundation. It is my wish that in the making of such loans, that preference, where possible, be given to students in human genetics and eugenics.” Such terms as “deemed wise by the Board,” “preference, where possible,” and “eugenics” give the Foundation considerable discretion in the allocation of loans to students.\textsuperscript{219} But the Foundation has interpreted this to mean that it is appropriate to make loans to students in areas of biological science related to genetics, “but areas removed from biology would not [be appropriate].”\textsuperscript{220}

The Foundation has not acted upon the suggestion of their legal adviser that loans could be made “to such students studying human genetics, or fields closely related to human genetics, or whatever science, if any, that has most closely taken the place that ‘eugenics’ occupied in 1963.”\textsuperscript{221} A report on the Goethe funds, prepared by a subcommittee for the Board in November 2003, does not even mention the word “eugenics” or discuss how it might be interpreted today. There is nothing in the will that would prohibit loans, for example, to students in the fields of history of science, ethics and philosophy, social welfare, race relations, multiculturalism, public

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{214} E-mail communication from Donna Parenti, December 16, 2003.
\item \textsuperscript{215} O’Leary and Lopes, Goethe Funds in Biological Sciences,” CSUS Foundation Board Minutes, December 5, 2003.
\item \textsuperscript{216} CSUS, “Julia Morgan House and Gardens: Rates and Regulations,” 2001; interview with Lisa Rogers, manager of Julia Morgan House and Gardens, October 6, 2003.
\item \textsuperscript{217} E-mail communication from Donna Parenti, December 19, 2003.
\item \textsuperscript{218} Letter from Goethe to Guy West, November 21, 1961. CSUS, Warner L. Marsh Collection.
\item \textsuperscript{219} Interview with Foundation attorney, Robert Murphy, January 26, 2004.
\item \textsuperscript{220} O’Leary and Lopes, “Goethe Funds in Biological Sciences,” CSUS Foundation Board Minutes, December 5, 2003.
\item \textsuperscript{221} Memo from Bob Murphy to Elroy Littlefield, November 5, 2003. Copy provided by Robert Murphy.
\end{itemize}
health, sociology, psychology, and American history -- academic disciplines which now address issues once covered by the discredited science of eugenics.

The Foundation has not been consistent in its use of discretion. In the case of Goethe’s residence, on the one hand, it has creatively interpreted the will. It was Goethe’s “hope that the lower floor” of his residence “may be an historic museum and, hence, all art treasures and library will remain intact.” By 1970, the Foundation had sold off all the contents of the house, including the library, and quickly abandoned the idea of using the house as a “eugenics museum,” as suggested by Goethe. Today, the renamed house has multiple uses and nothing remains in it of Goethe’s eugenic interests.

On the other hand, Goethe’s gift of an estimated $238,000 in memory of his wife ended up in Bishton’s account, despite the non-binding language in the will: “I suggest that this income be used for Dr. Bishton’s research.” Similarly, research funds designated for “the support of the work in human genetics, including population genetics” have been limited by the Foundation to use by the Biology department rather being opened to proposals from all departments and faculty interested in these issues.

Over the years, Biology has received regular grants from the Goethe funds, mostly in the form of income from interest and investment from the $500,000 principal in the four biology accounts. This money is used primarily for faculty development and research. In 1997-1998, the Department of Biological Sciences received $31,000 in Goethe funds for faculty research projects; in 1998-1999, the amount was $30,500. Recently, the department has complained that it has been denied adequate information about its accounts and that fluctuation in funds makes planning difficult. In response, the Foundation’s board is considering a proposal to make grants more dependable and consistent. Also the board has invited the department to turn the student loan program into a “forgivable loan program” for students, for example, “enrolled in senior research in Biological Sciences.” One of the authors of this proposal, Marion O’Leary, is a member of the Foundation’s Board of Directors and Dean of the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, in which the Biological Sciences department is housed.

In sum, the Foundation’s handling of the Goethe funds has been marked by conflict of interest, inconsistency, and a failure to imaginatively explore how the bequest might best serve the entire university community. Aside from innovative uses of Goethe’s residence, the Foundation’s governing board has taken a very narrow view of its fiscal responsibilities. Part of the explanation is to be found in the culture of denial that permeates how the university has related to Goethe’s legacy. “People just don’t talk about it,” says a current member of the Foundation’s board.

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223 “Synopsis Re C. M. Goethe Will,” c. 1969-1970, 7 pp., provided by Donna Parenti, CSUS Foundation. In the margin of the synopsis, a Foundation representative wrote “not binding” next to this article.
226 Interview with Marion O’Leary, October 6, 2003.
Strategic Amnesia

From their very first contacts with Goethe, representatives of the university knew about his views on race. Once his bigotry became a public embarrassment, especially in the context of anti-racism movements of the mid-1960s to early 1970s, the administration tried to surgically separate Goethe-the-conservationist from Goethe-the-eugenicist. This was certainly the case at the choreographed event to honor Goethe’s 90th birthday in 1965. Its specially prepared 35-page brochure, highlighting the accomplishments of Goethe’s long life, includes no reference to the conceptual framework that anchored all his good works: eugenics. For the last thirty years, the Foundation has continued to fund projects in Goethe’s name, while his symbolic presence on campus has eroded, much like the rotting plaque erected on campus in 1962 in memory of his wife by the local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

Goethe’s devotion to eugenic causes was not a dirty secret. He was a public figure who spoke his mind in a variety of contexts: as the organizer in 1924 of a Eugenics Section within the Commonwealth Club of California; as president of the Eugenics Research Association in 1936; and as an American delegate to the 1936 meeting of the International Federation of Eugenic Organizations in the Netherlands.227 In widely available articles, published in leading eugenics journals, he praised Nazi Germany’s “wisely” administered sterilization law and railed against the “low-powered … Negro [and] peon.”228 In 1944, Carey McWilliams identified Goethe in a national magazine as “one of the main financial supporters” of the Home Front Commandos, Inc., a Sacramento-based organization that “inundated Northern California with racist [anti-Japanese] manifestos.” McWilliams also reported on Goethe’s defense of Hitler’s efforts to make eugenics into an “applied science.”229

Goethe was proud of his ideas and widely publicized them. Prior to 1946, he estimated that he spent about one million dollars of his own money writing, publishing, and distributing his eugenics pamphlets and newsletters.230 Just open up any of his books and tracts, and there amid misspellings and grammatical errors, you will find his views on race. For example, in his 1949 book, What’s In A Name?, which he donated to the university’s library, you can quickly find references to “bue-eyed, blonde empire-building Nordics,” “the corroding pessimism of Asia,” and “unfortunate mongrelization.”231 After his wife died in 1946, now aged 71 he devoted a considerable amount of time and energy “spreading his beliefs on eugenics.” With a personal secretary on hand every weekday from 7:00 a.m., he kept up a huge volume of daily correspondence.232 He claimed in 1964 that the outgoing “avalanche” of mail was “probably near ten thousand units” per year.233

On campus, many people were well aware of Goethe’s unsavory provenance. In April 1965, when it was announced that the university planned to name the new science building after Goethe, a student-led organization, May Second Committee, issued a scholarly polemic, which

227 On the influence of Goethe on public debates about eugenics, see Stern, chapter 3, “Instituting Eugenics in California.”
229 Carey McWilliams, “Racism on the West Coast,” New Republic 100, May 29, 1944, p. 733.
230 Schauer, p. 125.
231 Goethe, What’s In A Name?, pp. xvii, 96, 128.
232 Schauer, pp. 78, 119.
compared Goethe to “Dr. Strangelove” and provided several examples of his Nazi sympathies and racist views. The pamphlet derided CSUS for acting like “the fattest vulture of all,” concluding that naming the building in his honor would be “a blasphemy against science.”\(^\text{234}\)

When the administration ordered the Committee to stop distributing its leaflet on the grounds that it was libelous, May Second protested against censorship of free speech. “We suspect that the administration,” noted a second leaflet, “is not so concerned about ‘libel’ as it is with the loss of its ‘Nordic Godfather’s’ financial favors.”\(^\text{235}\)

During the fall semester of 1967, students and faculty again organized to get the administration to remove Goethe’s name from the new science building. In the late 1960s, recalls a faculty member who participated in efforts to get faculty involved in governance, the university was in transition from a teacher training college to a liberal arts university. There was a significant number of activist faculty who “wanted an academic senate that had influence and teeth.” It was a time of turmoil on campus,” says Victor Comerchero. “The issue was about control and transformation of the college from a top-down, conservative hierarchy to a bottom-up democracy and equitable power structure. Naming the science building was part of that vortex. The faculty knew what Goethe stood for.”

With the support of historian James McGowan and other faculty,\(^\text{236}\) the Associated Students and Academic Senate both passed resolutions in favor of naming the new building the “Science Building,” a resolution that was clearly intended as a rejection of the decision made by the State College Board of Trustees. While the campus administration’s official position on “our little flap” was that the Senate’s “action to remove the name … was definitely premature and was not implemented,” it informally acquiesced to the pressure.\(^\text{237}\) “Guy West was not predisposed to be confrontational with the faculty,” says Comerchero, “and in the face of organized opposition, Goethe’s name was withdrawn from the building. The administration never formally accepted the Senate resolution, but they didn’t want to go to war with the faculty.”\(^\text{238}\)

Following the campus protests of 1966-1967, the administration tried to find ways to coopt the faculty into decision-making about Goethe’s bequest and to distance the university from Goethe’s eugenic reputation. The Foundation invited faculty in 1968 to make recommendations about what to do with Goethe’s house. The faculty was divided on the issue. Some came up with elaborate plans for making it into a research and service center. Others, like James McGowan, refused to participate on principle: “I do not feel that I can in good conscience recommend the use of his home.”\(^\text{239}\) To this day some faculty members still refuse to participate.

\(^{235}\) May Second Committee, “Banned at Sac State,” undated leaflet. CSUS, Severaid Collection.
\(^{237}\) Memo from Darrell Inabnit, Administrative Vice President, to Robert Thompson, chairman of Academic Senate, November 9, 1967. The Senate’s resolutions and relevant correspondence are in CSUS Archives, Academic Senate, 83:3:03.
\(^{238}\) Interview with Victor Comerchero, December 10, 2003.
in events at Goethe’s former residence.\textsuperscript{240} It would take the university thirty more years to implement a long-range plan for what is now known as the Julia Morgan House.

If anybody in the administration had any doubts about Geothe’s involvement with rightwing eugenics, they were put to rest in the mid-1970s when the Foundation financed a biography of Goethe under the auspices of Joseph McGowan, a professor in the history department. McGowan hired Andrew Schauer, to write up the research. The twenty-three year old graduate student, with minimal training in historical research,\textsuperscript{241} produced a comprehensive, honest, 206-page report that he submitted to the Foundation in January 1976. Despite a dearth of primary sources, the report included a chapter on Goethe’s interest in eugenics: “concepts of Nordic superiority and others … proffered by eugenicists at the turn of the century appealed strongly to Charles and … became the point around which all of his social ideas revolved.”\textsuperscript{242} Schauer also summarized Goethe’s ties to the anti-Catholic movement, his racist views about Mexicans, his opposition to immigration from non-European countries, and his preference for “Protestantism, and tallness, blondness, blue-eyedness.”\textsuperscript{243} Schauer concluded that Goethe “may have contributed to the racial hatred so predominant in America during the 1950s and 1960s through the publication of his eugenic pamphlets.”\textsuperscript{244}

In February 1977, the Foundation’s Acting Director made copies of Schauer’s report and circulated them to members of the Board.\textsuperscript{245} But nobody in the Foundation ever discussed the report with Schauer. When I called him recently in Topeka, where he works as a psychologist, he told me that I was the first person to engage him in a discussion about the report, other than his professor and the university archivist, Georgiana White who helped him to navigate the research process.\textsuperscript{246} The report was shelved, never discussed with the university community.

For the past thirty years, CSUS has pursued a policy of strategic amnesia with respect to Goethe’s legacies. More recently, the administration quietly removed Goethe’s name from his residence, resurrecting it as a memorial to its architect, Julia Morgan. There has even been discussion of renaming the C. M. Goethe Arboretum that greets visitors entering the campus.\textsuperscript{247} How the university handled Goethe’s library and papers, discussed in the next section, reveals a great about the university’s efforts to erase disquieting aspects of the past.

\textsuperscript{240} Personal communication from Otis Scott.
\textsuperscript{241} Schauer says now that he did not realize how much of Goethe’s correspondence was missing and was rather naïve regarding the university’s relationship with Goethe. Interview with Andrew Schauer, December 14, 2003.
\textsuperscript{242} Schauer, p. 135.
\textsuperscript{243} Ibid, p. 143.
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid, p. 149
\textsuperscript{245} Letter from Hugh Mickelson to Gordon Martin, University Librarian, February 23, 1977. CSUS Foundation, Goethe Permanent Records, Goethe Miscellaneous Correspondence.
\textsuperscript{246} Interview with Andrew Schauer, December 14, 2003.
\textsuperscript{247} See memo from Tony Bakula to Elizabeth Moulds, January 23, 2002. CSUS Foundation, Goethe Permanent Records, “Goethe Arboretum Plaque.”
IV. THE GOETHE COLLECTION

When Goethe died in 1966, he bequeathed to Sacramento State University Foundation “all of my library situate in my home, together with all the letters and documents relating to biology, eugenics and history, together with all cuts and engravings dealing with eugenical subjects which are now in the custody of the Keystone Printing Company, Sacramento, California, and also together with copyrights of all my books and publications, also my remaining stamp and coin collection.”  In February 1963, Goethe had added a codicil amending his 29-page 1947 will, which left his residence to the university rather than the city of Sacramento. It was his desire that his home be used in part as “a eugenics museum and a children’s museum or kindred purposes.”

Given Goethe’s significance as a historical figure in Sacramento and California, and his special relationship to CSUS, you would expect the university to have an extensive collection of his papers, pamphlets, publications, and books. The fact that he liked to scribble notes in the margins of his books and correspondence makes his library of unusual value to researchers and historians. The “library is of particular importance,” noted an article in the campus newspaper in 1969. “Dr. Goethe had a wide selection of books dealing with eugenics and genetics.”

But today the Goethe collection at CSUS contains only a fraction of what he left to CSUS. His library is gone. Historian Alexandra Stern, who is writing a book about eugenics, found the most complete set of Goethe’s publications at the University of Minnesota, not CSUS. And she had to reconstruct Goethe’s correspondence networks through searching the papers of eugenicists who received letters from Goethe. She concluded that Goethe’s letters in the CSUS collection had been “sanitized.” Currently, the university’s Department of Special Collections is collecting copies of Goethe’s correspondence from other libraries in order to fill out its own collection.

What happened to all the missing books, pamphlets, and correspondence? No official records were kept to document what happened or, if they were kept, I have not found them. The paper trail is sketchy and most of the participants have died, but I have been able to reconstruct a plausible scenario.

For four and a half years, from Goethe’s death in July 1966 to December 1970, the university dithered about what to do with his literary bequest, while three individuals, representing different points of view, squabbled over who had authority to determine Goethe’s intentions and the university’s best interests. Until Rodger Bishton distanced himself from the project in 1970, he asserted himself as the guardian of Goethe’s memory and possessions, and the university deferred to his wishes. The newly appointed librarian, Gordon Martin, apparently

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248 Codicil to will of Charles Matthias Goethe, January 7, 1963. Copy provided by CSUS Foundation attorney, Robert Murphy.
252 Information provided by Sheila O’Neill, Head, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, CSUS.
had little interest in the Goethe collection and was preoccupied with modernizing the library and moving it into a new building. But he also thought that he knew more about the collection than Bishton did, and was not willing to be deferential to a professor of education on matters pertaining to his expertise. Meanwhile, Eugene Morris, the Foundation’s director, was primarily concerned with protecting the university’s investments and reputation.

The Library

In December 1966, soon after the university took control of Goethe’s residence, the Foundation asked Gordon Martin to do an inventory of the books and periodicals in Goethe’s library. Martin reported to the Foundation and the Goethe estate’s trust officer at Crocker-Citizens National Bank that there were 2,650 books (value $3,000), 131 periodicals (value $1,500) and two boxes of pamphlets. In Martin’s opinion, the collection did not have much commercial value because the books were “frequently disfigured by addition of personal mementos as well as marginal notes and underlining. Books in this condition may have some value to a biographer of the owner, but have very little market value.”

Nothing further happened until the spring of 1969, when Gordon Martin removed Goethe’s collection to the university for evaluation and with a view to incorporating some of the books into the CSUS library. By this time, Martin very likely had briefed Eugene Morris, director of the Foundation, about his discovery of Goethe’s disturbing annotations inside many of the books. Meanwhile, Bishton was opposed to any action that would mean breaking up Goethe’s library or moving it from his home. Bishton and Martin argued, taking their case to the president. Bishton expected the university to “maintain his [mentor’s] home intact” and not “disperse the books hither and yon.” Goethe’s library, Bishton argued to President Butz, “was an integral part of his home and life.”

Martin apparently decided not to fight it out, in part because “we have not found very much of use [in Goethe’s collection] to us [the library].” The president was called upon to adjudicate the dispute and brokered a compromise: the Goethe collection would not be broken up, except for a few books that Martin wanted for the CSUS library. The following month, in a follow up meeting, “it was decided that the books we have accepted from the Goethe Library (unmarked, clean copies) should be retained by the Library.” The rest of the collection was returned to Goethe’s house for “Bishton’s inspection.” At this time, President Butz had decided “to retain the Goethe Library in the Goethe House much as it was during the lifetime of the donor.” Bishton essentially had won this round. By October 1970, Martin had selected only 19 books from the Goethe collection for the Library. “We have no further interest in the collection,” he wrote Eugene Morris, “and suggest that the Foundation dispose of it as desired.” Martin returned 2,631 books to Goethe’s house, where they remained until the end of the year.

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253 Interview with the university’s former Archivist, now retired, Georgiana White, October 27, 2003.
255 Letter from Bishton to Gordon Martin, copy to President Butz, June 20, 1969, Goethe Collection, 85A: 6.
256 Memo from Martin to Bishton, with handwritten note describing outcome, July 1, 1969, Goethe Collection, 85A: 6.
257 Memo from Martin to James Bradley, Assistant Order Librarian, August 1, 1969, Goethe Collection, 85A: 6.
Soon after Goethe’s death in 1966, the university hired appraisers to assess the value of the contents of Goethe’s residence.259 But it took a few years for the university to act on their decision to sell off the contents of the house. On December 12 and 13, 1970, Truesdell Galleries supervised the sale of the contents of the home through auction. Included in the inventory of 248 items was item number 248, “collection of books, approx. 2000 volumes.”260 After the auction was completed, all of Goethe’s books were gone, with no record of who bought them.

Everybody that I interviewed had heard the same story about Goethe’s disappearing library. The Foundation had sold off the library because it “had a bit of an Aryan feel,” the manager of the Julia Morgan House told me.261 “Given the marginal notations and underlining in his books, it was better if they did not surface,” said a member of the Foundation’s Board.262 “Given his Nazi views, best not to have his books in the house,” was what the Foundation’s executive director had heard.263 “The marginal comments in the books were very revealing of Goethe’s politics,” another person associated with the Board confided. “Very racist stuff.”

I was able to confirm this story when I tracked down Edwin Beach, a retired businessman and former partner in Truesdell Galleries, who has a clear memory of the auction. What happened to the library, I asked him. “You struck a chord with your question,” he replied. “It stuck in my mind because I was pretty upset about it at the time. The Cal State Foundation hired our company to dispose of all the items in the house, the furniture and other stuff…. The library is a very, very sore subject with me personally. The college could have set up a library and had it for research. Instead of which we had to sell the whole library. It went to a wholesale dealer in Los Angeles. The university didn’t want us to sell it in Sacramento.”

Why not, I asked him? “Somebody at the college didn’t want the collection available here to be researched. Mr. Goethe was a prolific reader and note-taker. He wrote notes regarding what he thought of everything, in the margins of the books too. No question that Mr. Goethe was not as tolerant as today’s people are…. Goethe was Goethe, period. He was what he was. He was a basically,” Beach paused, “a bigot. That’s a fact…. I remember the library. It took up two full walls in the library. I looked at a couple of books. Disturbing, but why get rid of what was reality? Goodness gracious, he had first editions, signed by authors. To me it was a fabulous research situation, but the university wanted it gone.”

Prior to the auction, Truesdell Galleries put out a request in Los Angeles for bids on the library. The Foundation, Beach was told, did not want Goethe’s books to circulate in northern California. Two people, recalls Beach, came to Sacramento, made an offer, which was accepted “after we cleared it with the Foundation.” The books were packed into boxes and removed from the house before the auction. “There’s no way to trace them now. No idea where they went. I’m

259 See, for example, letter from Alex Sabbadini to Crocker Citizens Bank, September 24, 1966, CSUS Foundation, Goethe Permanent Records, “Goethe Furnishings.”
261 Interview with Lisa Rogers, October 6, 2003.
262 Interview with Marion O’Leary, Dean of College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, October 6, 2003.
The university discreetly sold off one of the most complete collections on eugenics owned by a private collector without one letter of formal protest from Goethe’s most ardent supporter, Rodger Bishton. Why did he give up the fight?

The Biography

Rodger Bishton got the idea of writing a biography when he was working on the commemorative booklet for Goethe’s 90th birthday celebration. “I wanted it to merit your confidence,” he told Goethe, “in my ability and integrity to turn out a biography that would be a credit to you.” By his own account, Bishton was Goethe’s “closest friend during the last years of his life and consequently one among a privileged few to know him intimately during his life time.” He told Robert Johns, president of CSUS in April 1969, that “he had made a solemn promise to Dr. Goethe to write his biography.” A few weeks later, the Foundation’s Board of Governors approved Bishton’s request for $15,000 to do research on Goethe’s life and accomplishments. Eugene Morris, Director of the Foundation, instructed Bishton to submit a research plan for his work on “the Goethe Biography.” When Bishton told Morris that it was difficult to provide a timeline for gathering data because “the magnitude of this phase of the project defies one’s imagination,” Morris was annoyed by Bishton’s vagueness, returned his proposal and asked him to rewrite it, which he did.

In his research proposal, submitted on October 6, 1969, Bishton promised, inter alia, to review “packaged notes and clippings” stored in the basement of Goethe’s home; prepare a “complete bibliography” of Goethe’s writings; “file and cross file by topics some 5,000 letters”; and develop an outline of the proposed book. The Foundation bought out his salary for the year, authorized a part-time secretary, travel funds, and rent for an office. Nine months later, Bishton reported that he was making progress on the project: he had reviewed Goethe’s notes and clippings, begun the bibliography, and had completed the filing and cross-filing of “some 5,000 letters” on such “major topics” as eugenics, conservation, population control, abortion, and immigration. “The primary source of data for the biography,” he noted, “is our collection of CMG’s letters and publications.”

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264 Interviews with Edwin Beach, October 8 and 21, 2003.
266 Letter from Bishton to Goethe, April 26, 1965. CSUS, Goethe Collection, “Goethe-Bishton Correspondence.”
268 Minutes of Foundation Board of Governors meeting, June 18, 1969, CSUS Foundation, Goethe Permanent Records, “Goethe Biography Bishton.”
Bishton did not provide an outline of the book, as promised, but he reassured the Foundation that “the project is moving right along.” He was planning to divide his study into two parts, the first dealing with “the character and personality of Dr. Goethe,” the second with his “ideas and convictions related to eugenics and population control.” In June 1970, Bishton intended to demonstrate that “fifty years ago, CMG had the courage to propose, and promulgate and defend his ideas when they were very unpopular. He did so at the cost of being labeled a racist. I intend to show that he was unjustly maligned.”

But for reasons about which we can only speculate, some time in 1970, maybe earlier, Rodger Bishton began to sour on the project and to distance himself from the man, whom only five years earlier he had eulogized as “combining the qualities of efficiency and punctuality, the spirit, and the genius of a mind tuned to bettering the future…. Bishton did not complete his biography, or even a detailed outline. He gave up his role as watchdog of Goethe’s reputation and switched his research interests, for which he continued to draw from the Foundation’s Goethe accounts until his death in 2003.

By late 1969, Bishton had signaled the university that he would no longer stick to a rigid interpretation of Goethe’s wishes. He conceded that, for financial reasons, the university might need to get rid of Goethe’s home or drastically change how it was used. On the one hand, Bishton wrote President Otto Butz, Goethe was “exorbitantly sentimental about his home and books. On the other hand, Dr. Goethe was an astute business man and he was not one to let sentiment rule supreme.” In December, with Bishton no longer an obstacle to change, the Foundation put out a call to the campus for proposals regarding the possible uses of the Goethe residence.

According to two people who knew Bishton well -- Terry Thomas, his colleague in the Gifted Child Project, and Terry Hay, his closest friend and executor of his will -- Bishton deliberately abandoned his biography of Goethe. Hay, who became a friend of Bishton in the early 1970s after his wife died, “never knew him to be working on the Goethe project.” Bishton did not confide in his friend about his views on eugenics. “He was always positive about Goethe, very loyal to his memory.”

Bishton backed away from the Goethe project, says Thomas, because “he found material in Goethe’s papers that he didn’t want to reveal.” Bishton never directly criticized the benefactor who had paid for several vacations and trips, as well as subsidized his research and left him a considerable amount of money. Even with his personal friends, Bishton was guarded about Goethe, but he did let them know, albeit in euphemistic terms, why he abandoned the biography. “I can’t do the research any more,” Bishton told Thomas, “because of the material. It’s unpleasant.”

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275 Memo from Morris to Faculty, December 11, 1969, Goethe Collection, 85A: 6.
276 Interview with Terry Hay, October 14, 2003.
277 Interview with Terry Thomas, Director of Academic Talent Search, CSUS, December 15, 2003.
From 1970 until his retirement in 1980, Bishton switched his research to special education and the recruitment and training of academically gifted high school students. He had been involved in projects involving “education of the gifted” since the early 1960s, an interest that he shared with Charles Goethe. While Bishton and Goethe saw “eye to eye on the subject of eugenics,” Bishton had a preference for “positive eugenics” (encouraging the birth and training of the most talented members of society), while Goethe was mostly preoccupied with “negative eugenics” (sterilization, birth control, and marriage and immigration restriction).

Working closely with Terry Thomas, a professor of education, Bishton used his research grants from the Foundation to support the Accelerated College Entrance and Academic Talent Search projects. In 1979, Bishton and Thomas proposed the “First Annual Goethe Conference” in order to “focus attention on the present and future consequences to the state, the nation, and society of not developing to the fullest the potentials of gifted children and youth.” The conference never got beyond the planning stage, despite support from university officials. After his retirement, Bishton was paid by the Foundation as a consultant to Thomas’ projects. As of 1980, the two accounts listed in Bishton’s name, had a balance of “at least $614,000,” according to the Foundation’s Director of Finance. By 2003, the funds were all gone.

Today, the Goethe collection at CSUS is missing a significant portion of his correspondence, plus there is no trace of the hundreds of packaged notes and bundles of documents that were in the basement of Goethe’s house in March 1970. When Andrew Schauer used materials from the Foundation in 1975-6 to write a biographical profile of Goethe, he reported that he had access to 2,034 pages of correspondence, almost 3,000 less than Bishton had acknowledged in 1969. We will never know for sure what happened to these materials, but we do know that Rodger Bishton was the last person to have possession of them before they disappeared. The most likely conclusion is that Goethe’s missing correspondence and notes ended up in Bishton’s home, according to the executor of Bishton’s will. Terry Hay cleaned out Bishton’s home after his death and found “a bunch of papers and letters” in a cabin in Bishton’s backyard. But they were indecipherable due to water damage. “I couldn’t read anything, it was just a glob of stuff,” Hay told me.

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278 See, for example, letters from Goethe to Guy West, November 21, 1961, which identifies Bishton’s interest in a “Gifted Child program”; and from Bishton to Goethe, January 17, 1964. CSUS, Goethe Collection, “Goethe-Bishton Correspondence.”
279 Letter from Bishton to Goethe, December 21, 1963. CSUS, Goethe Collection, “Goethe-Bishton Correspondence.”
282 Interview with Donna Parenti, December 15, 2003. I have not been able to figure out how much Bishton personally received from the Foundation because his personnel records have been destroyed.
284 Schauer reports on the Goethe correspondence on p. 175.
285 In January 1970, Eugene Morris, the Foundation’s director, discussed with Bishton a plan to remove documents from Goethe’s house that were a fire hazard. Memo from Morris to Bishton January 9, 1970. CSUS Foundation, Goethe Permanent Records, “Goethe Biography Bishton.”
Salvaging the Collection

After Bishton abandoned the project, the Foundation still had an obligation to produce a biography of a benefactor whose “remembrance of the Foundation in his will is a matter of great confidence and trust.” And there were others on campus -- history professors and the university archivist -- who had different reasons for wanting to tell the Goethe story. They were more interested in finding evidence that revealed his views about eugenics than paying homage to a founding father.

Early in the 1970s, Bishton returned to the Foundation what was left of the Goethe collection. In 1973, the Foundation funded history professor Joseph McGowan’s proposal to sort through the Goethe collection with a view to writing or over-sighting the writing of a biography. When McGowan received “several boxes of papers” from the Goethe estate, he reported that they were in “complete disorder,” requiring the assistance of a graduate student throughout the spring semester to get them organized into several binders. “The Goethe papers in my office,” McGowan informed Eugene Morris in June 1973, “contain scoops and fragments of information about his life but it will require painstaking research to locate and extract these from his correspondence and organize it into a biography.”

In 1975, McGowan recruited Andrew Schauer, a twenty-three year old graduate student in history, to write a profile of Goethe, funded by the Foundation. Schauer quickly discovered that the collection was “all over the place” and incomplete. Correspondence prior to 1947 was mostly missing. He supplemented the Goethe papers with research in newspapers and court records, and interviewed people who knew Goethe, but Bishton did not cooperate with the project. In January 1976, he turned over his solidly researched, 206 page report to the Foundation, which shelved it without discussion.

The documents, correspondence, papers, diaries, and photographs that Schauer drew upon for his research eventually were sent to the library where the archivist, Georgiana White, did her best, with limited resources and encouragement, to preserve them until the collection was formally organized years later. Thanks to McGowan, White, and Schauer, the Goethe collection contains some important materials -- for example, Goethe’s passports and diaries -- that were salvaged from Bishton and the Foundation.

Bishton reappeared on campus in the late 1990s to support the rehabilitation of Goethe’s residence. “I am more than a little impressed with your great plans for the Goethe mansion. If I may momentarily be a spokesman for Dr. Goethe, let me say for him, Congratulations!”

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287 Memo from Morris to Bishton, October 1, 1969. CSUS Foundation, Goethe Permanent Records, “Goethe Biography Bishton.”
288 Interviews with Georgiana White, October 27, 2003; Ernie Isaacs, October 13, 2003; Mary McGowan, October 13, 27, 31, 2003; Joe Pitti, October 13, 2003; Andrew Schauer, October 14, 2003
289 Memo from McGowan to Morris, June 12, 1973. CSUS, Goethe Collection, “Correspondence.”
290 Interview with Andrew Schauer, October 14, 2003; Schauer, pp. ii-iv.
292 Letter from Bishton to Elizabeth Moulds, March 10, 1998. Copy provided by CSUS Foundation attorney, Robert Murphy.
When the re-named Julia Morgan House -- in tribute to its architect -- was formally opened on September 14, 2000, Bishton contributed two large, framed photographs of Charles and Mary Goethe, which hang in the living room.²⁹³ There was little else to remind Bishton of the Goethes inside the house. The room in which Goethe kept his library on the ground floor is still a library, but nothing remains of his books, periodicals, and pamphlets. The faux library is now dedicated to Julia Morgan, but its shelved, leather-bound books are purely ornamental, bought in bulk as a backdrop for social events.²⁹⁴

During the last years of his life, the Foundation courted Bishton in the hope that he would leave a sizable gift to a university that had subsidized his research for most of his twenty-five year career and given him extraordinary leeway in his personal access to the Goethe accounts. The university was hopeful about being remembered in his will because, like his mentor who died in 1966, Bishton had no immediate survivors. He left an estate of about 1.3 million dollars - sizable for a state college professor -- but not one penny to Sacramento State University.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ The photographs were dedicated on September 14, 2000, at the formal opening of the Julia Morgan House. One is dedicated to Mary Glide Goethe “by her friend Rodger Bishton,” the other to Charles Goethe by “his confidant and friend Rodger Bishton.”
²⁹⁴ Author’s visit to Julia Morgan House at 3731 “T” Street, Sacramento. Interview with Lisa Rogers, manager of Julia Morgan House, October 5, 2003.
²⁹⁵ Aside from a small bequest to a theatre in Sacramento, Bishton left his savings and residence to his alma mater, Principia College, a Christian Scientist college in Missouri. Interviews with Terry Hay and Terry Thomas, December 15, 2003.
V. ENGAGING THE PAST

“Some preservers believe they save the real past by preventing it from being made over. But we cannot avoid remaking our heritage, for every act of recognition alters what survives. We can use the past fruitfully only when we realize that to inherit is also to transform.”

(David Lowenthal) 296

History and Memory

The university has generally taken two approaches to dealing with Goethe’s legacies. From the mid-1950s until his death in 1966, he was treated one-dimensionally and uncritically as a founding father, who provided the new college not only with money, but also an invented history. This was an understandable impulse given the youthful lineage of Sacramento State College and dearth of institutional memory. From the mid-1960s to the present, in the wake of exposure of his rightwing racism, the university has engaged in selective memory, erasing his associations with eugenics and minimizing his symbolic presence on campus. But it is hard to cleanse an institution of its ghosts. It is time for a different approach.

Our university is by no means the first educational institution to confront the dilemma of how to deal with long gone benefactors whose practices negate values of equality and justice. Numerous public schools in the South are named after Confederate and national leaders who owned slaves. In recent years, there has been a movement to change the schools’ names on the grounds that public institutions should not honor the memory of servitude.297 Similar issues permeate higher education. “By the nature of American history,” observes historian Patricia Limerick, “many universities were founded and funded by men who made their fortunes in enterprises resting on slavery, or on other varieties of ruthless exploitation and manipulation of labor.”298

Between the 1930s and 1970s, Yale named its most prominent buildings after slave traders or defenders of slavery. A recent report by three young scholars has raised concerns about the university’s unwillingness to deal fully with the legacy of slavery.299 They call upon the university to acknowledge how it benefited from the slave trade and to consider reparations to families whose ancestors were victimized by slavery. “There’s been a real absence,” says Anthony Dugdale, “of any real discussion or real scholarship on the history of universities themselves, or their role, with regard to slavery. Universities are precisely the institutions that should be looking into their own history and coming to terms with it.” 300

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296  Lowenthal, p. 412.
298  Limerick, p. 100.
In 1961, the University of Colorado named one of its residence halls after David Nichols, a member of the Colorado legislature who in the 1870s was instrumental in raising money to fund the university that was established in 1876. As captain of the Third Colorado Cavalry in 1864, Nichols’ troops had led a massacre of between 100 and 175 Indians, including women and children. In a report to the university, Patricia Limerick described Nichols as “an enthusiastic and willing leader of attacks against Indians” and recommended that “the University change the name of Nichols Hall and carefully choose a replacement.”

In 1987, after several years of protests on campus, Nichols’ name was removed from the dormitory. In April 1989, the university’s board of regents renamed the building Cheyenne Arapaho Hall.

In North Carolina, where thousands of young women, mostly African American, were sterilized against their will and often on the basis of their sexual activity, professors at the Bowman Gray School of Medicine -- now part of Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center -- were actively involved in legitimating and supporting negative eugenics. Recently, Dr. William B. Applegate, dean of the medical school, has condemned the university’s involvement in eugenics and promised to establish a review committee of faculty and administrators to investigate the issue. “It is our duty to the public,” he said in December 2002, “to be squeaky clean.”

In 1997, James O. Freedman, president of Dartmouth College, acknowledged anti-Semitism in the university’s past -- including quotas for students and faculty -- at the dedication of a social and religious center for Jewish students. “We must confront the ghosts of the past and recognize that we have a history that’s not commendable in this respect,” Freedman told the New York Times. “It’s not just Dartmouth, it was the same at Harvard and Yale.” Freedman noted that “those of us who have a public platform to remember the past should [not] shirk from doing so…. College presidents can and must use their professional stature to promote the unhurried consideration of large questions. Their willingness to speak out on moral issues can remind us all of the essential nature of idealism.”

Similarly, with respect to C. M. Goethe, our university is not well served by substituting strategic amnesia for fawning celebration. We should face the fact that Sacramento State’s uncritical relationship with a wealthy benefactor compromised our obligation to speak out on issues of social injustice. The university’s silence made it easier for Goethe to promote racist policies in immigration, real estate, and family planning that victimized untold thousands. As a public institution of higher education, we have a responsibility to learn from our experience, to understand why the eugenics’ movement exercised such widespread influence. And we need to be alert to how its assumptions persist today in the demonization of immigrants, in government efforts to restrict the birthrate of poor women, and in growing support for the genetic

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301 Limerick, pp. 5, 107.
“enhancement” of the future children of wealthy families. It is time to engage the past, not erase it.

**Recommendations**

Rather than treating Goethe as an embarrassment to be managed, the university should welcome a transparent, public debate about how his legacy should be remembered and used. Such a process could be a liberating and enlightening experience. “If today’s insights can be seen as integral to the meaning of the past, rather than subversive of its truth, we may breathe new life into it.” Drawing upon David Lowenthal’s insight, I will conclude with some recommendations for how we might be able to “change the past” and free ourselves “from myths that constrained previous perceptions.”

1. Too often in the past the university has privatized its dealings with C. M. Goethe, withholding information from the community and making decisions behind closed doors. All sectors of the university -- administration, Foundation, faculty, staff, and students -- should be involved in deciding how to remember Goethe, what to do about his symbolic and material legacies, and how to spend what remains of his bequest. We should follow the advice that Patricia Limerick gave to the University of Colorado: “When a name that most people take for granted brings distress to a significant number of people within the University, then the University has an obligation to look into the problem.”

2. Cronyism, conflict of interest, and a lack of professionalism have marked the university’s handling of Goethe’s gifts. There should be full disclosure of the financial handling of Goethe’s multi-million dollar bequest. The university and Foundation need to draw lessons about its relationship with Goethe in order to develop ethical guidelines regarding future ties with private benefactors.

3. Given the lack of transparency in the handling of the Goethe gifts to CSUS, the Foundation should re-examine how the terms of the current Goethe grants are defined and, within legal limits, ensure that Goethe funds are equitably distributed throughout the campus. In these times of scarce resources, no department or individuals should monopolize Goethe funds. Loans, for example, should be made available to students in majors that address topics once the preserve of “eugenics.” Perhaps scholarships could be established for students studying social justice and science.

4. C. M. Goethe is not only an important figure in the history of CSUS; he also played a significant regional, national, and international role in the development of eugenics. Given that the university failed to preserve his library and many of his papers, it would be appropriate to put resources into restoring, rebuilding, and developing the Library’s Goethe Collection into a comprehensive archive for students, historians, and researchers.

5. The university should survey and examine the ways in which C. M. Goethe is remembered (and not remembered) on campus in markers, plaques, web sites, official documents, and publications. The campus community could be invited to submit proposals for how Goethe’s

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306 Lowenthal, p. 410, 411.
307 Limerick, p. 2.
memory should be represented or a conference organized to discuss the issue. We should keep in mind that remembrance is always a dynamic process and that “the purpose of a memorial is to get people talking.”

(6) The university should revisit the possible uses of the Julia Morgan House. Perhaps, as a statement of ironic justice, there could be space for a eugenics library or research center that addresses the history of eugenics. Or maybe space could be given to organizations that represent groups victimized by Goethe’s ideas and policies. We need to think imaginatively about ways of using the Goethe resources to remedy the injustices that were carried out in his name.

(7) The university’s involvement with C. M. Goethe offers all kinds of learning opportunities. The faculty should be encouraged to incorporate the university’s experience with Goethe into their classes where appropriate. The Library and interested faculty might consider drawing upon Goethe materials in the university’s archives to develop an exhibition or series of exhibits on campus and in the community.

(8) Finally, the university should acknowledge the people on campus who took a stand against Goethe’s hateful values. We should express our gratitude to the student organizations, faculty, and librarians who did their best to preserve the record, tell the full story, and speak truth to power, despite pressures not to do so. This report is dedicated to them.

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