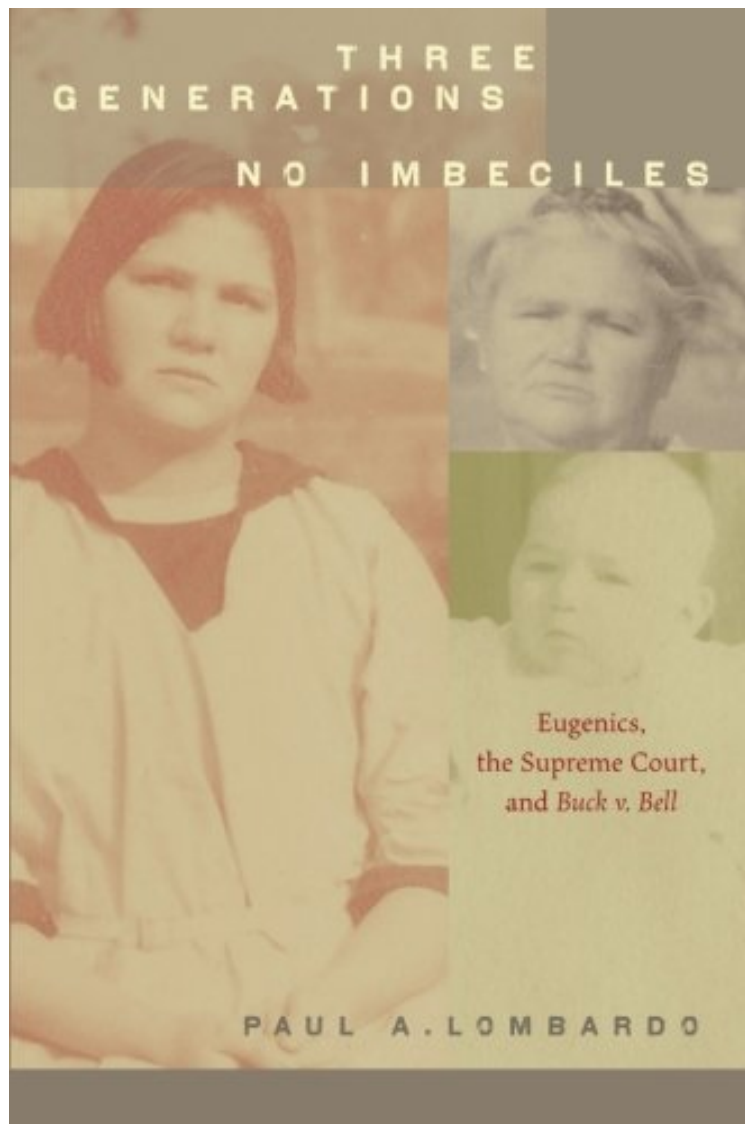


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## Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck v. Bell

*Paul A. Lombardo*

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**Paul A. Lombardo : Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck v. Bell** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Three Generations, No Imbeciles: Eugenics, the Supreme Court, and Buck v. Bell:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A must read story on the History of Eugenics in ...By Daniel HendersonA must read story on the History of Eugenics in the United States and around the world. A story most

Americans are ignorant of today. This horrific attitude was accepted, condoned and advocated by US Supreme Court Justice and former President William H. Taft and many other prominent Americans of the early 20th century. It became the basis for Hitler's mass sterilization in Germany and across Europe. There were over 60,000 of these procedures done in the US alone. All done with the intention of society ridding itself of its undesirables. What is really shocking is that the laws that allowed this to take place are still on the books in many states. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The tale is told by Gail Witt. Great story, Paul did a wonderful job. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars by Ben Lokey. Excellent

"Three generations of imbeciles are enough." Few lines from Supreme Court opinions are as memorable as this declaration by Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. in the landmark 1927 case *Buck v. Bell*. The ruling allowed states to forcibly sterilize residents in order to prevent "feeble-minded and socially inadequate" people from having children. It is the only time the Supreme Court endorsed surgery as a tool of government policy. Paul Lombardo's startling narrative exposes the *Buck* case's fraudulent roots. In 1924 Carrie Buck was involuntarily institutionalized by the State of Virginia after she was raped and impregnated. She challenged the state's plan to sterilize her. Having already judged her mother and daughter mentally deficient, Virginia wanted to make Buck the first person sterilized under a new law designed to prevent hereditarily "defective" people from reproducing. Lombardo, more than twenty-five years of research and his own interview with Buck before she died, demonstrate conclusively that she was destined to lose the case before it had even begun. Neither Carrie Buck nor her mother and daughter were the "imbeciles" condemned in the Holmes opinion. Her lawyer, a founder of the institution where she was held, never challenged Virginia's arguments and called no witnesses on Buck's behalf. And judges who heard her case, from state courts up to the U.S. Supreme Court, sympathized with the eugenics movement. Virginia had Carrie Buck sterilized shortly after the 1927 decision. Though *Buck* set the stage for more than sixty thousand involuntary sterilizations in the United States and was cited at the Nuremberg trials in defense of Nazi sterilization experiments, it has never been overturned. *Three Generations, No Imbeciles* tracks the notorious case through its history, revealing that it remains a potent symbol of government control of reproduction and a troubling precedent for the human genome era.

From Publishers Weekly: Starred. Law professor and historian Lombardo does a superb job of revealing, for the first time, all the facts in the infamous *Buck v. Bell* case of the 1920s, the Supreme Court decision ratifying Virginia's compulsory sterilization of feeble-minded people. In the majority decision, Chief Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. called the plaintiffs manifestly unfit both mentally and morally, and insisted that three generations of imbeciles are enough. This decision, which has never been overturned, led to tens of thousands of involuntary sterilizations. Lombardo interviewed the last survivor of the three *Buck* women who were plaintiffs; turned up indisputable evidence that there was no feeble-mindedness in that family; unearthed previously unknown correspondence of Carrie Buck's attorney, who, believing the law to be necessary, mounted a deliberately insufficient defense; and documented the private family tragedy (an incestuous rape and resulting pregnancy) that lay behind the Bucks' encounter with doctors bent on exploring eugenics. His book is a testament to injustice and to ignorance—not that of the *Buck* women, but rather of powerful doctors, attorneys and Supreme Court justices. 17 b/w photos. (Oct.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist: A 1927 U.S. Supreme Court ruling, *Buck v. Bell*, approved laws allowing states to sterilize the feeble-minded to keep them from having children. The case involved Carrie Buck, whose mother and daughter like Carrie had been adjudged feeble-minded. At a time of growing debate about the practice of eugenics, feeble-minded was a label freely and frequently given to prostitutes, illegitimate children, and epileptics, as well as the mentally deficient. For a period, Carrie and her mother were both residents of the Colony, a facility that practiced the segregation and sterilization policies prevalent at the time. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., in writing the decision, declared that three generations of imbeciles are enough. The decision set in motion more than 60,000 sterilizations. Law professor Lombardo draws on 25 years of research, including interviews with Buck before she died, her medical and school records, correspondence with her attorneys, and other documents to support the claim that the case was a fraud against a poor girl who had been raped. An engrossing look at a shameful case. --Vanessa Bush "Law professor and historian Paul Lombardo does a superb job of revealing, for the first time, all the facts in the infamous *Buck v. Bell* case of the 1920s, the Supreme Court decision ratifying Virginia's compulsory sterilization of 'feeble-minded' people." (Publishers Weekly (starred review)) "Highly recommended for academic, public, and law libraries." (Philip Y. Blue Criminal Law Library Blog) "An engrossing look at a shameful case." (Booklist) "Lombardo tells a compelling and heavily documented story of injustice to society's less fortunate citizens. His sympathy for the abused is evident, but that does not turn *Three Generations, No Imbeciles* into a polemic... Armed with knowledge from this excellent book, we can hope we never return to the mistakes of our past." (Internet of Books) "The book is lucidly written, well researched, thorough, and provocative... *Three Generations, No Imbeciles* is a must read for anyone who wants to understand the historical context of *Buck v. Bell* and its implications for ethics, law and public policy." (New England Journal of Medicine) "Lombardo reminds us that the same incentives to improve public health and lower tax burdens exist today." (Pathophilia) "Startling." (Damon

W. Root Reason)"A sad and fascinating book... With his legal and historical background, Lombardo is particularly suited to give us a book that explains a surprisingly ignored injustice, its antecedents and consequences, and helps us to think about the ongoing struggle to find a health balance between privacy and government power." (Stephen Murdoch History News Network)"This book is a legal and historical masterpiece, combining meticulous ethical analysis with a liveliness that belies its scholarly roots and exhaustive footnotes and research." (Michael B. Blank PsycCRITIQUES)"Compelling and well-researched... Three Generations, No Imbeciles gives Carrie Buck's long-untold story the attention it deserves." (Harvard Law )"In a very readable 279 pages, Paul A. Lombardo sets forth the facts about the eugenics movement in the United States." (Robert T. Adams Virginia Lawyer)"Meticulously researched... As Lombardo conclusively demonstrates, those who sought to have Buck sterilized did not let the facts get in the way of the story the law required them to tell." (Paul Lauritzen Commonweal)"Meticulously detailed and researched history... this book is enjoyable, thought provoking, and troubling in equal measure. I highly recommend it." (Susan Stefan, J.D. Psychiatric Services)" Three Generations provides valuable, new, and timely revelations for students and professional scholars across many disciplines." (Susan Burch Disability Studies Quarterly)"For almost 30 years, Lombardo has tried to uncover the full story of the wrongs." (Andrea Pitzer USA Today)"Most thorough examination to date... Readers will be both intrigued and disturbed by what they encounter." (Lynne Curry H-Law, H-Net s)"What makes Lombardo's analysis so important is that issues about the fate of our mutant genes, about the use of technologies to monitor pregnancies at risk for birth defects, and alternatives to relying on chance alone are subverted by our fear of eugenics." (Elof Axel Carlson Quarterly of Biology)"Overall, a fascinating book on one of the darker decisions in US law. An excellent addition to collections on US constitutional law, history, and reproductive rights." (Choice)"The struggle for justice goes on. Bioethicists typically ask 'ought' questions, but not all follow up with activism. More bioethicists should accept the social activist role. Paul Lombardo demonstrates exactly how it can be done." (Ruth Levy Guyer American Journal of Bioethics)"Heartbreaking and riveting... There is likely to be no better account of Buck v. Bell than Lombardo's book." (Ian Dowbiggin, Ph.D. Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences)"A remarkable work of investigation and narrative synthesis, Lombardo connects Buck v. Bell to a broader debate over the place of eugenics in American life and law... Having amassed over two decades of research, including interviewing Carrie Buck, Lombardo is uniquely qualified to tell this story." (Jason Morgan Ward Virginia Magazine of History and Biography)" Three Generations, No Imbeciles manages to be both a meticulously researched work of history and a compelling story." (John G. Browning Journal of Law, Medicine Ethics)"A powerful commentary on the dangers of politicized medicine and social engineering." (Daniel P. Murphy Magill Book s)"This painstakingly researched book will surely be the definitive study of Buck v. Bell for many years to come." (Diane B. Paul American Historical )"As a historical endeavor, it is rich and rewarding, permitting the reader a broad understanding of the social, cultural and legal context for the case that inspired Oliver Wendell Holmes' famous quotation, 'Three generations of imbeciles are enough.'... Equally important as the excavation of this history is the manner in which Lombardo's writing surfaces the emotional consequences of fertility-related policies." (Michelle Oberman Journal of Legal Education)"Lombardo does an excellent job of meticulously laying out the sham nature of Buck v. Bell, and by the end of the text, the reader is left with no doubt that the case, which has never been overturned, was mired in deceit... Fascinating nuggets of racial politics, class inequality, and fear of the female body." (Law Society )"Lombardo convincingly shows that the eugenics of the 1920s, despite professional reversals and government apologies, still echoes in discussions of designer babies, grumbling about the costs of social programs and attempts to calculate the financial value of life." (Edward Slavishak, PhD Nursing History )"This book is suitable for any audience interested in the history of the eugenics movement in the United States." (Susan L. Smith, Ph.D. Metapsychology)" Three Generations, No Imbeciles chronicles Buck's tragic life and reviews the larger history of American eugenics in a moving narrative that will appeal to a broad audience of lay readers interested in controversies over reproductive rights, public health, science, and the law." (Brent Ruswick Isis)"Compelling.. brilliant... and refreshing." (Jana Grekul Comptes Rendus Biologies)"Lombardo does full justice to this incredibly important and heartbreakingly tragic Supreme Court decision. His book places in stark relief a horrific miscarriage of justice and shows in full detail how the power of the judicial system can be used to undermine, corrupt, and ultimately destroy any vestige of equal protection under the law for poor, defenseless people in our society. It is a must read for anyone who cares about the rule of law and the cause of social justice." (James H. Jones, author of Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment)