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American Society of Human Genetics Statement Regarding Concepts of “Good Genes” and Human Genetics

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Note: In light of recent comments about the role of genetics in society, the American Society of Human Genetics is issuing this statement to reiterate genetics facts and knowledge, as well as the values the human genetics community holds.

The American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG) affirms the biological reality that we are one people, one species, and one humanity. As a community of researchers, clinicians, and others dedicated to advancing human genetics, ASHG is committed to the ethical use of valid genetic knowledge to advance science, improve health, and benefit people everywhere. Thus, as we did most recently in the 2018 Society-wide statement [ASHG Denounces Attempts to Link Genetics and White Supremacy](#), we reiterate our strong opposition to efforts that warp genetics knowledge for social or political ends.

Genetics demonstrates that humans cannot be divided into biologically distinct subcategories or races, and any efforts to claim the superiority of humans based on any genetic ancestry have no scientific evidence. Moreover, it is inaccurate to claim genetics as the determinative factor in human strengths or outcomes when education, environment, wealth, and health care access are often more potent factors. There is no factual basis for attempts to define communities or regions of people with “good” or “bad” genes and a century of science has debunked such

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claims, which can feed discredited views and racist ideologies. Unchecked, unethical application of false genetic “theories” have resulted in past atrocities from forced sterilizations to the Holocaust and can still fuel unethical social policies worldwide today. Over the decades, our field also has reflected on its own role in such now-condemned ideas, and we speak out vocally as a community and as individuals to combat their resurgence.

We must protect and advance the ethical use of genetics and genomics knowledge for the profound good it can realize, including better, more precise healthcare that leverages what we are discovering about human genetic commonality and diversity. The human genetics community dedicates itself to this goal each day, and today we are improving and saving hundreds of thousands of lives. As the ASHG community focuses on realizing the benefits of human genetics and genomics research for people everywhere, we also urge societal attention to address profound educational, economic and health inequalities that fuel differences in human experience and well-being. By pursuing all of these activities, humans can celebrate our common heritage as one people, embrace and fully tap our valued diversity, and help achieve optimal life outcomes for all.

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About the American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG)

Founded in 1948, the American Society of Human Genetics is the primary professional membership organization for human genetics specialists worldwide. Its nearly 8,000 members include researchers, academicians, clinicians, laboratory practice professionals, genetic counselors, nurses, and others with an interest in human genetics. The Society serves scientists, health professionals, and the public by providing forums to: (1) share research results through the [ASHG Annual Meeting](#) and in *The American Journal of Human Genetics*; (2) advance genetic research by advocating for research support; (3) educate current and future genetics professionals, health care providers, advocates, policymakers, educators, students, and the public about all aspects of human genetics; and (4) promote genetic services and support responsible social and scientific policies. For more information, visit: <http://www.ashg.org>.

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