

# PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: WILLIAM SHOCKLEY

*a candid conversation with the nobel prize winner—in physics—about his theories on black inferiority and his donation of sperm for a “super baby”*

Fifteen years ago, William Bradford Shockley went public with his theory that “retrogressive evolution,” or dysgenics, was occurring among American blacks—meaning that less intelligent blacks were having more children than those of significantly greater intelligence. His pronouncement, which amounted to a claim of black genetic inferiority, touched perhaps the most painful nerve that still exists in American society. After all, this was not a member of the Ku Klux Klan or the Nazi Party mouthing racial obscenities but an eminent scientist, a Nobel Prize winner at that, who was reviving an argument most Americans hoped had been forever discredited.

At first, in the wake of the nation's urban riots, and in the midst of legislative efforts to rectify past racial injustices, Shockley's theories were discussed seriously—if scathingly—mainly in the scientific community. The public at large took little heed. For one thing, it was pointed out in popular accounts, Shockley's 1956 Nobel Prize was for physics—he helped discover the principles that made possible the transistor—so why should his dabbling in the field of genet-

ics be taken seriously?

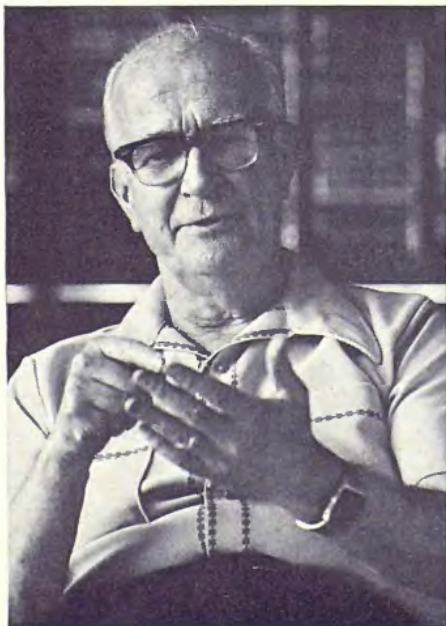
In addition, when scientists responded, they did so in such uncharacteristically abrasive terms—as they continue to do today—that Shockley's reputation as some sort of “mad scientist” prevented any dispassionate public discussion of his ideas. Three professors at Stanford, where he sought to teach a course in dysgenics, wrote: “The essentially genocidal policies [Shockley] has seemed to propose are not only painful for black people to hear but are abhorrent to all decent people whatever their skin color.” The National Academy of Sciences wrote, “Dr. Shockley's proposals are based on such simplistic notions of race, intelligence and ‘human quality’ as to be unworthy of serious consideration by a board of scientists. . . . It is basically vicious to evaluate individuals on the basis of the group to which they belong.”

But in 1969, Dr. Arthur R. Jensen weighed in with scholarly and statistical support for Shockley's dysgenic thesis. By then, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy had both been felled by assassins. Lyndon Johnson, the leader of what now seems a naïve Great

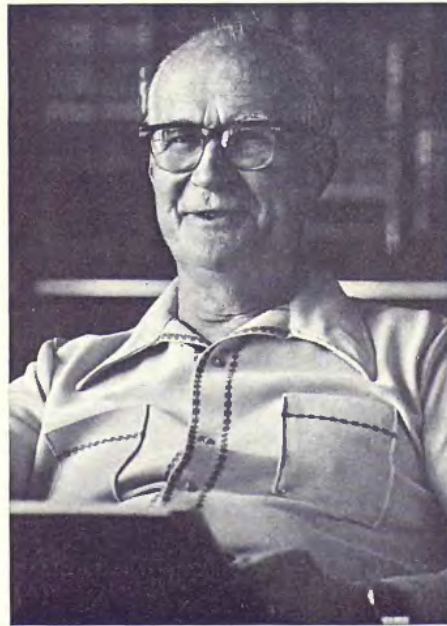
Society program, had been replaced by Richard Nixon. If Shockley wasn't quite respectable, the climate of the nation was such that at least people would listen to him—in some cases.

The man whose mind could range from the intricacies of electrical conduction to the problems of genetic reproduction was born in London in 1910. He graduated from Cal Tech in 1932 and got his Ph.D. at MIT. He worked at Bell Laboratories from 1936 to 1954 and it was in that year that he and fellow scientists John Bardeen and Walter Brattain discovered the principles of the transistor. The importance of the transistor was not publicly recognized until two years later, with the designation of the Nobel Prize. Shockley acted as president of Shockley Transistor Corporation from 1958 to 1960 and slowly shifted his attention to a new—and inestimably more controversial—field.

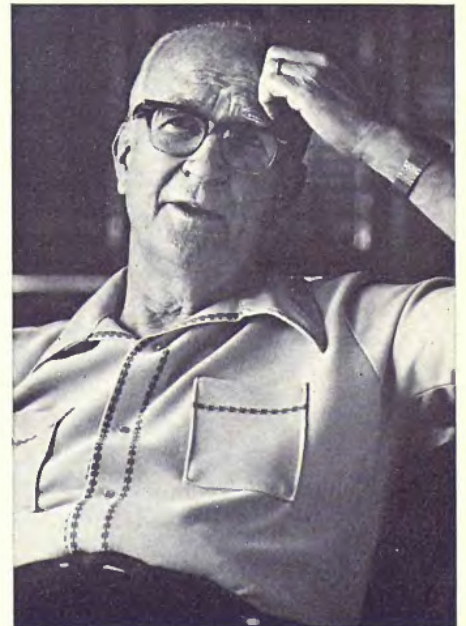
Bolstered by Jensen's highly publicized article in the *Harvard Educational Review* and subsequent studies, in which he asserted that black children were less capable than white children of “level II [abstract] reasoning,” and that



“I.Q. may not necessarily be the best trait to breed for, but I don't know of one that has such a positive correlation with other high-quality traits—such as honesty and physical capacity.”



“The major cause for American Negroes' intellectual and social deficits is hereditary and racially genetic in origin and thus not remediable to a major degree by improvements in environment.”



PHOTOGRAPHY BY LARRY L. LOGAN

“I don't think the right should be given equally to everyone to have children, if those people having them are clearly destined to produce retarded or defective children.”



blacks as a group scored 15 points below whites in I.Q. tests, Shockley toured the country, speaking at colleges on both coasts, spreading his dysgenic notions wherever he could find an ear—and in some cases even where he couldn't. He was often shouted down by militant black and white students at campuses such as Brooklyn Polytech, Sacramento State and Stanford, his home campus. In 1972, he was denied a request to teach a course on dysgenics at Stanford on the grounds that he was not a qualified geneticist, a charge he has never sufficiently refuted.

Shockley's lifework has been in electronics and electrical engineering. He is so highly thought of in those fields that the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers awarded him its Medal of Honor and the \$10,000 prize that accompanies it. In so doing, the I.E.E.E. made it clear it was not endorsing Shockley's dysgenic views. Writing in the institute's newsletter, past president Jerome Suran said, "If there's one person who's had the most impact on electronics in this century, it is Dr. Shockley. However, we are in no way endorsing or even sympathizing with his efforts in other areas."

To take on the difficult assignment of interviewing this contentious, brilliant scientist, PLAYBOY tapped Syl Jones, a Minneapolis-based science and medical writer who has long had an interest in the man and the subject. He also happens to be black. We made the assignment before Shockley delivered yet another public shock—this one involving sperm banks. Here is Jones's report:

"I first met Bill Shockley in 1974 as part of an assignment for Modern Medicine magazine. I tracked him down by telephone and tried to arrange an interview, but he was extremely difficult. He'd had bad experiences with reporters in the past quoting him out of context or misquoting him altogether. Shockley tape-records his telephone conversations and once told me that he and his wife, Emmy, often analyze the recordings over dinner. He had turned down many reporters on the grounds that they were not competent to understand his theories. By the time I reached him with my request, I was fully prepared. I had read almost everything that had been written by and about Shockley and his theories.

"He was pleased that I knew something about him but demanded that I study his theories and submit to a series of telephone quizzes before he would agree to an interview. These quizzes almost always involved fairly complicated mathematical analyses of statistics designed by Shockley in support of his theories. After a few weeks of this grilling, he agreed that I was competent to interview him.

"But there was still more. He wanted

personal information on my background. Where had I been born? Where had I gone to school? How many brothers and sisters did I have? Long before this point in the process, most other reporters had written Shockley off as a kook and had given up. I was tempted to do the same. But something intrigued me: Never once did he ask my race or make any kind of racist remark, and he had no idea I was black. I didn't tell him, because I was hoping for a confrontation. In October 1974, I got my wish.

"When a white photographer and I showed up at Stanford for the interview, Shockley instinctively reached to shake the photographer's hand with the greeting, 'Hello, Mr. Jones.' It was a wrong guess that seemed almost to stagger him. Obviously stunned by my blackness, he insisted that I submit to one final test, concocted on the spur of the moment, concerning the application of the Pythagorean theorem to some now-long-forgotten part of his dysgenic thesis. Somehow, I came up with a satisfactory explanation, and Shockley had no choice but to grant me the interview. Since that

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*"The standard questions  
are, 'Where are these  
sperm banks going to go?'  
and 'Isn't this what  
Hitler tried?'"*

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day, he has consistently viewed me as 'the exception that proves the rule' of black inferiority, a designation that he, in all innocence, believes is true.

"For the 'Playboy Interview,' Shockley and I met three times, twice at his home and office on the Stanford campus in Palo Alto and once in Minneapolis. Shortly before the second session, Shockley called my home and left a message that he wanted to speak with me. I tried calling back, but no one answered. A day later, Shockley was off on another adventure: In 1977, he had responded positively to a request from Dr. Robert Graham, eyeglass entrepreneur and student of eugenics, to donate sperm to the newly formed Hermann Muller repository, named in honor of the Marxist geneticist. In February 1980, he made that donation public in a story first published in the Los Angeles Times. Shockley had called me the night before his revelation to ask if I thought he should tell the world. Manchester Union Leader publisher William Loeb, a close personal associate of Shockley's, advised him to release the information; his lawyer ad-

vised against it, and even Graham thought it a bad idea to mention any of the Nobelists by name. But now Shockley himself seemed eager to be before the public eye.

"The media's reactions to Shockley's revelation have been resoundingly negative. But he insists that hasn't bothered him one bit. His purpose in telling the world about this incident was to get another forum for discussing 'human quality' problems.

"The main points to keep in mind while reading this interview are:

"1. Historically, blacks as a group have scored 15 points lower than whites on I.Q. tests. But, Shockley's evidence to the contrary, there is still no general agreement that I.Q. tests measure raw intelligence.

"2. Shockley believes that the 15-point difference is primarily reflective of a basic genetic inferiority on the part of all blacks, whether American or not.

"3. Critics of Shockley say he is perverting science for his own racist, political reasons and that he is only the most recent link in a long chain of scientific racists.

"4. Shockley claims that low-I.Q. individuals are responsible for lowering the average I.Q. of society, a phenomenon he has dubbed the 'dysgenic threat.' To combat that threat, he has proposed the provocative Voluntary Sterilization Bonus Plan as a 'thinking exercise,' the details of which are revealed here.

"And, finally, anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, writing in Society magazine, expressed some thoughts that may help place this interview in its proper context. Speaking of the futility embodied in the search for truth in the social sciences, where the data are often soft, he said: 'But if we are able to make even some limited progress toward wisdom, then we may be . . . more ready to resign ourselves to the general truth that science will remain forever incomplete.'"

**PLAYBOY:** In February of this year, Dr. Shockley, you revealed to the world your participation in Dr. Robert Graham's Nobel-laureate sperm bank. You have donated your sperm to Dr. Graham's repository and have admitted your participation publicly. The news media reacted to your admission with both shock and ridicule, so let's start by discussing that.

**SHOCKLEY:** Shall I give you the standard questions?

**PLAYBOY:** If you like.

**SHOCKLEY:** The standard questions are, "Where are these sperm banks going to go?" and "What's the objective in trying to produce a superrace?" and "Isn't this what Hitler tried?" and "Who are you to be donating your sperm?" and other questions of that sort.

**PLAYBOY:** Let's double back to those

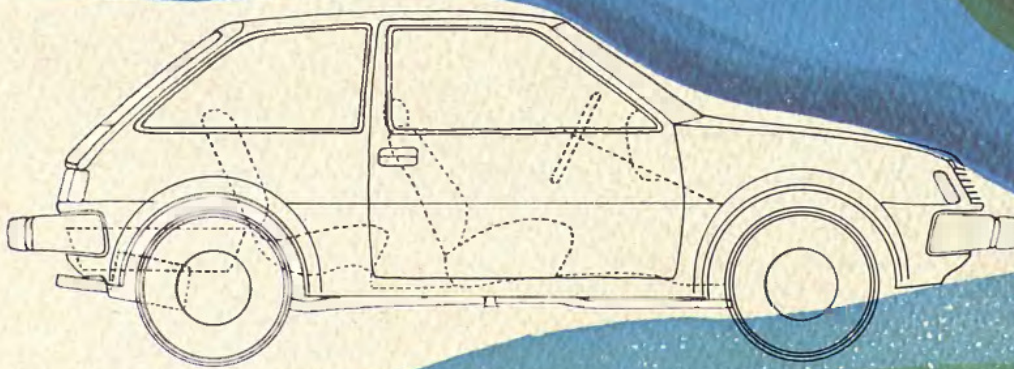


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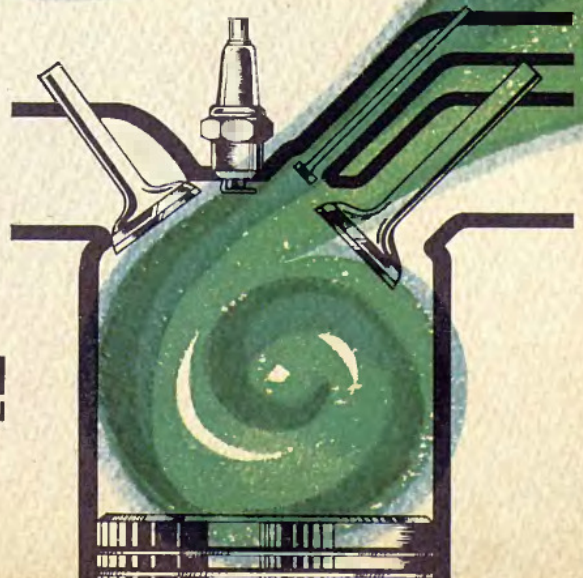
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questions and start with our own. How did you get involved in this Super Baby experiment?

**SHOCKLEY:** I don't call it a Super Baby experiment and I object to your doing so.

**PLAYBOY:** That's not our term; every newspaper in the country has called it that.

**SHOCKLEY:** Well, that is clearly a misrepresentation of my purpose in participating in Graham's program.

**PLAYBOY:** Fine. What was your purpose in offering your sperm to Graham's repository?

**SHOCKLEY:** Let's get this straight. I didn't offer. I responded to Graham's request. In 1965, I was in the news after expressing worries that the genetic quality of our population might be declining. My first contacts with Graham occurred shortly afterward, in 1966. Graham had started even then to canvass some of the Nobel laureates about the prospects of contributing sperm to a proposed repository. The actual opportunity to contribute came my way some 12 years later. Also, in 1965, I had met a man who had already made the decision, with his wife, to seek a highly qualified sperm donor in order to improve the probable quality of his children. His wife shared his views on the matter. To my way of thinking, they are a very rare case in having come independently to this decision to seek out a sperm donor.

**PLAYBOY:** Wasn't that an unnatural step to take?

**SHOCKLEY:** I agree that the idea seemed unnatural, but this man's arguments stood up very well. He was an unassuming fellow and not particularly impressive, but the more you listened to him, the more sense he seemed to be making. He said, "I don't expect to do everything for my child. I propose to teach him social values and to love him and to care for him. And I want him, or her, to have the greatest possible opportunity in life. If somebody can furnish sperm that gives a greater likelihood of success to my child than I would be able to give, then I'd have no qualms about arranging for a donor." What he said all hung together.

**PLAYBOY:** Maybe so, but you'll have to admit it's a minority opinion.

**SHOCKLEY:** I don't see that a minority opinion should be regarded as an adverse thing. I'm sure that as a black writer, you carry a certain number of these yourself. And Einstein carried some for quite a while, too.

**PLAYBOY:** Let's get back to how this whole thing began. We're trying to understand how you bring up a subject like donating your sperm to a repository. Did you and Graham sit down and hash it out over drinks, or what?

**SHOCKLEY:** This wasn't exactly a new

idea. Graham had been in contact with Hermann Muller, the Marxist geneticist, and this was actually Muller's idea, which he proposed long ago. I really don't know the history. Graham knows such things much better than I do.

**PLAYBOY:** What was the general reaction when Muller proposed it?

**SHOCKLEY:** Muller came in for a great deal of castigation. He made the tactical error of trying to draw up a list of people he considered optimum donors, which included some people who later ended up looking pretty unattractive.

**PLAYBOY:** Such as?

**SHOCKLEY:** I've forgotten who they were. Whether he had Karl Marx or Lenin or somebody else in there, I'm not sure.

**PLAYBOY:** Graham got involved because he knew Muller? What was his interest in something like this, which is outside his field?

**SHOCKLEY:** Graham's interest in the declining quality of people goes back at least to the Sixties, when he wrote a book called *The Future of Man*. He did studies of what went on during the French Revolution and the elimination of the elite class, which probably

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*"By and large, Mensa members have nothing going for them aside from a high performance on I.Q. tests."*

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removed some of the brilliant people of France. I don't know that one can say France has significantly less intellectual potential now than it did before the Revolution, but this is what some of Graham's studies were concerned with. Anyway, Graham had for some time been urging more intelligent people to have more children. We had talked about these things and my concern about possible downbreeding, or dysgenics, struck a responsive chord in him. I knew about his plans for a sperm bank and when it was set up, I had no particular problem in making a decision. This all happened about 1977, I believe.

**PLAYBOY:** How many other Nobel laureates have donated their sperm to that repository?

**SHOCKLEY:** To the best of my knowledge, there have been two others. The repository contains sperm from five individuals, two of whom I don't know anything about—but they are there for some reason of Graham's, which I have not explored.

**PLAYBOY:** Three women have already been inseminated, according to press

reports. How were those women chosen?

**SHOCKLEY:** Graham has been advertising for women in a publication sponsored by the Mensa Society. Mensa is a group of individuals who all have I.Q.s in the top two percent. But neither Graham nor I regard the Mensa population as being an ideal group. We both have the notion that, by and large, Mensa members have nothing going for them to speak of aside from a high performance on I.Q. tests.

**PLAYBOY:** But isn't that what you're looking for? High I.Q. as an indication of intelligence?

**SHOCKLEY:** Graham is looking for creative people.

**PLAYBOY:** Creative people? Why Nobel-laureate donors, then? Why not artists, writers or actors?

**SHOCKLEY:** The Nobel laureates can be said to be more distinguished in terms of creativity than in terms of I.Q. Certainly, they are distinguished in both categories but far more so in the creativity area.

**PLAYBOY:** We'll get back to the matter of creativity shortly; but first, did it concern you that new evidence suggests fathers over the age of 35—and not just mothers, as was previously thought—can contribute to a higher incidence of birth defects, such as Mongolism or Down's syndrome?

**SHOCKLEY:** I heard that one for the first time from a newsman after the sperm-bank story broke. One urologist acquaintance of mine searched his references and found nothing. Since then, I have heard more about the possible problem with Down's syndrome or Mongolism. That problem can be identified so early in pregnancy by amniocentesis that abortion is an appropriate course.

**PLAYBOY:** You say your medical friend found nothing in his references? We found the following quote from the *Annals of Human Genetics* of Great Britain: "Recent cytogenic evidence has shown that trisomy 21 [Down's syndrome] can arise perhaps even in substantial proportions from paternal nondisjunction. The evidence is that these cases of paternal nondisjunction occur more frequently in men over the age of 35." Don't you think you should have done more research into these things before you donated your sperm at the age of 70 to father a child?

**SHOCKLEY:** No. I had confidence that Dr. Graham was in touch with medical experts who had given him good advice. So I felt this was a responsibility I could turn over to qualified experts. One cannot undertake all responsibilities. Besides, this question exhibits complete ignorance as to what Graham's program is. No one who participates in this program is going to be retarded. Participants must have a high I.Q., and if you



have a high I.Q., by every definition you're not retarded.

**PLAYBOY:** We're not asking whether a participant is retarded—obviously, you're not. We're asking about your potential genetic contribution to Down's syndrome because of your age.

**SHOCKLEY:** There is no gene for Down's syndrome.

**PLAYBOY:** We're aware of that. Again, is it possible that some people of certain ages, including you, might be more predisposed to contribute to the genetic malfunction that causes the syndrome?

**SHOCKLEY** [annoyed, challenging]: What does trisomy mean?

**PLAYBOY:** It means there are three X chromosomes instead of two. Chromosomes usually come in pairs. The extra X is what causes the syndrome.

**SHOCKLEY:** That's correct.

**PLAYBOY:** Our point—and we must insist on making it—is that in some cases, that extra X chromosome is contributed by the father. These are usually men over the age of 35. Why doesn't that possibility concern you?

**SHOCKLEY:** There is a tendency for paternal nondisjunction to increase with age, but nothing you've said so far about this has been very specific. You said that it is more likely above the age of 35. How much more likely? Twice as likely?

**PLAYBOY:** We're not certain. But we're not donating our sperm to a sperm bank, either.

**SHOCKLEY:** But if you're going to ask questions like this, don't you think you should have done research to find out whether these questions are answered in the literature?

**PLAYBOY:** It's you who isn't addressing the question. The fact is, at least some researchers think the tendency to contribute that extra chromosome actually decelerates after the age of 45. We've pressed the point because we find it hard to believe a man in your position didn't research this.

**SHOCKLEY:** Well, there is another factor in this. Sperm that has been through the liquid-nitrogen treatment will be less defective than sperm that has not. This treatment immobilizes the sperm so it can be stored almost indefinitely. A news report triggered by the sperm-bank revelation points out that the incidence of defective sperm or of spontaneous abortions is reduced by a factor of three or four after this special liquid-nitrogen treatment.

**PLAYBOY:** Some people may not know how sperm is donated. Tell us how you did it.

**SHOCKLEY:** It is an abnormal male who at one time or another in his life has not masturbated, and this is one of the standard methods. There are also special condoms prepared for this purpose. These avoid the presence of sulphur, which exists in ordinary rubber and has

a spermicidal effect.

**PLAYBOY:** All right, going back to the topics of creativity and intelligence: They may be important, but aren't there other positive traits society is in need of? Such as intuition, physical strength, honesty? And how are those related to high I.Q.?

**SHOCKLEY:** There is definite positive correlation between practically any high-quality human trait and I.Q. A number of these things, including honesty, resistance to temptation to cheat on tests and physical capacity, in high-I.Q. children, compared in a positive way with their contemporaries. Now, this doesn't mean that I.Q. necessarily is the best trait to breed for, but I don't know of any other trait that has such a highly positive correlation. There are other sperm banks where you can specify things like hair color, eye color and height. I'm not sure if you get information about the donor's educational attainment or I.Q. But I have nothing against these other traits you mentioned. It's just that in selecting for high I.Q., you are likely to get these other things anyway.

**PLAYBOY:** Your bias is definitely toward the intelligentsia, isn't it?

**SHOCKLEY:** It takes many good traits to make a good society, and if we were able to isolate these traits and prove that they were heritable, then it would be good to select for these values. It might be very attractive to set up specialized sperm banks for that purpose, but obviously, you couldn't get too specialized. One could not set up a sperm bank that would be intended to select people with a high inclination to become celibate priests, for example. This characteristic would have eliminated itself from the gene pool, assuming it could be shown to be heritable.

**PLAYBOY:** How do you define creativity?

**SHOCKLEY:** The Nobel committee is essentially looking for discoveries and inventions "of greatest benefit to mankind," that occurred in the recent past. So if you examine that, you find that one definition of creativity might be the creation and delivery of something new and valuable. Nobel laureates in science certainly meet those standards.

**PLAYBOY:** As to the three women who already have been inseminated—

**SHOCKLEY:** When I last spoke with Graham, it was not known if any of these women had yet become pregnant.

**PLAYBOY:** Newspapers reported that the women were due to deliver this year.

**SHOCKLEY:** I've seen such news stories, too. I am not aware that they have any basis in fact.

**PLAYBOY:** Odds are that at least one will get pregnant. Let's assume you're the father. Are you going to know who the mother is?

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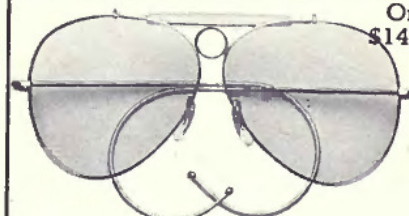
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**SHOCKLEY:** The arrangement is that Graham knows everything on both sides and neither side knows anything about the other side.

**PLAYBOY:** Might this situation create some psychological problems for the child?

**SHOCKLEY:** It might. But I wouldn't think any more than adoption would. I also think the child would be better able to have an objective view of the situation than an ordinary child would. Furthermore, there is the other side of this, which speaks to the fact that we are not trying to produce a superrace. I might point out here that before I even allowed my name to be linked with this experiment, I insisted on stating that we were not endeavoring to produce a superrace, but I was entirely in accord with Graham's objective of producing more intelligent, productive, creative people. I also went on to say that my emphasis is on reducing the human misery that may be developing at the bottom end of the I.Q. distribution. And I tried then to emphasize the difference in the distinction between these two positive influences on human quality; namely, the positive eugenics that Graham is talking about and the antidygenics that I have been emphasizing.

**PLAYBOY:** If the genetic theory behind this idea really worked, wouldn't we be able to judge the success of it by looking at the children Nobel laureates have already produced, for example?

**SHOCKLEY:** Yes, and there was a famous study done on this back in the Twenties by Lewis M. Terman. He picked 1000 children from the California schools who were in the top one percent of the I.Q. distribution. Then this so-called gifted group was followed for about 35 years. At the end of that time, they had about 2600 children. Terman's project was able to measure I.Q.s of 1500 of these. The median I.Q. of those children was about 135. I made drawings showing how well these I.Q.s fit the pattern of normal distribution for the general population. And not one of these 1500 children fell into what is known as familial mental retardation—that's retardation that results from the tail of the normal distribution. Actually, there were 13 retarded children in this group of 1500, but these included Mongoloids and other children with physiological problems.

**PLAYBOY:** What about your own children? How did they turn out?

**SHOCKLEY:** In terms of my own capacities, my children represent a very significant regression. My first wife—their mother—had not as high an academic-achievement standing as I had. Two of my three children have graduated from college—my



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daughter from Radcliffe and my younger son from Stanford. He graduated not with the highest order of academic distinction but in the second order as a physics major, and has obtained a Ph.D. in physics. In some ways, I think the choice of physics may be unfortunate for him, because he has a name that he will probably be unlikely to live up to. The elder son is a college dropout.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you see your children very often?

**SHOCKLEY:** Not very often. No.

**PLAYBOY:** Do they know about your activities?

**SHOCKLEY:** My daughter perhaps knows more than the others of my activities in these areas. But as far as my sons are concerned, it's mainly the things they see in the papers.

**PLAYBOY:** Incidentally, what's your I.Q.?

**SHOCKLEY:** I don't know.

**PLAYBOY:** You've never known your I.Q.?

**SHOCKLEY:** I had I.Q. tests made by Terman in connection with the gifted-children study when I was about ten. Then my I.Q. was about 130.

**PLAYBOY:** So you were actually part of the Terman gifted-children study.

**SHOCKLEY:** I was not accepted for the Terman study, because my I.Q. was not high enough. Terman missed two Nobel laureates; I was one, Luis Alvarez of Berkeley was another. We were both tested for this program.

**PLAYBOY:** What was Terman looking for in terms of I.Q.?

**SHOCKLEY:** I think 135 or over. I suspect my I.Q. is higher than that by now, but I have not done a test on it.

**PLAYBOY:** Do I.Q.s improve with age?

**SHOCKLEY:** There have been cases in which there has been marked improvement of I.Q. over the years. I have heard that Einstein was not a very bright student in his early years. I'm not sure what his I.Q. was in his adult life, but I would be rather surprised if it weren't quite high.

**PLAYBOY:** What are your children's I.Q.s? Do you have any idea?

**SHOCKLEY:** No, I don't.

**PLAYBOY:** What about your parents'?

**SHOCKLEY:** Terman measured my mother and, as I recall, it was above 150.

**PLAYBOY:** To come back to Graham's experiment in breeding, what's the value of it if not to add more knowledge about the effects of this kind of eugenics?

**SHOCKLEY:** I consider the real experiment to be sociological, and that experiment has been accelerated by the publicity surrounding the Nobelist sperm bank.

**PLAYBOY:** Now that the reactions have come in, are you sorry it was tried?

**SHOCKLEY:** Not at all. There has been a clear demonstration of an important truth about our nation's intellectual community. This truth is that a Dark Ages dogmatism blocks objectivity about human-quality problems.



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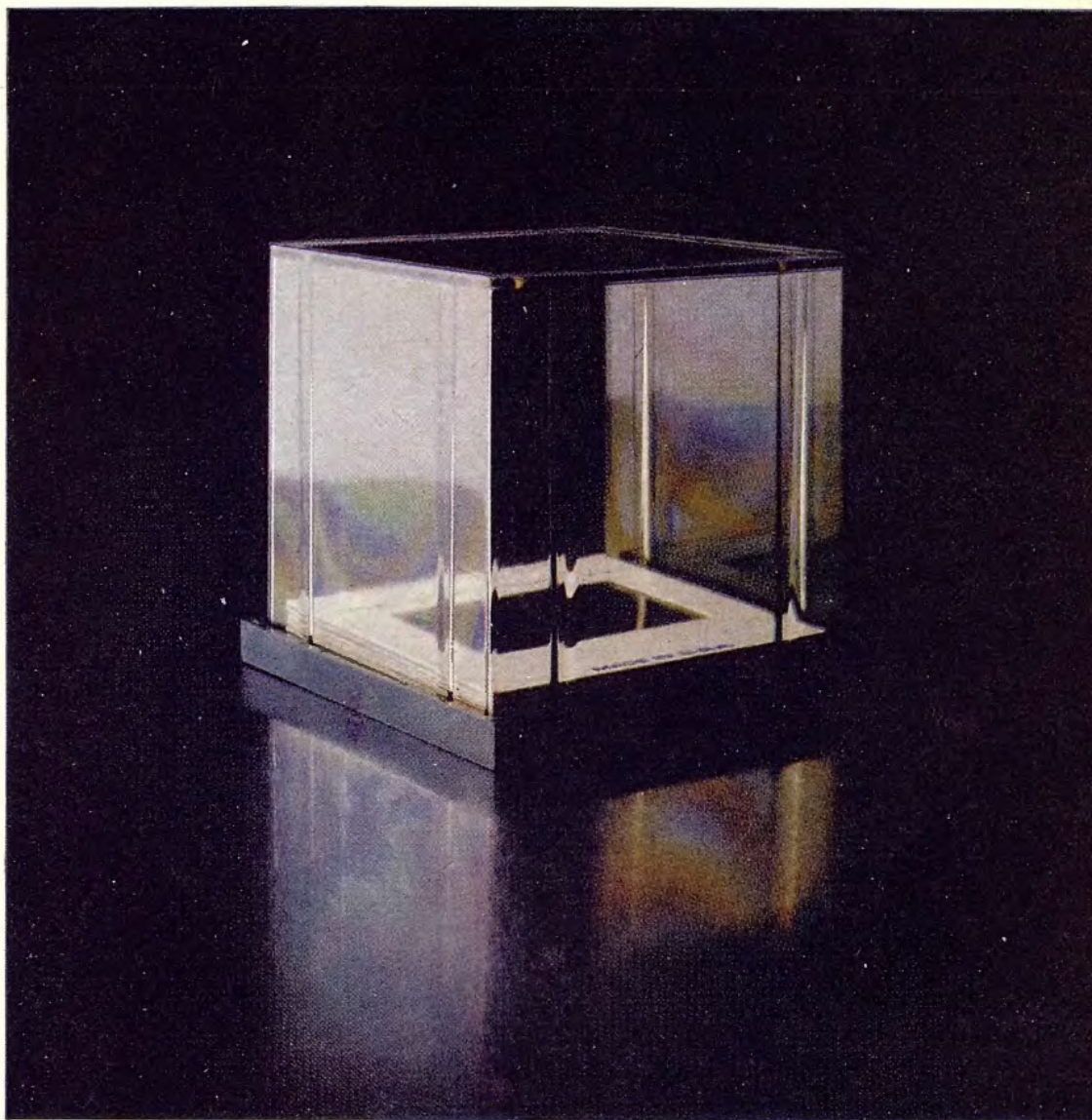
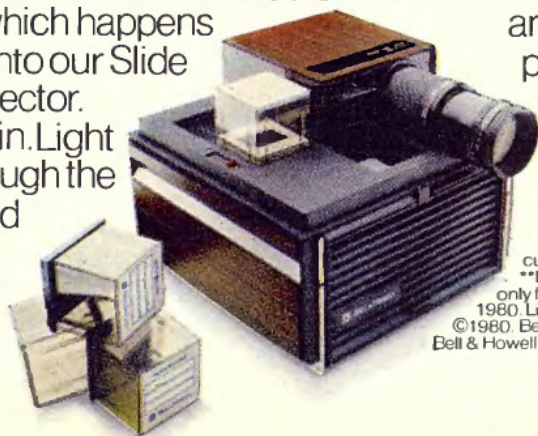
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**PLAYBOY:** Dark Ages dogmatism? That's strong language.

**SHOCKLEY:** The evidence for Dark Ages dogmatism is found in press reports of interviews with scientists about the sperm bank. These suggest emotional judgments rather than reason. Most eminent scientists, including Nobelists, have condemned Graham's program with the words weird, pretty silly biological nonsense, ridiculous, ethically and morally repulsive.

**PLAYBOY:** So much for the inherent intelligence of Nobelists, right?

**SHOCKLEY:** I think these reports suggest that sperm recipients may be hoodwinked into thinking that genius babies are guaranteed. Dogmatism won a KO decision over science in one report suggesting that a child's mental endowment would be *completely* uninfluenced by the father's own mental powers. The Dark Ages dogmatism suggested by these reports would, if transferred from man to horses, amount to saying that breeders of race horses have all been hoodwinked when paying the stud fees demanded for Kentucky Derby winners.

**PLAYBOY:** Yes, the general reaction of the press to the whole idea of "intelligent sperm" has been devastatingly negative. Columnist Ellen Goodman accused you of conceit and we're wondering: Is it possible you're on an ego trip, trying to play superstud, just to get the resulting publicity?

**SHOCKLEY:** That comment raises two issues. I'll dispose of the ego-trip aspect first. After Phil Donahue introduced me to his audience a few months ago, I thanked him for not bringing up the superman issue. To put it in perspective, I rose to my full 5'6" height, removed my jacket, turned a full circle and explained that a superman description would need to be expressed as "superman plus 20 pounds."

**PLAYBOY:** That's a nice PR gimmick, but it doesn't answer the question. The fact is, this revelation of your participation in the sperm bank has brought you a great deal of publicity. It seems to us you may have planned it that way.

**SHOCKLEY:** No, I acted on the spur of the moment in making the donation. But I deliberated and consulted, as you know, before deciding to identify myself as a sperm-bank donor. Furthermore, I insisted that the original sperm-bank story in the *L.A. Times* quote me as saying that I didn't think of myself as the perfect human being or the ideal donor, and also that, although I supported Graham's positive eugenics aim of more people at the top of the population, my own focus is on reducing the misery at the bottom. By these statements, I laid a foundation for emphasizing the dysgenic threat when subsequently interviewed about the sperm bank. The results have been rewarding to me.

**PLAYBOY:** Why is it so important to you to talk about the so-called bottom of the population? And what people are at the bottom, in your opinion?

**SHOCKLEY:** It's important to me because of the tragedy at the bottom end of the population, which is particularly severe for the blacks, but also probably occurs for the *chicano* population—maybe to a comparable degree—though I am not as conversant with the *chicano* case. The same thing probably occurs for some Appalachian whites. What I'm talking about here is poverty, crime, unemployment and a host of other human miseries that impose heavy burdens on society and bear most heavily on the babies who are born into suffering as a result of this misery.

**PLAYBOY:** What about these so-called human-quality problems? You have repeatedly said that the quality of the human race is declining in this country because "society is not doing enough research into the genetic factors that make people what they are." What caused you to make that observation?

**SHOCKLEY:** One key incident in 1963

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*"This teenager was one of  
17 children born to a woman  
whose I.Q. was 55. I asked  
myself what people I knew  
who had families that large.  
I could think of none."*

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stands out. It involved a San Francisco delicatessen proprietor who was blinded, or nearly blinded, by an acid-throwing teenager with an I.Q. of 65. This teenager was one of 17 children born to a woman whose I.Q. was 55. I asked myself what people I knew who had families that large. I could think of none. Apparently, these large families were those of people who were not making it in our society, so that those with the least intelligence were having the most children. The more I talked to people about this, the more alarmed I became. No one was willing to look at this subject objectively, dispassionately. This is what drew me into the whole question of dysgenics, or retrogressive evolution.

**PLAYBOY:** Why focus on some acid-throwing teenager who happens to be black? The majority of mass murderers in this country have been white and not all have been low-I.Q. morons. Hitler apparently had a high I.Q. What does that suggest to you?

**SHOCKLEY:** It suggests that any trait, either extremely good or extremely bad, would be highly enhanced by a high

I.Q., because the individual having that high I.Q. would possess general abilities to get things done.

**PLAYBOY:** But it seems to us you emphasize that anecdote about the black teenager more than any other. Why?

**SHOCKLEY:** He was in California at the time, a time when I was involved in considering the question of whether the abortion laws should have been liberalized. He came from a rather large family of relatively ineffective people. His crime made the news, of course, and my attention was drawn toward him as an example of problem makers' multiplying faster than problem solvers. It was simply an accidental circumstance that brought this into focus for me.

**PLAYBOY:** All right, let's define dysgenics.

**SHOCKLEY:** It's an important word to get into the vocabulary of the public. Dysgenics is evolution without progress, retrogressive evolution, which decreases the quality of the species. It is caused by the excessive reproduction of the genetically disadvantaged. In 1967, in *Sex Versus Civilization*, demographer Elmer Pendell proposed that civilizations decline because problem makers multiply in greater percentage than problem solvers. This is what I fear is happening to intelligence in our society.

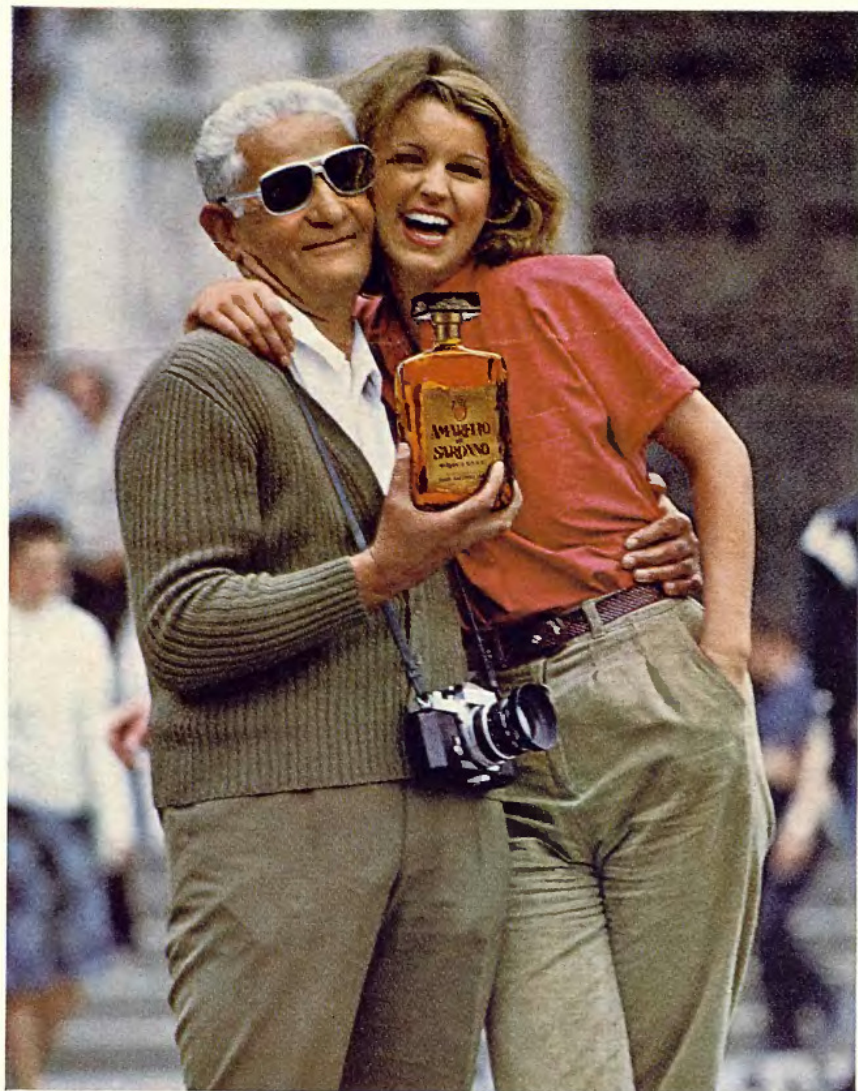
**PLAYBOY:** Is that just your opinion or do you have facts to support it?

**SHOCKLEY:** The 17 children of the low-I.Q. mother are one example. The fact that she was black warns that the dysgenic threat is most severe for blacks, and statistics from the 1970 census back up this conclusion. When socioeconomic classes are listed, college graduates come near the top and rural farm families near the bottom. Black rural farm women average 5.4 children, nearly three times as many as the 1.9 for black women college graduates. Now, on the average, the woman who graduates from college has a better brain, for hereditary and genetic reasons—one more suited to education—than does the rural farm woman. And 1.9 children per woman is not enough to maintain that part of the population. It looks as if the numbers of problem solvers of the black minority may be decreasing. As for the problem makers, I have heard at least two anecdotal stories from responsible observers about women who have said they would have babies to increase their relief income. But I have found no good published evaluation of this matter. One sociologist has written that the percent of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) that goes to parents whose parents in their turn were AFDC recipients has doubled twice from five to ten to 20 percent in the past 20 years. If something doubles every ten years for a century, it will become 1000 times larger—an alarming prospect.

**PLAYBOY:** But the comparatively rapid



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social advancement of blacks during the 25 years since the Brown desegregation decision, when some of the artificial environmental barriers that impeded progress were removed, proves the falsity of your dysgenic analysis.

**SHOCKLEY:** Blacks have caught up with whites to a substantial degree during that time. But, as Dr. Arthur R. Jensen's new book documents, the incidence of mental retardation for black children in school has not decreased as it should if theories about better education due to integration were working out. The socioeconomic gains of blacks compared with whites eliminated about one third of the deficit in family incomes.

**PLAYBOY:** That's not true. The gap in incomes between blacks and whites has actually grown because of inflation's effect on the dollar.

**SHOCKLEY:** My analysis used what I have called an offset method based on percentages of black and white families in matched income ranges. The dollar values are not used. What I find is that the gains all occurred between 1955 and 1969 and after that, progress stopped. Is dysgenics involved? It's something to worry about.

**PLAYBOY:** Isn't the answer to this to spend more for remedial education and job training, instead of conjuring up the "dysgenic threat"?

**SHOCKLEY:** If environmental efforts now being put forth are not at an optimum level, they should be increased. But that emphasis should not continue to prevent research on genetic factors. If genetic factors affecting the I.Q. or motivation are involved, then future taxpayers will suffer from this dysgenic trend. But those who will suffer most are the babies born to these families—babies who may be so genetically disadvantaged that they can't escape from these bad environments. In effect, they are genetically enslaved to a life of frustration. A question that might well be asked is, for example, Are fertility rates, like the 5.4 children for rural black farm women, even higher in city slums? I have not found a penetrating study on what may be the root cause of urban decay. Nobly motivated humanitarianism that prevents objective studies' being done on these tragic matters, which affect whites as well as blacks, is humanitarianism that has gone berserk. One question that I've mentioned is whether welfare mothers have babies to increase their income. Berserk humanitarianism may put taboos on such research. I once asked an investigative reporter to do some research on this subject through the Welfare Department. He was unable to complete his report due to the Welfare Department's uncooperative efforts. They evidently felt this was a taboo subject.

**PLAYBOY:** But the bulk of evidence you and others bring to bear on this subject

of black intellectual inferiority comes from I.Q. testing, does it not? And isn't it a known fact that the black minority in this country has suffered from years of social neglect, abuse and poverty? All of which is reason enough to expect low performances on I.Q. tests.

**SHOCKLEY:** But these environmental deficits don't explain the details of the tragedy. One of the standard erroneous representations about my position is: "Dr. Shockley says Negroes have lower scores on I.Q. tests and therefore are racially inferior." That is an entirely inaccurate statement, setting up a straw man that can easily be knocked down. My opinion is best represented in this statement: My research leads me inescapably to the opinion that the major cause for the American Negroes' intellectual and social deficits is hereditary and racially genetic in origin and thus not remediable to a major degree by practical improvements in environment. That statement is based upon research that puts together a whole pattern of things.

One example concerns *components* of the I.Q. test and not simply the total

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*"The incidence of mental retardation for black children has not decreased as it should if theories about better education due to integration were working out."*

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scores. A significant example is supplied by studies done under the direction of Gerald Lesser at Harvard. He went into the New York school system and tested students who were white, black, Chinese, Puerto Rican and Jewish. His I.Q. test was divided into four components. The most striking findings, from the point of view of my interests, concern the component of the test on which almost all sociologists would say that blacks would perform worst because of cultural disadvantages; namely, the verbal part. Actually, the verbal component turns out to be the part on which black children score highest. On the other hand, the components that involve analytical reasoning—even things that involve day-to-day reasoning, like how many pennies are in a nickel—on those things, the blacks are more retarded than whites of their age group. In other tests, this same pattern of retardation has been borne out. In other words, black children don't have much comparative trouble with questions like, Who discovered

America? and Who wrote *Romeo and Juliet*? But they do have problems with things like, Which way is west? and How many days are in a week?

**PLAYBOY:** In other words, things that require noegenetic reasoning are more troublesome for blacks. Is that what you're saying?

**SHOCKLEY:** What does noegenetic mean?

**PLAYBOY:** It's a term developed by Charles Spearman that refers to the application of eductive or inductive reasoning.

**SHOCKLEY:** You mean something that involves the use of cognitive skills?

**PLAYBOY:** Right.

**SHOCKLEY:** Yes, these tend to be more troublesome. Another kind of test stands out in my mind, and this one has been documented by Jensen in one of his books. It's a test of memorization ability done on white and black children in the California schools. The child is shown a set of 20 familiar objects, such as a ball, a book, a brush, a toy car—one at a time. Then the child tries to recall as many as possible. This is called a free-recall test. At this stage of the test, there is no difference between the black and white children on performance. By the fifth time the children went through this test, it became obvious that the white children were remembering better. The reason for their better performance was this: The white children, as the test series progressed, were mentally classifying the items into a group of balls, a group of books, and so on, as an aid to memorization. Black children weren't nearly as apt to do this or to do as good a job at it as were whites.

**PLAYBOY:** You said these items were common to the children's environments. Were they two separate groups of items, one for black children and one for white children?

**SHOCKLEY:** In Jensen's California experiment, they were objects that are common both to Richmond, California, and to Berkeley.

**PLAYBOY:** But that assumes that the white children and the black children in that part of California live in the same environment.

**SHOCKLEY:** Still, the point is that on the first few rounds of the test, the two racial groups showed negligible differences in the performance. Hence, one concludes that the items were equally familiar to both groups. Otherwise, why should the performance have been so nearly equal?

**PLAYBOY:** You conclude, then, that—

**SHOCKLEY:** That the difference in performance is in the processing of the information, which requires cognitive skill, rather than in the familiarity of the items.

**PLAYBOY:** The subject of the relevancy of I.Q. testing has been debated endlessly and may never be resolved. But getting back to this dysgenic-threat thesis

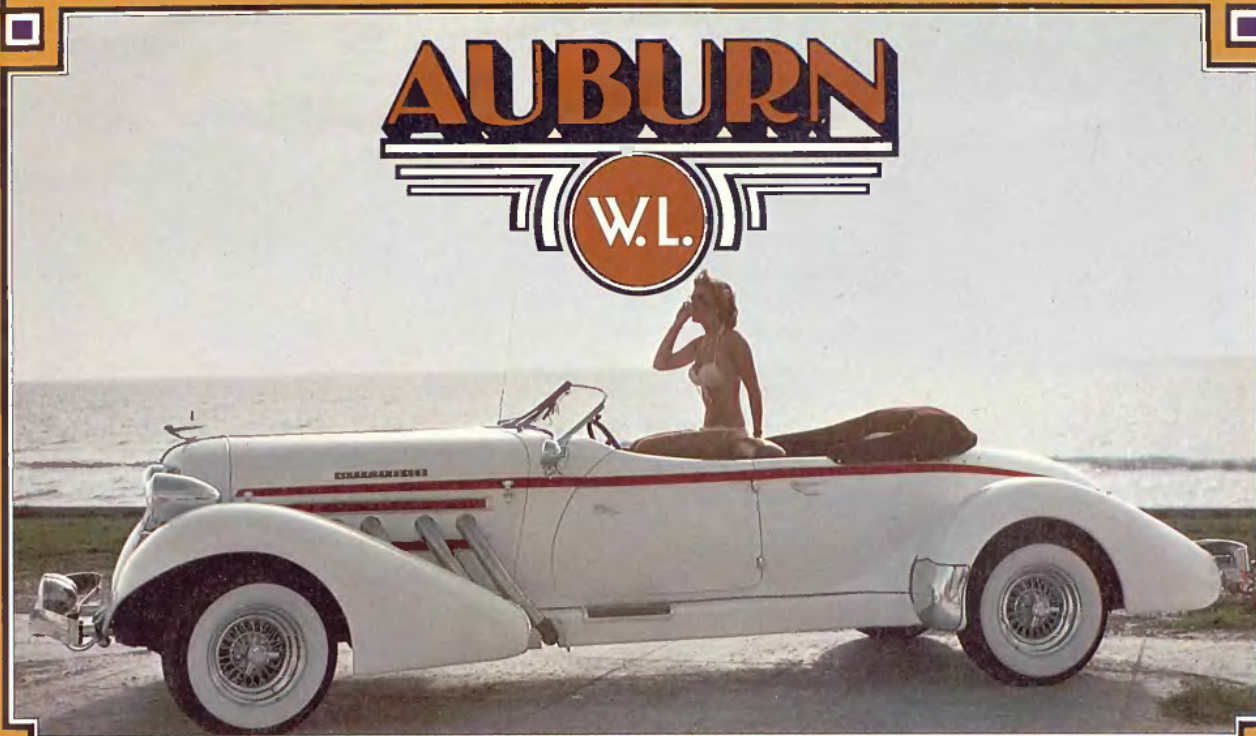


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of yours, it's fair to point out that your theories have been aimed for the most part at black Americans, whom you have labeled genetically inferior as a group. In fact, you called this "The National Negro Tragedy." What is your motive in using such inflammatory terms?

**SHOCKLEY:** I don't know where you got that National Negro Tragedy phrase. It's not mine and doesn't convey my position. The phrase that I now use is The Tragedy for American Negroes. My emphasis is on the tragedy for the Negroes themselves arising from their greater per-capita representation in statistics for poverty, welfare, educational failure and crimes. The relief burden related to these statistics could be called a National Negro Tragedy if the intent is to focus upon the concerns of tax-paying citizens. But that is an unfair focus. I believe society has a moral obligation to diagnose the tragedy for American Negroes of their statistical I.Q. deficit. Furthermore, this is a worldwide tragedy, and in my opinion, the evidence is unmistakable that there is a basic, across-the-board genetic disadvantage in terms of capacity to develop intelligence and build societies on the part of the Negro races throughout the world.

**PLAYBOY:** Wait a minute. Let's boil that down a bit. At the nub of what you're saying is the belief that blacks are inferior, right?

**SHOCKLEY:** If you, personally, were representative of the Negro population as a whole, rather than belonging to Lord knows how high a top-level fraction of it, then we wouldn't have these troubles. There are many individual exceptions, of course, as I have said many times. What disturbs me most about this situation is that black people are going to suffer most because of their disadvantages. The real losers are going to be the genetically disadvantaged babies. Their disadvantages result from what I've tried to emphasize by calling it an unfair shake from a badly loaded parental genetic dice cup.

**PLAYBOY:** That's colorful, but what does it mean?

**SHOCKLEY:** Actually, it's more as if the baby got a genetic five-card poker hand that was drawn not from a full deck but from a ten-card deck made up of the two hands holding the genetic cards of the parents. If both parents had high hands, for example, each containing four of a kind, the chance of the baby's getting two pairs or, even better, a full house, would be pretty good and the worst possible draw would be one pair. This oversimplified genetic explanation suggests how high-I.Q. parents will tend to produce not-quite-so-high-I.Q. children, while sometimes produc-

ing a dumb one. Sometimes parents blame themselves when one child falls far below his sibling in making grades. Actually, genetic models predict that in about ten percent of all two-child families, the I.Q.s of the children will differ by 20 I.Q. points or more. Knowledge of this fact might keep some parents from trying to push the slower child beyond his capacity, which may do the child far more harm than good. At the other extreme, if the parental ten-card deck is composed of two worthless four-card flushes, both in the same suit, one child in 20 would have a good chance of being a high-value flush. This suggests how a single, highly gifted child may show up in a large family even though all the other children are below average.

**PLAYBOY:** If such a tragedy exists—and you yourself have pointed out that only 50 percent of the people you've talked with will admit that there is a tragedy for American blacks—doesn't it have as much to do with the white power structure in this country as anything else? The "tragedy" could not exist in a vacuum.

**SHOCKLEY:** Let me put my thoughts in

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*"I believe society has a moral obligation to diagnose the tragedy for American Negroes of their statistical I.Q. deficit."*

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perspective. A similar sort of tragedy certainly exists in Africa in terms of famine areas where planning has been inadequate. One aspect of the tragedy in America, which seems to me to be hard to blame on the white power structure, is the tragedy of the black spouse-killing-spouse homicide rate. If this is caused by frustration due to the belief that blacks have been treated unfairly—as the general prevailing sociological position would inculcate anyone who listens to it—then, certainly, widespread resentment could exist and more instability could lead to marital quarrels. My research on statistics shows that the spouse-killing-spouse mortality rate is about 13 times higher per capita for the blacks than for whites. I don't believe the same thing occurred with the American Orientals at the time the power structure was saying that they couldn't buy houses in the same area as other people in California, back during World War Two.

**PLAYBOY:** Certainly, you're not comparing the history of Oriental Americans with that of black Americans. Blacks

have been exploited in America for generations.

**SHOCKLEY:** I'm not convinced that it takes even one generation to adapt to changes from situations that have lasted for many generations. I know a man—an Aztec Indian—whose family had been out of touch with white civilization for, I think, 100 or 200 years. This fellow had never had any experience with things that dealt with modern technology and his father had been enslaved. He came from a culture of blow-gun and Stone Age level, isolated from modern civilization. He didn't enter school until the age of ten, yet at 21 he had acquired an electrical-engineering B.S. and a physics M.S. His brother is a successful journalist in Mexico City. This example supports my conviction that fantastic cultural deficits can be overcome in a fraction of one generation by individuals with outstanding inherent determination and intelligence.

**PLAYBOY:** You're comparing an anecdotal story of an Aztec Indian with a whole race of people and saying the Aztec case proves a genetic disability on the part of blacks. Would you agree that there are similar individuals in the black community who have overcome environmental handicaps? Many, in fact?

**SHOCKLEY:** Absolutely. And these people have certainly existed in our society for at least a century.

**PLAYBOY:** If you agree, how does that fit with your view of blacks as a genetically enslaved race?

**SHOCKLEY:** My point is, the environment and the discrimination have not stopped some blacks who have the ability from progressing, so I don't see why it is necessarily stopping all the rest.

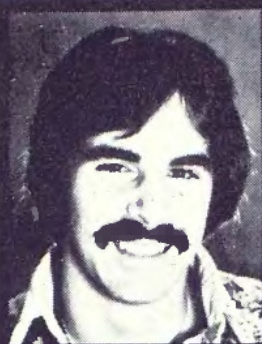
**PLAYBOY:** Very interesting. But what does that have to do with the relationship between the badly loaded genetic dice cup and what you call the American Negro Tragedy?

**SHOCKLEY:** Tragedy for American Negroes, if you please. The relationship is that in some cases the cards are stacked or the dice are loaded, so to speak, so that the likelihood of drawing really good genes for intelligence and other behavioral traits is much smaller for some groups of people than for others. This is patently unfair. These people end up at the bottom rungs of the socioeconomic ladder through no fault of their own. This is the fate that is now befalling a disproportionately large fraction of the black minority. This fate will become worse if dysgenic effects result from the 5.4-to-1.9 ratio found in the 1970 census.

**PLAYBOY:** In what way is this a tragedy for all blacks, if these dysgenic conditions affect only the low-income end of the black population?

**SHOCKLEY:** The tragic disadvantages of those at the low end probably act as a





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disadvantage to those at the high end because the color-coding effect comes in. People may then react to all blacks unfavorably as a result of some experience with those at the low end of the scale.

**PLAYBOY:** But that has nothing to do with objective science.

**SHOCKLEY:** That's right. One might respond subjectively to all blacks in just the same way that some people believe that all red-headed people are emotionally volatile.

**PLAYBOY:** That's called prejudice, isn't it?

**SHOCKLEY:** Well, it may or may not be. Perhaps one has intuitively picked up something about red-headed people that is perfectly sound. In the case of the black situation, carrying the reactions one might have to black street-gang types over to black academic-faculty types would be a prejudice.

**PLAYBOY:** How do you feel about prejudice?

**SHOCKLEY:** Prejudice that is not supported by strong facts is both illogical and not in accordance with truth. The general principle that truth is a good thing applies here. Some things that are called prejudice, which are based on sound statistics, really shouldn't be called prejudice.

**PLAYBOY:** Give us an example of that in the context of our discussion.

**SHOCKLEY:** It might be easier to think in terms of breeds of dogs. There are some breeds that are temperamental, unreliable, and so on. One might then regard such a breed in a somewhat less favorable light than other dogs. Now, some of the business prejudices against blacks, the pragmatic man-in-the-street prejudices, are not incorrect. The man in the street has had experience and knows what to expect from blacks in business. If one were to randomly pick ten blacks and ten whites and try to employ them in the same kinds of things, the whites would consistently perform better than the blacks.

**PLAYBOY:** Of course. The majority of whites have better access to education, influence, money and other environmental elements that help ensure success in our society.

**SHOCKLEY:** Well, I've already said that I've been led inescapably to the conclusion that these problems are more related to genetics than to environment.

**PLAYBOY:** Earlier, you mentioned Africa and said this dysgenic threat was a world-wide problem. You believe it affects all Negroids, regardless of their environment?

**SHOCKLEY:** I put my chief emphasis on the tragedy for American Negroes. The book *Race and Modern Science* contains the best study I've seen on blacks outside this country. In his chapter, Stanley Porteus, a Hawaiian psychologist, describes how he and his colleagues used a maze test on tribes in





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Africa and Australia. They found the natives to be intrigued and challenged by the test. They tested various tribes and found very big differences among them in performance. Some Rhodesian tribes—Ndaou and Wakaranga—were more advanced, while some of the Bushmen were at the low end. From the data, which are given in mental-age equivalents for these tribes, I conclude that the Bushmen were down around an I.Q. of 50 and the others are up to somewhere around 80. None came closer than ten I.Q. points of my estimate of about 90 I.Q. for California Negroes.

**PLAYBOY:** Few scientists working in the fields of genetics, anthropology or psychology agree with you. Many of them have said that your theories are blatantly racist.

**SHOCKLEY:** Let me point out that this attitude did not exist at the turn of the century. Many eminent and thoughtful scholars expressed the same ideas that I am attacked for. Alexander Graham Bell wrote a pamphlet on improving the human race. Stanford's revered president David Starr Jordan stressed the same theme in a book, *The Blood of the Nation*. The situation had changed by 1962, when eminent anthropologist Carleton Coon proposed in a book that Negroes were substantially behind whites on an evolutionary scale and said that he would discuss brain differences in his next book. In the next book, he retracted his offer because of pressure put on him. Coon has told me that these attacks undermined his health and led to early retirement from Harvard. This suppression of inquiry on matters related to dysgenics shows up in book publishing. Under the subject "eugenics," the Stanford library card file has many acquisitions from 1900 to 1930 and practically none from 1930 to now.

**PLAYBOY:** You'll have to admit that eugenics is widely held in disrepute and is barely a legitimate science. You won your Nobel Prize for your work that led to development of the transistor. Why should anyone listen to a person who's a Nobel Prize winner in physics on the subject of genetics?

**SHOCKLEY:** There is an old saying: Wisdom from the mouths of babes.

**PLAYBOY:** Babe? At 70?

**SHOCKLEY:** Wisdom from the mouths of babes means that occasionally, truths can come from an unlikely source. This is like the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* or some other profound mathematics book being produced by monkeys typing in the British Museum. If there seems to be merit in the things that are expressed, one had better look at them.

**PLAYBOY:** The likelihood of a monkey typing the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*—especially when he knows more about bananas than about encyclopedias—is

infinitesimally small.

**SHOCKLEY:** If you ask, Why should anybody listen to someone? well, why should anyone have listened to Einstein when there were no relativists at the time?

**PLAYBOY:** That's not the first time you've mentioned Einstein in comparison to yourself. Einstein is considered a genius. Are you a genius, in your opinion?

**SHOCKLEY:** Insofar as genius may be sweat and effort, perhaps. I would not like to try to define exactly what a genius is or to say that I necessarily belong to that class. Certainly, there have been very great technological developments that have followed from very simple observations that anyone might have made if he had been there at the time. My track record is definitely somewhat better than that. But in terms of people such as Einstein, Newton and Maxwell, I would say they belong to a higher level of genius. The contributions I have made are more technological.

**PLAYBOY:** And now your contributions to this new field of eugenics have brought you notoriety and censure from

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*"The mere fact that I had mentioned both Negroes and I.Q. in the same paragraph led my critics to label me a racist."*

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some of your academic colleagues. How have you had to deal with suppression of your ideas?

**SHOCKLEY:** I was put on notice very early that few would take kindly to my raising questions that are usually swept under the rug. My interview "Is Quality of U.S. Population Declining?" was published back in 1965. It was reprinted in the Stanford Medical School alumni journal. Stanford's "faculty, the department of genetics" objected with a letter to the editor brandishing the words malice, mischief and myopic against me. An eminent friend of mine in the National Academy of Sciences explained to me that the mere fact that I had mentioned both Negroes and I.Q. in one and the same paragraph led my critics to label me a racist. The geneticists' beautifully and forcefully written letter pained me greatly when I first read it. Since then, I have enjoyed reading it aloud to friends, with rhetorical flourishes, preferably over cocktails, so as to dramatize its Madison Avenue merits. My presentations have been suppressed many times by disruptions or cancellations, sometimes only a day or

so before I would have left home to keep the engagement.

**PLAYBOY:** Didn't common sense tell you that linking an entire race—black, white or green, for that matter—to intellectual inferiority would be opposed as racist by many people? And that it would invite censorship?

**SHOCKLEY:** The genetics-faculty letter did more than any other thing to make me face up to dealing with the racial issue. A related incident occurred earlier, when I was preparing a paper that didn't deal with racial questions at all but simply with mental retardation, heredity and thoughts stimulated by the story of the acid-throwing teenager. While preparing my lecture, I questioned one of my fellow Nobel laureates about the possibility of the world-wide dysgenic threat. I proposed to him that human genetic quality—almost certainly definable to some meaningful degree—was declining. His responses were vague, unclear. I finally said, "I think what you're saying is that this question is so bad you will not try to answer it." He agreed with that interpretation. I thought that was a deplorable attitude to take.

**PLAYBOY:** In your own mind, how do you explain the fact that so many people disagree with your theories about black genetic inferiority?

**SHOCKLEY:** I think that two basic premises underly the rejection of the concept of genetic inferiority of humans, no matter whether the concept is applied to individuals or to races. One is the American ideal that stems from the "created equal" phrase in the Declaration of Independence. That phrase was intended to apply to social rights but is popularly misinterpreted as equality in genetic endowment. This is biologically ridiculous. It asserts that man alone, of all species of mammals, is made up of individuals all genetically equal—equal at least in potential for socioeconomic success in our society. The second premise is what I have labeled the Apple-of-God's-Eye Obsession, AGEO for short. In Galileo's day, this obsession held that God must have put the Garden of Eden at the center of the universe. Galileo's conclusion that the earth moved around the sun was an intolerable heresy. Darwin's evolutionary theory that man was a descendant of primates was a comparable heresy. The version of AGEO that blocks objectivity about racial or dysgenic questions combines these two premises. AGEO adherents hold that God created all mankind with equal dignity and equal potential, and that God could not have done anything else. These views are so widely held and accepted that they have set up taboos that prevent research. This is an example of berserk humanitarianism. As a result, there are many scientists who agree with



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me but dare not speak out—dare not “come out of the closet,” as one psychometrician has told me.

**PLAYBOY:** Let's assume that the dysgenics threat is real and the quality of the human race is declining. What would you propose as a solution?

**SHOCKLEY:** I proposed a thinking exercise about ten years ago called the Voluntary Sterilization Bonus Plan. What it does is to offer people who may be carrying genes that are defective, including those for intelligence, a bonus for voluntarily agreeing to be sterilized.

**PLAYBOY:** That sounds vaguely familiar to us. Does it remind you of any particular mass movement within the past 40 years?

**SHOCKLEY:** Forty years takes us back to Hitler's concentration camps and gas chambers. Your question has often come to me from lecture audiences in the form, “You're talking about eugenics. That's what Hitler tried, isn't it?” Incidentally, during the war against the Nazis, I did operations research and was awarded the Medal for Merit with a citation signed by President Truman. The real lesson from Nazi history is that the First Amendment, which permitted uncovering Watergate, is the best guard against totalitarian abuses. The Hitler reference is one standard question often used to shut off discussion of eugenics or antidysgenics. A second, similar question is: “What's the definition of the perfect man?” And a third question is: “When the committee to define the perfect man is set up, how can I make sure to be appointed to it?” If one accepts that any conceivable remedy for dysgenics would be worse than the illness, then there would be little purpose in diagnosing the tragedy we've been discussing, except as an intellectual parlor game.

**PLAYBOY:** OK, that's fair. How would your Voluntary Sterilization Bonus Plan work?

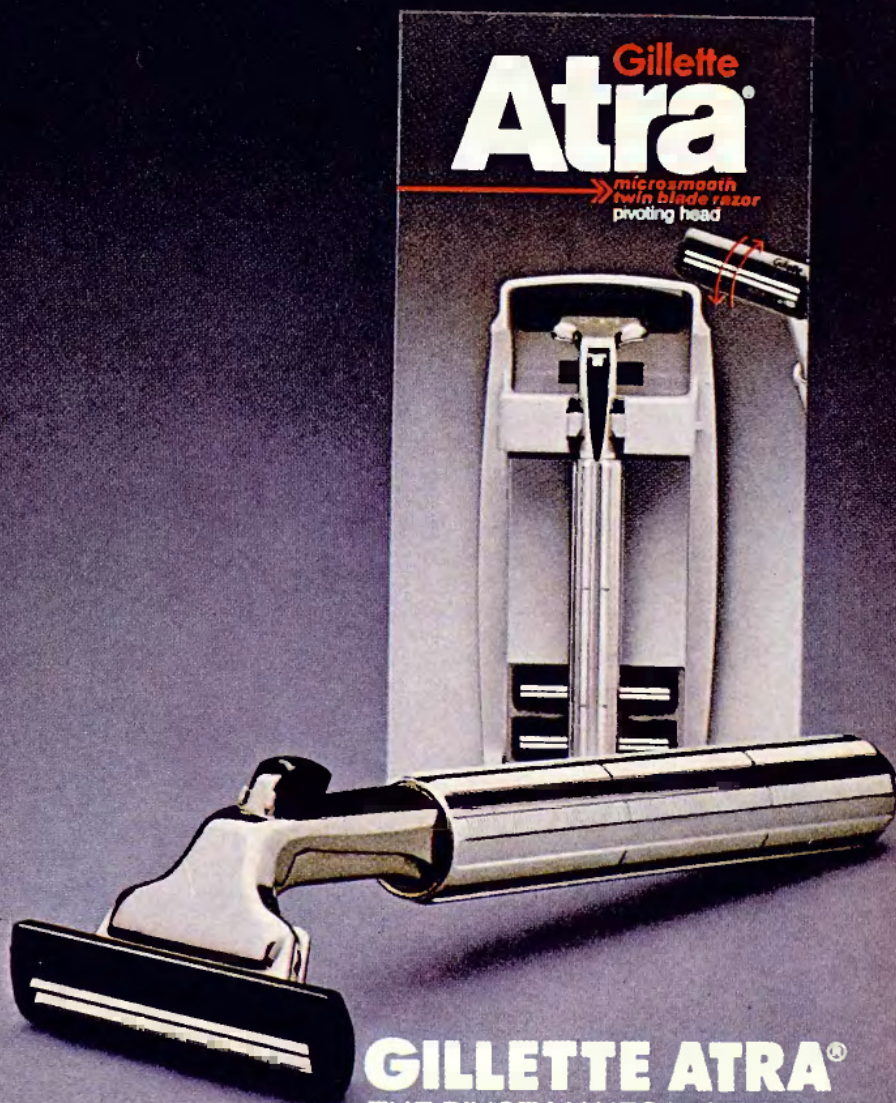
**SHOCKLEY:** Every time I have discussed the Voluntary Sterilization Bonus Plan, I have described it carefully as a *thinking exercise* rather than as a legislative proposal. It shows that we don't have to define what the perfect man is and that no authority is deciding who can have children. It's a voluntary choice by the people themselves. It does not require Hitler's concentration camps. There is an inducement, but nevertheless, its acceptance is voluntary. The amount of the cash bonus would vary. In some cases, it would be zero. For example, income-tax payers, who tend to be somewhat successful already in society, would get no bonus. All others, regardless of sex, race or welfare status, would be offered a bonus that would depend upon best scientific estimates of any genetically carried disabilities that they might have. Those would include



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diabetes, epilepsy, hemophilia, Huntington's chorea and other genetically transmitted illnesses. A dysgenic increase of these afflictions is probably now occurring, owing to advances in medicine that overcome evolution's pruning actions. There would also be bonuses for lower-than-average I.Q.s.

**PLAYBOY:** A lot of people are affected by those so-called undesirable genetic traits that might be passed on from one generation to another. Do you have any of those traits that you might pass on yourself?

**SHOCKLEY:** I am not aware of any. No hemophilia, no epilepsy, no Huntington's chorea, no diabetes.

**PLAYBOY:** So nothing that you are aware of that would be passed on to a child through the sperm-bank program?

**SHOCKLEY:** I was short one tooth on the lower jaw, and I think maybe one wisdom tooth. I'm not sure those are real disadvantages.

**PLAYBOY:** How much money would those people receive for agreeing to sacrifice their right to have children?

**SHOCKLEY:** My thinking exercise proposes a figure of \$1000 for every I.Q. point below 100. That may sound high, but \$30,000 put into a trust for a 70-I.Q. moron, who might otherwise produce 20 children, might make the plan very profitable to the taxpayer. If three of these hypothetical children ended up in institutions for the mentally retarded for life, it might cost the taxpayers nearly \$300,000 to take care of them. Furthermore, if we offered ten percent of the bonus in spot cash, it might stimulate our native American genius for entrepreneurship.

**PLAYBOY:** And that doesn't strike you as playing God?

**SHOCKLEY:** Now, that's one discussion-stopping question I overlooked when you brought up Hitler's eugenics. I don't think proposing the V.S.B.P., or even giving it a test, is playing God. I argue that if God made man, including his brain, in God's image, He intended man to be a problem solver. I have talked about the V.S.B.P. many times and haven't found anything really wrong with it—except for one most obvious flaw that I leave in as a thinking exercise.

**PLAYBOY:** What is that?

**SHOCKLEY:** Finding the flaw is *your* thinking exercise. Incidentally, others besides myself have independently invented very similar plans.

**PLAYBOY:** Are you going to tell us who those others are? Or is that another thinking exercise?

**SHOCKLEY:** The earliest was iconoclast H. L. Mencken in the Thirties. Two others won Nobel Prizes: Francis Crick for double-helix, genetic-code research, and Archer Martin for a chemical invention. In a 1974 lecture, Martin pro-

posed that "by simply giving a bonus of sufficient size to both men and women to get themselves sterilized, a desirable differential fertility would result." He also suggested a bonus for more children to those who had "distinguished themselves." I think if funds could be found and law violations avoided, I would like to see a trial run of the V.S.B.P. It might prove to be a sound idea.

**PLAYBOY:** The earliest was actually Margaret Sanger in 1926. And are you aware of the Chinese government's bonus plan that rewards people for having one child but punishes them for having three or more?

**SHOCKLEY:** Only vaguely. Some years ago, I tried to get some students to look at the literature on this. All we found at that time were some very broad sweeping statements of objectives of the Chinese government, but nothing indicating that anything was actually going on. I've heard recently about the program you mentioned, but without knowing more about the statistics and how it worked, and how the Chinese people responded to it, I wouldn't want to speculate on how effectively this might

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*"I think sterilization programs for the mentally retarded have been very unjustly derogated."*

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work. There is one feature about it that I don't like, which isn't present in the Voluntary Sterilization Bonus Plan. If you start penalizing a family with two children because they have a third child, you are penalizing the first two children, which is certainly unjust to the children, who don't share any responsibility for the situation. On the other hand, if the penalties are severe enough, then this inhumane aspect is a substitution for nature's own pruning efforts that existed in evolution. Carried to that extreme, parents who fail to take the proper precautions, and their families, are less likely to survive. But generally, I don't think this is any more effective than the Voluntary Sterilization Bonus Plan, and I think the V.S.B.P. would be more humane.

**PLAYBOY:** Several states in the South have sterilization programs for those who are mentally retarded or otherwise judged unfit by society. Many of those programs call for forced sterilization. What do you think about them?

**SHOCKLEY:** I think that they have been very unjustly derogated. Objections to these programs are based on the same

berserk humanitarian beliefs and Dark Ages dogma that refuse to accept the fact that people may be created very unequal and may obey breeding laws that are similar to those of animals. I remember one man asking me if I favored sterilization of the retarded and then proceeded to say that he had a loving, compassionate retarded daughter and he didn't see why she shouldn't have children. To my way of thinking, this is a clear case of humanitarianism gone berserk. Why should a child be brought into the world under those adverse genetic conditions just to fulfill the compassionate and warm feelings of the retarded mother, in this case?

**PLAYBOY:** What bothers many people is the fact that *your* thinking exercise seems aimed at blacks in particular. That's why the Nazi parallel has been raised by those who are normally dispassionate and detached in these matters. Your theories amount to scientific genocide of the black race.

**SHOCKLEY:** What I am intending to do is reduce human misery for the people involved. And this proposal cuts across all racial and ethnic-group lines. Certainly, in terms of numbers, more whites than blacks would be involved, though the percentages for black retardation are higher. As to the Nazi reference, I think everyone agrees that their methods were profoundly inhumane. I believe that true humanitarianism extends further than the Christian version of the golden rule of "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." I feel that true humanitarianism is best expressed by Jainism: "In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self." In other words, true humanitarianism is concerned with even nonhuman forms of life.

Nobel laureate Albert Schweitzer carried this to the extreme in acting on his principle of reverence for life by trying to avoid stepping on insects and transplanting weeds and things of that nature. But I believe he drew the line at withholding antibiotics from a sick patient because of his reverence for the life of bacteria. Incidentally, Schweitzer spent the last part of his life running a hospital for blacks in Africa. He wrote, "With regard to the Negroes, then, I have coined the formula: 'I am your brother, it is true, but your elder brother.'" For this, Schweitzer has been called racist. I think that a logical, true humanitarianism replaces Schweitzer's reverence for life with concern for the memories of emotions stored in the neurological systems of one's fellow creatures. The Nazis had no regard for concerns like these.

**PLAYBOY:** And you, unlike the Nazis, are concerned with the feelings of your fellow creatures?





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**SHOCKLEY:** Yes.

**PLAYBOY:** Are you familiar with Kipling's philosophy about the white man's burden?

**SHOCKLEY:** In a general way. Kipling applied this to India, did he not?

**PLAYBOY:** No, to the Philippines, but it has been more widely applied to white paternalism toward all Third World people.

**SHOCKLEY:** It would be interesting to know how the general welfare in India actually fared before and after the British occupation there.

**PLAYBOY:** We're asking because your Jainist attitudes seem like warmed-over paternalism toward blacks. That quote from Schweitzer, in particular, reflects a rather odious view. Do you share Schweitzer's view of blacks? How does this reflect your humanitarianism?

**SHOCKLEY:** You've asked that question before. We do take seemingly brutal measures that we regard as humanitarian with certain animals. If we eliminate all predators of deer, they might become too numerous and run out of food and starve to death. I think a situation not too different from that might exist in some of the most primitive tribes, possibly the Bushmen tribes. If one were to build up a civilization around those people and try to fit them in, it's quite possible that it might lead to a very miserable situation for children of that society, who might then lead very tragic lives. I think society has a moral obligation to diagnose these conditions and take corrective measures.

**PLAYBOY:** Your use of animal imagery is clearly inappropriate. The fact is, it's incredibly conceited for one group of human beings to make life-and-death judgments like that over another group of human beings.

**SHOCKLEY:** But there's nothing novel about that. That's what we do on all sorts of food-and-drug laws. To protect people from their poor judgment in buying drugs. The extreme case is the law on cancer drugs. Even though the cancer cases may be essentially hopeless, and the patients may be relieved of some symptoms, the laws say certain drugs cannot be used to treat cancer. In California, the law even prescribes what kinds of treatments are legal for cancer. So there is no great novelty about Government's taking this view. Only when it comes to something like human quality and the possibility of doing research into it are there taboos and thought blocks erected.

**PLAYBOY:** Let's be clear on this: You are trying to balance your concern for human feelings on the one hand with your strongly held belief that something must be done to stop this genetic backsliding. Correct?

**SHOCKLEY:** Thanks. That's a good summary. But one aspect deserves special

emphasis. Human intelligence is one of the finest, most admirable products of evolution. Intelligence is necessary to ensure that humanitarian and compassionate endeavors do not go astray. We should respect intelligence and do all we can to prevent a dysgenic deterioration of it.

**PLAYBOY:** Geneticist Cyril Burt is a name you know quite well, since you used some of his data on identical-twin studies in your own work. That data has now been shown to have been falsified, or at least tampered with by Burt himself. Why did he deliberately skew the data?

**SHOCKLEY:** I'm not sure, and in any case, it is rather pointless speculation now. There seems to be little doubt that Burt's data did have a good deal of fakery in it.

**PLAYBOY:** Don't you think his fakery reflects on your own credibility? Here is a man who was a scientist, who evidently had no qualms about tampering with the truth. Whether or not his motives were political, we can't say. But doesn't that hurt your cause?

**SHOCKLEY:** Certainly. It's only human

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*"We take seemingly brutal measures that we regard as humanitarian with certain animals."*

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nature to make that kind of connection. That is why it is so important to have a better study on identical twins—one that is scrupulously objective—so as to refute all of these sorts of criticisms.

**PLAYBOY:** Are you now denouncing Burt's data?

**SHOCKLEY:** I would not use the word denounce. I would regard it as deplorable and sad, but it happened and it is unfortunate.

**PLAYBOY:** We're asking because Burt's data was central to at least part of your thesis.

**SHOCKLEY:** As well as other data. Plenty of others have dealt with Burt.

**PLAYBOY:** Let's discuss Arthur Jensen, the Berkeley psychologist you mentioned earlier. You've been referred to in the press occasionally as a disciple of Jensen, who advanced the theory that black children are less capable of level-two or abstract reasoning. He's been in the news recently as a result of a new book defending I.Q. testing. What's your relationship with him?

**SHOCKLEY:** We first met in 1966, when I spoke at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford. Jensen was a member of the audience.

He told me about Burt's work on the identical twins, which he had recently learned about. So that's where we became acquainted. I regarded him as a resource person, because he had been reading and writing in the field for decades and had a very scholarly approach. In his *Harvard Educational Review* article in 1969, he used words from parts of a paragraph I had written a year or so earlier having to do with the "dysgenic threat" and "genetic enslavement." But as far as I know, that's the only time that he has emphasized that particular point. Whereas I have put my emphasis on the area of social obligations and psychometric research. Jensen's focus has been much more on the tools for analysis and the scientific validity of the results.

**PLAYBOY:** But you basically share the same beliefs about blacks, don't you?

**SHOCKLEY:** I'm not aware of whether Jensen would agree with my main conclusions or not.

**PLAYBOY:** His book takes a rather hard line in favor of I.Q. tests. Jensen says I.Q. tests are not biased against any group of Americans for whom English is the first language. Is that an opinion you share?

**SHOCKLEY:** I would not want to give a blanket endorsement to that point of view without studying it more. I believe it might be possible to make an intelligent estimate of the degree to which environmental deprivation might actually be producing a bias in the intelligence scale for children. There may be a few general-information questions that show a specific cultural bias toward whites, such as, "What color is a ruby?" But I would postulate, without having looked into this in much detail, that questions like this one would make a difference of only two or three I.Q. points, at most.

**PLAYBOY:** Some I.Q. test questions are obvious cultural setups. One, in particular, that strikes us as invalid is, "If you see smoke coming from a neighbor's house, what should you do?" The answer to that question depends on how you were socialized, what your parents have told you to do, not on your general intelligence.

**SHOCKLEY:** There was one example of this kind of question brought up in CBS's program *The I.Q. Myth*. The question was, "If a child smaller than you hits you, what should you do about it?" This was supposed to be an example of a culturally biased question. As it turned out, this was one of the easier questions for blacks and certainly did not give evidence of being culturally biased.

**PLAYBOY:** The so-called correct answer to the question is, "Don't hit the child back, because he's smaller than you."

**SHOCKLEY:** I'm pretty sure that was not





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the only correct answer. There may have been several.

**PLAYBOY:** In any case, isn't the point that these answers reflect a value system based on white society and have nothing to do with intelligence?

**SHOCKLEY:** That doesn't stand up. The fact is that the blacks have acquired these values from their environments just as well as the white children have. Furthermore, they gave more correct answers on that question than they had on the average for all of the other questions.

**PLAYBOY:** What we're really talking about is the assimilation of values as reflected by an I.Q. test. Not necessarily the use of any cognitive skills. A child isn't stupid just because he answers that question another way.

**SHOCKLEY:** The question is whether the elements involved in developing cognitive skills are entirely cultural or whether there is a basic genetic predisposition. Many cases have been cited of gifted children who start learning how to read with very little stimulation whatever. This is obviously due to genetics. I don't see why the same sort of thing shouldn't apply to cognitive skills. It's the consistent pattern of observations like these that leads me to what I call my "inescapable opinion" about the black I.Q. deficit.

**PLAYBOY:** In the past, you have indicted the scientific community for not researching ideas about black genetic inferiority. We're not saying there is a problem as you've described it; but if there were, who would be responsible for investigating a genetically disadvantaged race?

**SHOCKLEY:** I would say the responsibility to do this kind of thinking rests primarily with those who are most intellectually capable of it. In terms of race, a disproportionate fraction of the white population can do this compared with the black population. So the white population is most responsible. But one particularly distressing circumstance is implied by news stories about intelligent blacks' moving into the suburbs to avoid ghetto or slum areas. Some reports indicate that they seem withdrawn rather completely from a concern for their less fortunate brethren. I have often said that the people who would be most important for me to try to reach are the black intellectuals of this country.

**PLAYBOY:** How can you expect to reach black intellectuals when your rhetoric smacks of racism?

**SHOCKLEY:** The smack of racism attributed to "my rhetoric" lies in the ears of the listeners. It is not present in my written or spoken words. The word racism carries with it a connotation of belief in the superiority of one's own race, plus fear and hatred of other races,



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and lacks any hint of humanitarian concern. What I am intending to do is to promote raceology, the study of racial problems and trends from a scientific point of view, and this approach is quite different from racism. One black student told me after we talked that he no longer thought of me as a Klansman or Hitler and that I had guts for facing up to a problem no one else would face.

**PLAYBOY:** That's nice, but you are still making qualitative judgments about an entire race, are you not? You believe quite simply that whites as a race are superior in intellect to blacks.

**SHOCKLEY:** Statistically, yes. But not in individual cases. Let me repeat that I always try to qualify statements about black racial I.Q. inferiority by saying that there are many blacks who are intellectually superior to many whites, and that the Caucasians are not necessarily the world's most superior race. In terms of the percentage of the population who can achieve eminence and make great contributions in science, American Jewish scientists are an outstanding fraction of the scientific community and on a per capita basis are represented, I think, at least ten times higher than is the population as a whole. American Orientals also are overrepresented.

**PLAYBOY:** Of course, Jews aren't a race. But doesn't the tightly knit social structure of Oriental and Jewish families have more to do with their success than genetics?

**SHOCKLEY:** What makes their social structure tightly knit?

**PLAYBOY:** Tradition, customs, learned experiences—their environment, in other words. But we're asking you.

**SHOCKLEY:** Why shouldn't it be genetics? It certainly is in the animal kingdom. Take, for example, the cuckoo bird, which has this very unusual habit of never hatching its own eggs. That's certainly not an environmental factor. The weaverbird, which hangs its nest on a limb with a piece of horsehair that is tied in a knot. They have raised weaverbirds with robin foster parents and never let them see a horsehair for several generations. Then, if you give them a horsehair, they know exactly what to do with it. That's undoubtedly a built-in genetic trait. I see no reason to think that family patterns don't stem from genetics.

**PLAYBOY:** What about Orientals: Is it possible they are the "superior race," assuming there is such a thing?

**SHOCKLEY:** They are certainly not inferior. Furthermore, even when discriminated against in the Twenties, Japanese school children in California on two verbally weighted tests showed very small I.Q. deficits and actually outperformed whites on a less verbal one. The massive 1966 Coleman report on 645,000 students showed Orientals about five

verbal I.Q. points below whites and on nonverbal I.Q., a shade above in grades nine and 12.

**PLAYBOY:** All right, here we are back to square one again. Dr. Shockley, aren't you essentially a white supremacist?

**SHOCKLEY:** No, I am not a white supremacist.

**PLAYBOY:** If that's the case, why have you allowed yourself to be used by right-wing-extremist groups who promote white supremacy? For example—

**SHOCKLEY:** I have appeared a few times prominently in such right-wing publications as *Thunderbolt*, a newspaper supported by the States Rights Party, or closely tied into it. It's not a Ku Klux Klan publication, but it is definitely anti-Negro and anti-Semitic and very much white supremacist. I find these views in conflict with my version of the golden rule. But on two points I put *Thunderbolt* ahead of much of the American press. First, I believe it is not hypocritical, though it does express erroneous views. Second, it sometimes publishes valid news that I don't find elsewhere. I also believe that the net result of getting the truth out will be good and that misinterpretations will be corrected.

**PLAYBOY:** But if these people are misusing your theories, why haven't you put a stop to it?

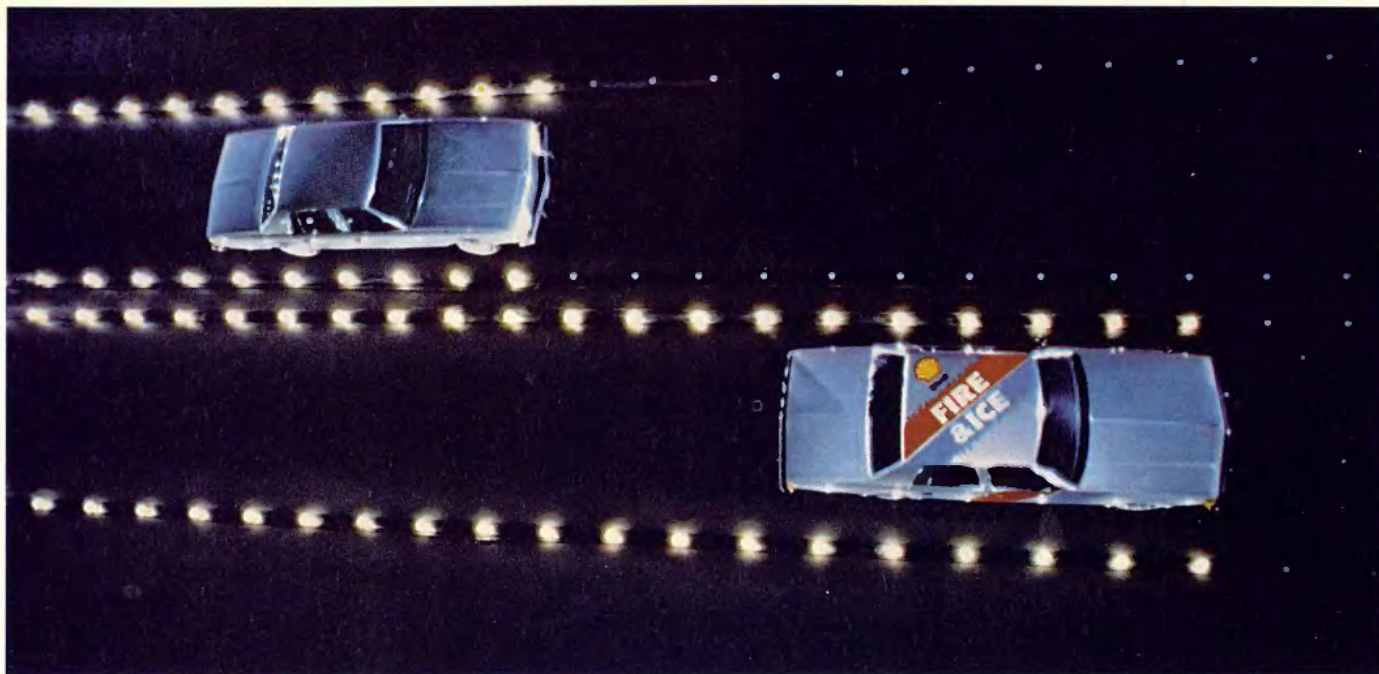
**SHOCKLEY:** If someone has stolen your car and is driving it recklessly, why haven't you put a stop to it? I have not given priority to a study of extremist groups, but I have this view about them: Those groups view black problems from the perspective of racism, not from that of scientific raceology. Their focus on black crime would be on its brutality rather than its contribution to the Tragedy for American Negroes.

**PLAYBOY:** You've mentioned black crime before, as if its existence supports your claim of black genetic inferiority. Does it?

**SHOCKLEY:** The important issue is the role of crime in the Tragedy for American Negroes. The people who suffer most from black crime are blacks themselves. I mentioned earlier the high spouse-killing-spouse ratio. A young black male in Harlem is more than 100 times more likely to be a homicide statistic than a male in Denmark. These are aspects of the tragedy that raceology reveals.

**PLAYBOY:** As to crime and race: Aren't there tribes in Africa in which crime is almost unheard of? Anthropologists who have studied those tribes point out that their environment tends to discourage crime. On the other hand, there are studies in this country showing that our cities tend to breed crime. Obviously, there's a strong environmental relationship here. How does that fit in with your racial thesis?





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**SHOCKLEY:** I don't know of any studies showing such a lack of crime. I do know of some showing that certain tribes tend toward intertribal warfare. Some researchers postulated that this bellicosity was caused by a lack of protein, but that didn't seem to be true once they actually looked into it. With respect to urban slums' breeding crime, the question of a cause-and-effect relationship needs to be researched much more carefully. Do people remain in the slums because they have a low I.Q., which is highly correlated with a high crime rate? I tried looking into this myself once. I asked a law-enforcement agency if it would search its files and give me a reference to anything that had been written on the correlation between I.Q. and crime. They claimed there was nothing available. I went to the Stanford library in one afternoon and produced two studies in which hundreds of prisoners had their I.Q.s tested in two separate studies. As I recall, the median prisoner I.Q. was about 85, or one standard deviation below normal. Of course, someone could argue that high-I.Q. people who commit crimes don't get caught. That might be one explanation, but I doubt it.

**PLAYBOY:** To return to the central point: There is no question that the K.K.K. and even the Nazis have used your data for goals that are political, destructive and have nothing to do with humanitari-

an idealism. Given your goal of reaching the so-called black intellectual community with your theories, how can you allow yourself to be misrepresented by those white-supremacist groups?

**SHOCKLEY:** Your emphasis that we must "return to the central point" is a new experience for me. I do not recall anyone making the point before, and certainly not as persistently as you have just now, that I will be irresponsible if, in your words, I allow myself to be misrepresented by white-supremacist groups. Let me assure you that I make no efforts to allow myself to be misrepresented. My efforts instead have been to communicate the concerns and findings that we are discussing as accurately as I can. That, as far as I am concerned, is the central point of this interview. I would then hope that this accuracy would suffice to reach the intellectuals, black or white, who should think responsibly about the dysgenic threat in general and its relationship to the Tragedy for American Negroes in particular.

**PLAYBOY:** What attempts have you made to reach black intellectuals, and with what results?

**SHOCKLEY:** If I think that one over, I will end up with a pretty long list. Near the beginning are Dr. Alvin Poussaint and Donald Warden, a San Francisco attorney and radio host. James Farmer, Roy Innis and Frances Cress Welsing

have appeared with me on TV programs and I have tried to be as precise as I have been here. My correspondence with Roy Wilkins in 1973 was, perhaps, my most diligent effort to open a line of communication. Mr. Wilkins regarded me as a threat to Negro progress greater than the K.K.K., according to press reports of a speech. In that case, I responded with both a press release and a letter to Mr. Wilkins. I asked him to choose 100 to 200 black intellectuals for blood tests and I pointed out if this showed they were no more Caucasian than the national average, then, and I quote from a news story: "This new scientific fact could correct unfair discrimination that now prevails on the opinion that Negroes obtain their intelligence from white ancestors."

**PLAYBOY:** Some anthropologists say that race is such a fuzzy concept that it would be pointless to try to find out how much Caucasian blood American blacks have. What about that?

**SHOCKLEY:** One proof that I don't have to be a geneticist to work on these problems is my 1973 paper in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* on the determination of the percentage of genes in Oakland blacks that come from white ancestors. I refined the best prior estimate of 22 percent obtained using a particular blood type called Duffy's gene.

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I reconciled that with an estimate of 27 percent for another blood type and obtained a new best value of 23 percent. As far as I have heard, my 1973 paper is still the most advanced on this subject.

**PLAYBOY:** What was Wilkins' reaction?

**SHOCKLEY:** Mr. Wilkins rejected my proposal but made no reference to your central point about white-supremacist groups. Biology professor Richard Goldsby and I are on first-name terms after a number of public debates but no closer to agreement on the main issues. Carl Rowan and others were also approached. This interview with you is the latest of my serious attempts.

**PLAYBOY:** Reaching the black intellectual community is nearly an impossibility for you. Harvard psychiatrist Poussaint, one of the best-known, most respected black professionals in the nation, says that your theories have hurt the black self-image and that blacks tend to take them to heart and feel that they are personally inferior, not as a group but as individuals. Would you comment on that?

**SHOCKLEY:** Yes. I think that there may be some truth to what Poussaint says, and this is a very sad state of affairs. If a very substantial fraction of the black race is made up of people who have limitations in objectivity of character so that it is impossible for them to accept reality, then disclosure of this dysgenic

threat could be a very devastating thing for them, and that would be tragic. But one alternative can be even more tragic. That would be to set up an artificial milieu in which blacks are protected, as some people might be in mental institutions. If such a lack of objectivity exists and if the blacks most susceptible to it are increasing most rapidly because our society is afraid to do the needed research to diagnose the problem, then it's a pretty deplorable state of affairs. It indicates fear and a lack of faith in the power of reason and the existence of humanitarianism—attitudes that I do not share. Where there is a serious illness that needs to be diagnosed before treatment can be wisely made, I see no excuse for withholding the contributions that reason may provide.

**PLAYBOY:** Your faith in humanitarianism seems unrealistic to us. For example, what logical reason would blacks have for showing faith in humanitarianism when, as a group, they have suffered from severely inhumane acts for generations? And why would most whites who know the history of blacks, and whom you blame for "not doing the needed research to diagnose the problem"—why would they put faith in humanitarianism's winning out over racial hatred and injustice? It never has before, so why would it now?

**SHOCKLEY:** Well, I have faith that if one brings facts out and presents them properly, sound answers will be found. I may be wrong about this, but not only is this a faith that I have, but it is probably an element of faith that any religious person should have. If he believes that God is involved in this situation, then he is compelled to have the same faith I have.

**PLAYBOY:** Really? Why?

**SHOCKLEY:** Because the Apple-of-God's-Eye Obsession says that God has set up the world to be fair to man and to be good to him.

**PLAYBOY:** But you don't believe that, do you? You apparently don't believe in God.

**SHOCKLEY:** I think that some of these philosophical views are broader than the belief or nonbelief in God. I think these things came about through evolution. In terms of my humanitarianism, you wouldn't say that the blacks in the United States are worse off than they are in almost any African country, would you?

**PLAYBOY:** Worse off in what way?

**SHOCKLEY:** Healthwise.

**PLAYBOY:** No, not for the most part. But blacks in America have been exploited and deprived of their basic human rights.

**SHOCKLEY:** How about Idi Amin?



**PLAYBOY:** An isolated instance.

**SHOCKLEY:** Or how about the civil war in Nigeria?

**PLAYBOY:** Civil war is one thing, slavery is another. So is genocide.

**SHOCKLEY:** Is there now black slavery of blacks in Africa now?

**PLAYBOY:** Perhaps, but how do these digressions help us understand your faith in humanitarianism? Your faith seems somehow unconnected to historical and present-day reality.

**SHOCKLEY:** You could have some faith in terms of the elimination of slavery, the enactment of affirmative-action programs, the wiping out of Jim Crow laws and things of this sort. But blacks can also conclude that these things will turn around and get worse if dysgenics are at the root of the problem. And, on that basis, it may be very difficult for blacks to share my faith in humanitarianism. Nonetheless, I'm reminded of the dictum of Herbert Spencer: "The profoundest of all infidelities is the fear that the truth will be bad."

**PLAYBOY:** Do you believe that?

**SHOCKLEY:** I think I can concur with that, yes. It expresses rejection of a lack of faith in reality. To have such a profound lack of faith in the world is being unfaithful to the very nature of one's existence. That is what it means to fear that the truth will be bad. The truth about Watergate, for example, was a very bad thing. But getting the truth may have been a very good thing.

If one can perceive some kind of a tragedy potentially developing—then one should seek some way of dealing with it that minimizes human misery. For the worries that I express about dysgenics, this aim may very well be best achieved by limiting the number of babies that come into the world under adverse circumstances. The same solution has often been recognized, but not implemented, in underdeveloped, and perhaps undevelopable nations.

**PLAYBOY:** That kind of humanitarian social Darwinism may be well and good, but it doesn't deal with real-life situations. Take, for example, the white woman who was thinking of marrying a black man. This is a documented case. Somewhere on the East Coast, she heard you speak about black genetic inferiority and she became afraid that her children by this black man might be born inferior. She threatened to break off an otherwise good relationship. She went to a therapist and asked for advice. This kind of reaction seems to be the real potential tragedy, Dr. Shockley—that white people could actually come to believe that black people as individuals are inferior to themselves and will inevitably produce inferior offspring.

**SHOCKLEY:** Do you know what answer the therapist gave her?

**PLAYBOY:** The answer was that she

shouldn't be concerned about your theories, that they were irrelevant. And that the question itself was inherently racist.

**SHOCKLEY:** Well, if she had been asking about races farther apart than blacks and whites, and if more facts were known, the therapist might very well have said that the chance of having a mentally retarded child as a result of this vast divergence between the races might be very substantial. I doubt if it is for black-white matings, because if it were, the result would be known. The probabilities might be much larger for very different groups.

**PLAYBOY:** But we're describing an emotional crisis in a woman who reacted to your theories. Obviously, asking a question about mental retardation in black offspring in the context of your theories is tantamount to questioning the very humanity of a people. Certainly the humanity of the black individual she wanted to marry.

**SHOCKLEY:** Well, it is quite true that these are very painful thoughts. They are things that strike centrally on one's

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*"I certainly would not  
oppose an interracial marriage  
in any particular case  
that might come up. But  
I wouldn't advocate it  
as a policy."*

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whole viewpoint toward life and the universe. Objective thinking on this subject is blocked by the Apple-of-God's-Eye Obsession, as I mentioned earlier.

**PLAYBOY:** But you still haven't answered our question about this white woman. Wouldn't it be a tragedy for whites to believe that black people as individuals were inferior to themselves and would inevitably produce inferior offspring? And isn't this an example of that kind of racist thinking?

**SHOCKLEY:** I'm not saying that this is not a tragic situation, you understand. But what are the facts? If you pick two black people at random in the black population and mate them and produce children, and you take two white people at random in the population and mate them and produce children, the existing statistics fit into this pattern that I call an inescapable opinion that the black children will be, as far as the I.Q. tests are concerned, inferior to the white children. Now, then, you say, suppose people came actually to believe this. It seems to me you are saying, "Suppose white people actually came to believe what you, Shockley, believe."

**PLAYBOY:** But you keep saying your purpose is to limit human misery. The example of the woman is one in which you may have caused human misery.

**SHOCKLEY:** I would say even greater misery will result, and is now taking place, because of society's refusal to investigate the dysgenic threat.

**PLAYBOY:** Are you for or against interracial marriage? Not as a scientific experiment but as a social reality?

**SHOCKLEY:** I'm going to say I certainly would not oppose an interracial marriage in any particular case that might come up. But I wouldn't advocate it as a policy. One would have to know more about these facts.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you think there ought to be efforts made to increase marriages between black men and women of high I.Q.s?

**SHOCKLEY:** I don't see why not. It would be applying positive eugenics to encourage more births in that part of the population.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you believe in equal opportunity for all people, black or otherwise?

**SHOCKLEY:** Yes. I believe in the created-equal assertion of the Declaration of Independence, when it is interpreted in terms of equal political rights, but I would qualify it some: I don't think the right should be given equally to everyone to have children, if those people having children are clearly destined to produce retarded or defective children. This puts an unfair burden upon society. But when I talk about that burden, my standard language emphasizes the fact that the ones who suffer most are the children themselves.

**PLAYBOY:** But we're asking about equal opportunity, not about the right to have children.

**SHOCKLEY:** Can you have equal opportunity if you don't have the same capacity as someone else to utilize it?

**PLAYBOY:** The fact that you can't go through a door doesn't mean that it shouldn't be open. Don't you agree with that?

**SHOCKLEY:** That's right. But you may also be led to demand that there should be a wider door. If the door is too narrow for you to go through, you can certainly assert then that, although the door is open for you, you are not given equal opportunity. Is the trouble really with the door or with the width of the man?

**PLAYBOY:** Suppose we are talking about a handicapped individual. Handicapped by society or by himself. And the doorway to success is not designed to accommodate his wheelchair. Should the door be redesigned to accommodate the man?

**SHOCKLEY:** This does not lend itself to an absolute and general answer, because if one follows the open-door approach, then one would say that a man should have equal opportunity to visit anyone





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he wants, and every house should be built with a ramp for his wheelchair.

**PLAYBOY:** No, we're talking about equal opportunity in institutions such as colleges, corporations, etc., that have a responsibility for administering equal rights.

**SHOCKLEY:** An individual may be limited in his capacity to exploit his opportunity for equal rights. Black students who get into college certainly have equal rights to learn. They are exposed to equal lectures. They may be brought in by quota systems and are underqualified both by training and in their basic ability to grasp the material. Then, although they are given the equal opportunities and, indeed, the extra advantages of remedial courses, they won't be able to make the most of them. They can reasonably conclude that something phony in the system is frustrating them. When society endeavors to enforce equality of achievement by methods like these, then the result may be a sort of induced paranoia on the part of blacks. I see this as possibly related to the high spouse-killing-spouse rate we have discussed.

**PLAYBOY:** Wouldn't it be better for society if you shifted your focus and your energies from the dysgenics question to the goal of equal opportunity for all? Then we might have an equal basis for making qualitative judgments.

**SHOCKLEY:** To my way of thinking, that is basically not a very astute observation at all. I could at most add only a minuscule contribution to the efforts already under way. I'm perfectly certain I am unique among the Nobel laureates in saying that I feel an obligation to face this problem, the dysgenic aspect or threat. Nothing that has occurred in the past several years has made me feel that my approach is unsound. This situation places me in a position like the one I occupied when my team was probably almost alone in trying to create the transistor. And the dysgenic problem is of greater importance than that was. It has been around since the days of the Greeks. It has been discussed many times and no satisfactory solutions have been found. The transistor will, in due course, probably be replaced by something else, just as the vacuum tube has been replaced by the transistor. But the human-quality problems I'm talking about are going to be with us until some new stage arrives. Possibly, it may be genetic engineering on the DNA code or cloning or things like that. But I think these are so distantly foreseeable that they amount to distractions in discussions like this one. Anyway, if we can prevent dysgenic deterioration of intellectual capacity, future generations will be that much better able to think about genetic engineering.

**PLAYBOY:** It might be helpful for us to know something about the tenor of your

personal relationships with blacks. It could give us some insight into your motives.

**SHOCKLEY:** I basically haven't had much personal contact with blacks, but I can remember some.

**PLAYBOY:** What were your impressions?

**SHOCKLEY:** The earliest recollection I have of any close association with blacks was in my teens. We had a black maid—I think her name was Genoa, as I recall—and my mother and I were both very fond of her. Also, when I attended Hollywood High, there were black students there.

**PLAYBOY:** How did you get along with them?

**SHOCKLEY:** I didn't have much contact with them. All I remember about them is that they were active in sports. Later on, when I moved to New York—actually, Madison, New Jersey—we had a maid or housekeeper who was black. She wasn't very efficient, that's what I remember most about her. I also recall that while my children were going to school, I happened to find out that the

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*"Industrialists who have operated in Africa have told of the greater value of mulattoes over pure blacks as employees."*

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president of the high school student body was black. I thought that was a constructive social development.

**PLAYBOY:** That's interesting. Anything else?

**SHOCKLEY:** Well, there's something I hadn't thought about until you asked me just now. One night while I was living in Madison, we found a black boy, about eight years old, sleeping in our garage. I tried to drive him home, but he couldn't or wouldn't find the way. The police finally took him off our hands. They seemed to feel he'd been a victim of some kind of child abuse.

**PLAYBOY:** What about more recent contacts, outside of your well-publicized encounters with Roy Innis and other professional blacks in a business setting?

**SHOCKLEY:** Well, in 1961, my wife and I were in a hospital for months in casts after a head-on collision. Most of the nurses who took care of us were black, and the quality of their care stood in marked contrast to that of the white nurses. My wife and I were most impressed.

**PLAYBOY:** What was it that impressed you so highly?

**SHOCKLEY:** They gave us the best care and were the most natural and comforting that I had. In fact, while my cast prevented me from doing so, they were the ones who cleaned my rear end properly.

**PLAYBOY:** One of the more troubling parts of your theory has to do with the degree of white blood you claim affects the genetic intelligence of blacks. Do you really believe there are intelligence differences between light-skinned blacks and dark-skinned blacks?

**SHOCKLEY:** Industrialists who have operated in Africa have told of the greater value of mulattoes over pure blacks as employees. But where race mixing has gone on for generations, only a statistical correlation would be expected between skin color and performance. Judgments about individuals would be dubious. Actually, skin color alone does not provide the best measure of white ancestry. J. R. Baker in *Race* considers morphological features, in addition to skin color, and concludes that many eminent American Negroes have substantial fractions of Caucasian ancestry. The conclusion seems to me to be borne out by blacks seen on TV—for example, by many black newscasters.

**PLAYBOY:** That's interesting, but how is it pragmatic for the man in the street, who doesn't understand statistics?

**SHOCKLEY:** The pragmatism comes in when a businessman says, "I know I have had bad luck hiring three blacks, and so I am going to avoid hiring blacks if I can." Here again, science may offset unfairness by developing valid aptitude tests that see deeper than skin color.

**PLAYBOY:** Is your opinion based on personal experience you have had with blacks?

**SHOCKLEY:** It is based mostly on conversations with successful businessmen. Two of these described specific aspects of their problems. I have also obtained a similar impression from general reading. A third item is my own research, which proposes a mathematical model to explain why an increase in I.Q. raises earnings less for blacks than it does for whites. Its name, the cooperative-correlation model, is much shorter than its explanation.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you feel that certain scientific groups that should be dealing with this issue are simply ignoring it?

**SHOCKLEY:** Yes. My primary target for this criticism is the National Academy of Sciences. Another group I would single out specifically consists of the tenured members of faculties and departments of anthropology in the country. Most of these anthropologists tend to maintain that race is a myth and there can't possibly be any differences in intelligence or anything else deeper than skin color. They will go further, of course, and say that even if there were differences, there wouldn't be anything one could do about





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it. Both of these statements are irresponsible.

**PLAYBOY:** Most of your critics assume that there is some ulterior motive for your highly inflammatory views, such as racism or some political intent. Is there? And how do we know that you don't have any secret political ax to grind? That you aren't a racist wolf in humanitarian sheep's clothing?

**SHOCKLEY:** I guess I really don't know how you can convince people of that. Eminent political figures have tried with great eloquence and expressiveness to convey such impressions, sometimes quite successfully, sometimes even when untrue. I wouldn't pretend to have the expertise that politicians have. One characteristic that would make me an unlikely candidate for a covert racist ideology is my not entirely unrecognized lack of tactfulness in some areas. The outspokenness that I have is, I think, by and large, not in keeping with a man who has any skills in being deceptive in political matters. That would be about the best argument I could give.

**PLAYBOY:** Even so, you are undoubtedly aware that some people would sooner see you in prison than allow you to express these opinions, though the First Amendment protects your right to say what you have said. Do you have any thoughts on freedom of speech?

**SHOCKLEY:** The words that define the First Amendment seem to me to be some of the most important words put on paper by man. I compare their significance in the political arena with statements in science like Newton's third law of motion: "For every action there is equal and opposite reaction." I have stressed the point that the First Amendment was a lesson that the German people didn't learn during Hitler's time. I don't believe he would have lasted if the First Amendment had been in place in Germany.

**PLAYBOY:** Do you worry about reprisals?

**SHOCKLEY:** Not really. As my wife has often said, to do what I do, you must have three things: honesty, a secure professional reputation and financial security. I have those three things and thus have no excuse not to try to communicate what I believe will benefit mankind.

**PLAYBOY:** How are you hoping readers will respond to the concerns you have raised in this interview?

**SHOCKLEY:** I am hoping that it will trigger someone who is sitting on the edge of making a decision, saying, "I should take a stand on this." He might then take action. Get a proposition on a ballot or organize a demonstration. I don't know who it would be. My main theme in this interview has been that the diagnosis of racial problems can be done and that good things might happen as a result of open-minded research.

**PLAYBOY:** What if, in the final analysis, you are proved wrong about all of this?

**SHOCKLEY:** I've got my answer for that one: My chagrin over a scientific setback would be more than offset by the fact that these new scientific results would go far toward eliminating what would have to be regarded, then, as an unwarranted prejudice against blacks.

**PLAYBOY:** That's very interesting. Perhaps more than any public figure in the history of this nation, you have been booed off speaking platforms at college campuses, hung in effigy and generally greeted as bad news. How did you feel when that began to happen to you?

**SHOCKLEY:** I think the first time was at Sacramento State in 1969 or so. There were people dressed in Ku Klux Klan uniforms and I remember a man coming up to the platform and offering me a Nazi salute. Then there was the situation at Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute, where there was a 20th-anniversary meeting of the scientific honorary research society Sigma Xi. They had asked me to speak and I accepted and told them the title of my talk, which had the words race and dysgenics in it. A week before

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I was to give the talk, they called and asked me to speak on physics. I refused. The net result of this was that they canceled the whole meeting and sent out about 500 telegrams one day before the scheduled meeting.

**PLAYBOY:** You were involved in a rather famous dispute at Leeds University in England, weren't you?

**SHOCKLEY:** Yes. Someone thought the transistor deserved to be recognized, and so I was invited to accept an honorary doctor of science degree from Leeds in May of 1973. I was in London in February of that year to lecture to electrical engineers to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the transistor. I can remember well that it was February, because the most dramatic incident occurred on my 63rd birthday, the 13th of the month. Lord Boyle, the vice-chancellor of the university, invited me to have cocktails at the Carlton Club, the noted conservative club in England. He and I had a pleasant conversation for a few moments, and then he said: "Dr. Shockley, when we decided to award this degree, we were not aware of your other interests." I at once began to wonder about this and

said, "Lord Boyle, are you leading up to saying that when I come to Leeds University you would like me to behave in some way other than I would normally behave, or are you saying you'd like me to forget the whole thing?" He replied, "A frank question deserves a frank answer. We'd like you to forget the whole thing." After I broke that story to the press, the news coverage in England was comparable to that of Graham's sperm bank here. David Frost interviewed me as the first of a new series.

**PLAYBOY:** Did it ever occur to you that you might actually get hurt at some of those disruptions?

**SHOCKLEY:** Yes. There was one occasion when I saw a man in the audience with something that looked very like a sword cane. I've been a little concerned in other situations but not very much. Incidentally, I've acquired great confidence in the competence of the police and security forces.

**PLAYBOY:** After 15 years of this and at the age of 70, Dr. Shockley, one would think you'd be rather tired of this crusade. Any rewards you have received must be intensely personal in nature, since the world has not exactly welcomed your theories with open arms. What we're wondering, finally, is how you feel about the work you have done and how you would characterize the risks involved in being a "raceologist," as you have described yourself elsewhere.

**SHOCKLEY:** As I have said before, I don't feel myself that the risks are very large. Young scientists would jeopardize their careers by doing research or expressing views like mine. Such risks have been much smaller for me. I have felt that this fact places an obligation on me to continue. One fellow scientist, whom I meet every year or so, usually greets me with, "Well, here you are again. I didn't know whether you would be here another year." Actually, I have had very few threats. Although sometimes in the press I may not come across accurately, I find that most people, or at least most who talk with me, accept the fact that my intentions are good. I believe this goes a long way toward eliminating the type of hostility that might otherwise exist. As for my personal motivations to continue pressing this subject despite my advanced age, I once used a letter-to-the-editor opportunity, while responding to a column in *Presbyterian Life* identifying me as a disciple of Hitler, to discuss it in these words: "During the last five minutes of my life, should I have my intellectual powers intact, I hope to consider that since engaging in this campaign, I have used my capacities close to their maximum potential in keeping with the objective of Nobel's will of conferring greatest benefit on mankind."

