

Japan won't apologize for forced sterilization

By Mari Yamaguchi
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TOKYO — The Japanese government said yesterday it doesn't plan to offer apologies or pay compensation for a program that forcibly sterilized more than 16,000 disabled women over five decades because the program was legal at the time and was public record.

A Health and Welfare Ministry official also said the government had no intention of further investigating the program, despite demands Tuesday by 17 groups that represent women or the disabled.

Over the years, a few Japanese women have claimed they were sterilized without their consent while they were housed in public institutions for the disabled or mentally retarded. But their claims did not gain much attention until last month, when it was discovered that as many as 60,000 people had been involuntarily sterilized in Sweden. That government has since apologized.

Japan legalized sterilization in 1948 as a means of improving the Japanese people. The law, revoked only last year, allowed doctors to sterilize people with mental or physical disabilities or certain hereditary diseases without their consent after the approval of committees appointed by local governments.

Tomoko Kitajima, an official in a ministry section supervising maternal and child health, said yesterday that Japan does not plan to follow Sweden's precedent. Because the procedures were legal at the time and were documented in public records, it doesn't make sense to offer apologies or pay compensation, Miss Kitajima said.

In a story about the activists' demands, the Asahi newspaper said a Meiji Gakuin University lecturer had gone through government records and discovered that 16,520 Japanese women had been sterilized without their consent from 1949 to 1995. Some of the women were sedated when they resisted.

Japan Acknowledges Sterilizing Women

TOKYO—More than 16,500 handicapped Japanese women were involuntarily sterilized with government approval from 1949 to 1995, an official said, but the government does not plan to apologize, offer compensation to the victims or their families, or conduct an investigation.

The admission came one day after 17 citizens' groups that represent women or the handicapped demanded that the Health and Welfare Ministry investigate cases of involuntary sterilization.

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Japan legalized sterilization in 1948 as a means of improving the human species through the control of hereditary factors. The law, which was revoked only last year, allowed doctors to sterilize people with mental or physical handicaps without their consent, after obtaining the approval of local governments.

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Israelis of Yemeni origin have long claimed authorities took hundreds of infants who were in hospitals between 1948 and 1950 and gave them to adoptive families of European origin.

Official confirms baby-snatching charges
JERUSALEM — A former senior Israeli figure has broken a decades-long silence to confirm that authorities snatched babies from Yemeni immigrants nearly 50 years ago and gave them to European-born Jews for adoption.

← 1948

* W = Osborn & Company write Japanese Constitution after WWII = 1948

The pro-choice movement is eugenics under a different name

It was great to read Richard Grenier's Friday Op-Ed piece, "Building the Aryan race." Eugenics remains a very strong force, even in the United States.

George Annas, a leading bioethicist, said last year at a symposium at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum that what is happening in genetics today is in fact eugenics. But, he added, the Nazis wanted a perfect race and we just want a perfect baby.

I'm not comforted. The cutting edge of reproductive technology for the rich is high-tech baby-making through in vitro fertilization and other methods. For the poor, there

are birth control methods such as Norplant and Depo-Provera. "More from the fit, less from the unfit," to quote Margaret Sanger's magazine.

To understand modern eugenics, you have to understand Maj. Gen. Frederick Osborn. He is credited with reforming eugenics after World War II, removing the taint of racism. The problem is, Osborn the "reformer" was president of the Pioneer Fund, a secretive white-supremacy group. He would not end racism; he would hide it.

One of Osborn's ideas was to shift from open coercion to subtle pressure, encouraging the undesirables to stop having children. That idea

isn't dead. Look at the family cap in welfare reform. Osborn used the delicious phrase "voluntary unconscious selection." In time, this became "choice." But the targets are supposed to select or choose a specific option: abortion. How many "pro-choice" advocates have fought against coercive abortion in China?

Eugenics was a big part of American history. In fact, it's a big part of American life today.

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