

Race and Genetic Technologies: A New Reproductive Dystopia?
Dorothy Roberts

I. Introduction: Reproductive Stratification and Dystopia

A. In the 1980s, Margaret Atwood, Gena Corea, and other feminists imagined dystopias in which white women's reproduction was valued and privileged and women of color's reproduction was devalued and exploited.

B. Two decades later, feminist scholars have continued to critique the reproductive hierarchy by contrasting white and minority women's opposing relationship to reproduction-assisting technologies.

C. My prior writing on the reproductive caste system

1. First also contrasted policies that penalize poor black women's childbearing with the high tech fertility industry that promotes childbearing by more affluent white women.

2. Later, rather than place these women in opposition, I tied them together in relation to the neoliberal state: both population control programs and genetic selection technologies reinforce biological explanations for social problems and place reproductive duties on women that privatize remedies for illness and social inequities.

3. In recent years, promoters of race-based biotechnologies promise to extend the benefits of genetic research to people of color.

D. Purpose of presentation

1. Critically explore the role of race and racism in the emergence of reproductive technologies that incorporate advances in genetic science.

2. What are the implications of including women of color in the market for reproductively assisted technologies and in the expectation that women will use them to ensure preferred genetic outcomes?

II. Expanding the Market for Reproductive Technologies

A. In *Killing the Black Body*, I highlighted the role of race in images promoting the fertility industry.

1. Pictures showing the success of reproduction-assisting technologies were always of white babies, usually with blond hair and blue eyes, as if to highlight their racial purity.
 2. Black babies figured in media coverage intended to evoke revulsion precisely because of their race.
- B. The high tech fertility business no longer appeals to an exclusively white clientele; images on fertility clinic websites routinely show people of color alongside claims advertising clinic services and their benefits.
1. The marketing of reprogenetics to women of color is part of a broader inclusion of minority groups in the testing and production of new genetic biotechnologies.
 2. Some clinic websites not only market their reprogenetic services to people of color; they also perform race-based genetic testing as part of those services.
 3. Fertility clinics' use of race and ethnicity in genetic selection procedures may help to reinforce the erroneous belief that race is a biological classification that can be determined genetically.

III. Neoliberalism and Reproductive Dystopia

- A. New genetic technologies have generated greater surveillance of women, the ones primarily responsible for making the “right” genetic decisions.
- B. The prevailing reproductive dystopias may be wrong to imagine that women of color are excluded from access to reproduction-assisting and genetic selection technologies.
- C. Reprogenetics serves as a form of privatization that makes the individual the site of governance through the self-regulation of genetic risk.

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1. The state may rely on the expectation that pregnant women undergo genetic testing to legitimize its refusal to support the care of disabled children.
2. Health insurance companies may require its policyholders to participate in a prenatal genetic screening regime that selects out embryos and fetuses predicted to have a disability.

D. Race-based biotechnologies promote the view that deepening racial inequities, which result from neoliberal policies, are actually caused by genetic differences between whites and other racialized groups.

IV. Extending Choice to Women of Color

A. The role reproductives plays in neoliberalism's integrated system of privatization and punitive governance is obscured by liberal notions of reproductive choice.

B. Including women of color in the market for reproductive technologies does not eradicate the racial caste system underlying reproductive stratification. It shifts racism to a new reproductive terrain.

C. Conclusion

1. A reproductive dystopia for the 21st century could no longer exclude women of color from the market for high tech reproductives.
2. Rather, it would take place in a society where racial and economic divisions are reinforced by their inclusion
3. But new utopia arising from feminists' radical resistance emboldened by new alliances -- joining reproductive justice with antiracist, disability rights, and economic justice movements.