EXHIBITS

Twisted Science

Hitler's regime distorted anthropology, psychology, and genetics to justify murdering millions of Jews and other people deemed inferior. Deadly Medicine, an online version of an exhibit at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., reviews how the Third Reich's pursuit of "racial hygiene" led to mass homicide.

The Nazis absorbed eugenic ideas that were prevalent in Germany and elsewhere, the site notes, but went further than other countries in their efforts to "strengthen the national body." From mandatory sterilization of people with schizophrenia and other supposedly inherited diseases, they moved on to euthanasia of children with birth defects and institutionalized patients. In video conversations, the exhibit's curator explores disturbing documents from the time, such as this mid-1930s poster (above) warning against the crime of "racial defilement," or mixing between Jews and non-Jews. Brief profiles describe scientists and doctors who helped shape the Reich's racial policies and in many cases resumed their careers after the war. >>
www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/deadlymedicine

RESOURCES

Language of Lava >>

Resembling bundles of licorice, this gnarled lava on Hawaii's Kilauea volcano (right) is known as pahoehoe. The plaited texture forms when the lava's crust slows or stalls but the material below keeps flowing, stretching the surface. Learn to recognize pahoehoe and other volcanic features at this illustrated glossary from the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Photos, drawings, and animations can help users distinguish types of volcanoes, eruptions, and ejected material. The glossary is part of the USGS Volcano Hazards Program Web site, which also offers a primer on dangers from volcanoes, information on historic eruptions, and other facts. For the latest on U.S. volcanic activity, click over to the observatories that monitor rumblings in Alaska, the Cascade Range, Yellowstone, and Hawaii. >>
volcanoes.usgs.gov/Products/Pglossary

WEB LOGS

Water Cooler Physics

For a discussion of research funding in the new federal budget, musings about scientists' public image, or a host of other opinions, click over to Cosmic Variance. At the 8-month-old blog, five physicists and astrophysicists from institutions around the United States discourse daily about their field and anything else that catches their fancy, whether it's politics or the arts. Scientific posts include heads-ups about noteworthy discoveries, such as new measurements that indicate dark matter might be warmer than predicted, and a commentary on a *New York Times* write-up of a book on astrology. Contributor Mark Trodden of Syracuse University in New York denounces the reviewer for "willful twisting of hard-won scientific progress." >>
cosmicvariance.com

TOOLS

Gene-o-Matic

This new program from the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions in Baltimore, Maryland, is a timesaver for scientists who craft DNA sequences for genetic engineering or to decipher gene functions. Users key in a protein sequence, and GeneDesign specifies a DNA blueprint that researchers can synthesize themselves or order from a company. GeneDesign lets users customize their creations for a particular vector—a DNA snippet that ferries the sequence into cells—and for the organism they are studying. >> slam.bs.jhmi.edu/gd

IMAGES

Mollusks With Attitude

One of the newest painkillers on the market, ziconitide, comes from the sting of a snail—not the ones that demolish your cucumbers but their marine cousins, the cone snails of the genus *Conus*. The rapacious creatures subdue fish and other animals with their poison-tipped mouthparts. To help taxonomists tidy up this complicated group, Trevor Anderson and Alan Kohn of the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture in Seattle, Washington, launched this catalog of the more than 3000 known *Conus* species. Mollusk mavens can also peruse photos and drawings of more than 600 type specimens, the original samples researchers used to delineate a species or other taxonomic group. Pioneering classifier Carolus Linnaeus consulted the *Conus marmoreus* specimen above when he named the genus in 1758. A dozen or so video clips show the predatory snails ambushing and gobbling their victims. Anderson and Kohn plan to add species accounts with range maps and other data. >>
biology.burke.washington.edu/conus

CREDITS (TOP TO BOTTOM): U.S. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM; T. N. MATTOX/USGS; ALAN KOHN/BURKE MUSEUM

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