

## NEWS

# 'Professor of hate' shares vision from an academic haven at JHU

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Dr. Robert A. Gordon's views on race and intelligence are so inflammatory that he has been a pariah in the Johns Hopkins University sociology department for 15 years. He's been branded by Rolling Stone magazine as a "professor of hate." Black students on campus have denounced him as a racist.

Protected by tenure, Dr. Gordon has used a pulpit at one of the country's most prestigious universities to preach his vision of a world in which intelligence is color-coded. For years, much of the Hopkins campus has done its best to ignore him.

But this year he is emerging from the academic shadows. With the publication last fall of the best-selling book "The Bell Curve" by Charles Murray and the late Richard Herrnstein, Dr. Gordon's incendiary theories have gone from taboo to dinner table conversation.

At the core of Dr. Gordon's research lies the conclusion that blacks, as a group, are less intelligent than whites largely because of their genetic makeup, and that this leads to higher poverty and crime rates.

His work is cited in "The Bell Curve," and he is devoting his spring seminar at Hopkins to the book.

"This has rejuvenated his academic record," says Hopkins senior Kenneth Anderson, an international studies major who is president of the Black Student Union. "This is an opportunity for him to get his name out there without doing something novel or new, but jumping on a controversial bandwagon."

Dr. Gordon has been emphasizing the themes echoed in "The Bell Curve" since the 1970s, though he believes the authors did not go far enough.

"The Bell Curve" is named for the shape created on a graph showing scores on intelligence tests -- most people grouped near the middle, with the very dull and very bright at the ends. The book contends that the gulf between white and black America in wealth, jobs and incarceration results from a broad gulf in intelligence -- a gulf it says will probably never be bridged by advances in education or other social programs.

Dr. Gordon, 62, goes further. He says that these differences are rooted in genes, and, therefore, less-intelligent people should be persuaded to have fewer children. To many critics, this is the most repugnant, and, some would say, the most dangerous of his opinions.

"This is one of the most egregious abuses of statistics," says Dr. Frank L. Morris, a political scientist and the dean of graduate studies and research at

Morgan State University. Many things can affect scores on intelligence tests,

Dr. Morris says, including education, wealth, genetics, health. To single out one factor and base public policy on it is bad science, Dr. Morris says.

Even the authors of "The Bell Curve" don't make the same leap as Dr. Gordon, saying they are "agnostic" on whether environment or heredity is the main cause of race-based differences on IQ tests. "You cannot make the logical link between heredity and race," says Dr. Murray.

While Mr. Anderson and some other students think Dr. Gordon should be condemned for his teachings, Hopkins President William C. Richardson says that for academic freedom to mean anything, tenured professors must be allowed to direct their own courses.

"It seems to me that so long as a person is teaching in his or her area of expertise, that the faculty member's given the freedom to exercise judgment, unless there's some evidence of impairment," Dr. Richardson says.

Many of Dr. Gordon's colleagues do not want to talk about him and consider his work offensive. Dr. Gordon says he is not a bigot, but rather a scholar with the courage to look at hard truths, however unpopular.

"I determined years ago to find out what was the cause of juvenile delinquency," Dr. Gordon says. "I took many risks going out in Chicago [to conduct studies], where sometimes, in broad daylight, on busy streets, I was the only white person in sight. People would hang out of windows to look at the white person."

Dr. Gordon is a man with a trimmed, white beard whose furtive smiles give way to guffaws as he details what he considers the lunacies of his academic colleagues. He labors alone most afternoons in his large Mergenthaler Hall office. Magazines, academic journals and daily newspapers are piled on desks, on chairs, on the floor. All of them contain articles on various aspects of intelligence.

In a series of interviews, Dr. Gordon describes himself as a man unfettered by the liberal guilt of many academics because of his own upbringing. His parents separated when he was 11, and he was brought up in two homes for orphans in the Bronx, N.Y., first at Leake & Watts Home School and then at the American Female Guardian Society and Home for the Friendless.

"Even in the first home, my nickname became 'Doc.' They knew I was smart," he recalls. "Many people can't help but parade their smartness. I learned how to mute it, to get along with other people well. It proved very valuable for when I was studying delinquent groups."

While working on his doctorate in sociology at the University of Chicago, he assisted in a large study of youths growing up in the city's housing projects. He says he began to notice a link between race and delinquency that he would later make his life's work.

"The people on the project were very ambivalent about taking those data seriously," he says. "I was a person with no liberal guilt. I'd grown up with black kids, and I didn't feel obliged to look at them as anything other than they'd seemed."

"It's just like people who have exposure with animals in the wild," he says. "They might be able to deal with it better than the city people, like the people who go hiking amongst the grizzlies. They're used to it, but other people are terrified."

Such remarks suggest there is at least as much racism as science in Dr. Gordon's work, critics say.

"That speaks for itself," says Dr. Morris of Morgan State. "It's a great reflection on the kinds of stereotypes of how blacks are perceived. Everyone likes to assume that eminent university scholars are immune from these kinds of biases."

But Dr. Gordon says society is ill-served by what he calls "politically correct" sociology.

"I don't know of any way to raise IQ considerably other than in slow change of the composition in a population over time," says Dr. Gordon, who envisions a world where less-intelligent blacks have fewer children.

Some consider such thinking the first step down the road to eugenics, the quasi-science of "improving" populations through selective reproduction. The most extreme advocates of eugenics have called for the sterilization of "undesirables" -- at various times immigrants, Jews, blacks or the mentally retarded.

"Every time these folks talk about voluntary choices, they don't really mean the word 'voluntary,' " says William H. Tucker, an associate professor of psychology at Rutgers University and author of "The Science and Politics of Racial Research." "The ammunition they provide is perfect for racists to fire."

Dr. Gordon arrived at Johns Hopkins in 1963. Soon after he received tenure in 1974, Dr. Gordon began pursuing his interest in crime rates. He went back over the old University of Chicago statistics.

"The difference in delinquency rates between blacks and whites could be accounted for precisely in terms of difference in IQ distributions," he says. But getting his theories published was not easy.

Mainstream "sociology journals didn't want to print data showing blacks were several times more delinquent than whites," Dr. Gordon recalls. Instead, his work appeared in publications like the Journal of Methodological Sociology, which he describes as "an esoteric journal for super-mathematic, number-cruncher types."

Among his sociology department colleagues, Dr. Gordon is the odd man out. He doesn't get many invitations to dinner parties, or to rub shoulders with prospective graduate students. He stopped teaching graduate courses in 1985 and finds undergraduates more accepting of his theories.

In a sense, Dr. Gordon has created his own department of psychometrics -- the controversial science of quantifying intelligence -- pulling together as colleagues a few professors from other Hopkins departments and some who teach at other universities.

"He's a very respected scholar in the field," says Hopkins psychology professor Julian C. Stanley, the noted authority on young geniuses who is a friend and fan of Dr. Gordon's. He noted that Dr. Gordon and his ex-wife, University of Delaware sociology professor Linda Gottfredson, founded what might be called the sociology of intelligence.

Dr. Gordon's course this spring on "The Bell Curve" was denounced by some students. Despite the controversy, the class has 35 undergraduates who seem startlingly receptive to Dr. Gordon's message. None of the students is black.

During a recent class, Dr. Gordon examined an early chapter in "The Bell Curve" that describes a society in which bright whites tended to cluster together, intermarrying and achieving the wealth and success beyond the grasp of the less intelligent. In a two-hour period laced with invective against liberals, he attacked intensive educational programs for students at risk of dropping out.

One student argued that it is wasteful to spend money on the education of people who would become at most blue-collar workers rather than professionals.

"It's all a question of economics. We have a limited amount of money," said Andrew Gutmann, a sophomore from Teaneck, N.J. "The factory worker is not as important as a doctor. The factory worker is less desirable."

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