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SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94720

October 24, 1969

Mr. Lewis Bergman, Editor  
The New York Times Magazine  
The New York Times  
Times Square  
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Bergman:

I wish to let you know that in my opinion Mr. Lee Edson's article on "jensenism" was the clearest and most accurate presentation of my views that I have yet seen anywhere in the popular press. Both Mr. Edson and the N. Y. Times are to be commended for the publication of this article. However, I must bring to your attention one unfortunate and grossly misleading inaccuracy which occurs, not in Edson's article, but in the major picture caption on the first page of the article. I refer to the statement: "...no amount of compensatory education will improve this ability since it is mainly inherited." I have never said this, nor do I believe it. The fact that a trait has a genetic basis does not make it immutable. Although learning ability has a genetic component, persons can obviously improve their knowledge and skills through learning. If this were not the case, any kind of education would be useless for all persons. Musical talent, like intelligence, is genetically conditioned, but it amounts to little without training and practice, and without a tremendous amount of study and practice there would never be a Heifetz or a Rubinstein. The genes make for differences in attainments among persons given equal opportunities for learning; they do not fix an absolute level of learning and performance.

Sincerely yours,

Arthur R. Jensen  
Professor

ARJ/rmg

cc Mr. Lee Edson