



# The Dark History Behind Planned Parenthood

By Sharon Sullivan

Since the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, the issue of abortion has been at the center of social, political, and medical conversations with perhaps more vigor than ever before. Over many decades, the increased availability of birth control pills, abortion, and abortifacient drugs has eased the process of preventing the births of millions of children across the country. It should be no surprise that the U.S. birth rate has seen a steady drop over the last three decades.<sup>1</sup> The implications of this decline will have repercussions for decades to come.

As Christians, we believe that life is precious. Every human being is made in the image of God. No one has more worth than another. But, in secular circles, we often find that pro-choice arguments prevail. It is common today for a pregnant woman to have more rights than her unborn baby, and she alone can choose if she wants to birth a child. Without a Biblical perspective, the arguments for "choice" are often accepted by many people. Pro-choice proponents steer clear of the history of abortion and birth control in America, and there is good reason for them to do so. A look into the past reveals the deep dark motives that originated the tragic loss of so many children's lives.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.statista.com/statistics/195943/birth-rate-in-the-united-states-since-1990/>

## The Woman Behind It All

Margaret Sanger. The highly recognizable name of a woman scarcely discussed. A delve into the history of this infamous 20th-century feminist and birth control “pioneer” is harder than you might think in this technological age. A cursory search will bring up many platitudes lauding Sanger’s significant role in women’s “health education” and her responsibility for the sexual revolution. As the founder of Planned Parenthood, many across the globe view Sanger as a hero and a liberator. However, a deeper dig into her life yields information indicating she was not the altruistic woman that her devotees would have us believe. In fact, Margaret Sanger was an avid racist and supporter of eugenics.<sup>2</sup> While the information isn’t always easy to find, a grasp of her history and life’s work is important for Christians to understand, for we must comprehend the evil at hand to prepare for the battle.

Born Margaret Higgins in 1879, Sanger’s childhood and early adulthood helped to shape her into a radical feminist. Her father, an Irish immigrant and Civil War veteran, held socialist political views.<sup>3</sup> He has been described as having iconoclastic ideas, criticizing or opposing beliefs and practices that were widely accepted.<sup>4</sup> Her mother, a devout Catholic, passed away prematurely at the age of 50. Though her mother died from tuberculosis, Margaret, the sixth of eleven children, blamed the underlying stress of frequent pregnancies for her mother’s premature death. In 1902, after becoming a nurse, Margaret married her first husband, architect William Sanger. William, like her father, also embraced radical politics and moved his young family to Greenwich Village, where they participated in mostly left-wing political movements. There Margaret joined the Women’s Committee of the N.Y. Socialist Party and became a member of the Liberal Club.<sup>5</sup>

During her time as a young nurse, Margaret witnessed the deaths of many childbearing women. Some died from complications of abortion, and others from ill-equipped or repetitive pregnancies.<sup>6 7</sup> These incidents, she said, shaped her desire to help women prevent unwanted pregnancies

In 1914, Sanger fled to England to avoid a possible conviction and jail sentence for distributing her magazine, *The Woman Rebel*. The periodical’s distribution broke postal code obscenity laws and was a violation



Margaret Sanger (1879-1966), Chairman of the National Committee on Federal Legislation for Birth Control, on the stand before a special Senate Committee on February 13, 1931 to testify in favor of birth control as embodied in the Gillett bill (S. 4582).

of the Comstock Act of 1873. At the time, it was illegal to use the post office to send anything deemed obscene, or anything that promoted birth control or abortion.<sup>8</sup> While a fugitive, Sanger contacted British radicals, feminists, and individuals who supported population control. The theories espoused by these contacts continued to shape her leftist views and led to her developing a deeper justification for birth control promotion. Through her relationship with eugenicist and sex and drug researcher Havelock Ellis, Sanger came to believe that birth control would “fulfill a critical psychological need by enabling women to fully enjoy sexual relations, free from the fear of pregnancy.”<sup>9 10</sup>

### Sanger’s Eugenicist Philosophy

Eugenics, a term coined by Francis Galton, the cousin of Charles Darwin, was a pseudo-science introduced in the late nineteenth century. Eugenicists believed that through selective breeding, social ills could be eliminated, and the human race could be perfected. Methods for attaining a ‘better race’ included segregation, social exclusion, and involuntary sterilization,<sup>11</sup> and in North Carolina alone, an estimated 7,600 citizens were sterilized between 1933 and 1977.<sup>12</sup>

2 <https://womansrational.uchicago.edu/2022/09/21/margaret-sanger-the-duality-of-a-ambitious-feminist-and-racist-eugenicist/>

3 <https://rtl.org/educational-materials/margaret-sanger/>

4 <https://sanger.hosting.nyu.edu/aboutms/msbio/>

5 <https://sanger.hosting.nyu.edu/aboutms/msbio/>

6 <https://rtl.org/educational-materials/margaret-sanger/>

7 <https://womansrational.uchicago.edu/2022/09/21/margaret-sanger-the-duality-of-a-ambitious-feminist-and-racist-eugenicist/>

8 <https://www.britannica.com/event/Comstock-Act>

9 <https://rtl.org/educational-materials/margaret-sanger/>

10 <https://sanger.hosting.nyu.edu/aboutms/msbio/>

11 <https://www.genome.gov/about-genomics/fact-sheets/Eugenics-and-Scientific-Racism#:~:text=Eugenics%20is%20the%20scientifically%20erroneous,ills%20through%20genetics%20and%20heredity>

12 <https://northcarolinahistory.org/encyclopedia/eugenics-board>





Mrs. Margaret Sanger, the great birth control advocate, and her two sons

## **"WOMAN AND THE NEW RACE"**

By Margaret Sanger

This book, just published, is Margaret Sanger's greatest effort for the birth control movement. It contains the very essence of her life's work. It instructs the women of the world in the greatest step of their emancipation. "WOMAN AND THE NEW RACE" contains the sum total of Margaret Sanger's experience and knowledge on this vital subject—knowledge she dared to utter and print—knowledge for which she faced jail and fought through every court to establish as woman's inalienable right.

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|   |   |
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Sanger, a eugenicist who adamantly viewed birth control as another means to eliminate the reproduction of the "feeble-minded" from society,<sup>13</sup> was a member of The American Eugenics Society (AES) and the International Eugenics Society. Other notable members have included Charles and Leonard Darwin (grandson and son of evolutionist Charles Darwin); American birth control advocate and the founder of the Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress, Marie Stopes; and Professors D. Baird and W.C.W. Nixon, two of Britain's most celebrated illegal abortionists.<sup>14</sup>

These influences are historically evidenced in her writings and speeches. Years before the atrocities of Hitler upon the Jewish people during World War II, Sanger exposed herself as a racist and eugenicist. In her piece *Morality and Birth Control*, Sanger said that birth control "must lead to a higher individuality and ultimately to a cleaner race" and that "All of our problems are the result of overbreeding among the working class."<sup>15</sup>

Also, on the topic of birth control, Sanger said in her book *Woman and the New Race* that birth control "is nothing more or less than the facilitation of the process of weeding out the unfit, of preventing the birth of defectives or of those who will become defectives."<sup>16</sup>

On eugenics and selective breeding, Sanger writes in her autobiography, "The eugenicists wanted to shift the birth control emphasis from less children for the poor to more children for the rich. We went back of that and sought to first stop the multiplication of the unfit. This appeared the most important and greatest step towards race betterment."<sup>17</sup>

Her words leave little question about Sanger's views on race, the poor, and the disabled. Because of remarks like these, Planned Parenthood has struggled to remove the stain that Sanger herself left on her organization.

## **Planned Parenthood in a "Politically Correct" Age**

In April of 2021, The New York Times published an article titled *I'm the Head of Planned Parenthood. We're Done Making Excuses for Our Founder*. In the piece, Alexis Johnson, the president and chief executive of Planned Parenthood, tries to put some distance between the founder and the behemoth abortion provider. Her words are damning. "Up until now, Planned Parenthood has failed to own the impact of our founder's actions. We have defended Sanger as a protector of bodily autonomy and self-determination, while excusing her association with white supremacist groups and eugenics as an unfortunate 'product of her time.'" Johnson continues, "...she [Sanger] endorsed the Supreme Court's 1927 decision in *Buck v. Bell*, which allowed states to sterilize people deemed 'unfit' without their consent and sometimes without their knowledge..." and, "Sanger remains an influential part of our history and will not be erased...we must fully take responsibility for the harm that Sanger caused to generations of people with disabilities and Black, Latino, Asian-American, and Indigenous people."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> <https://womanisrational.uchicago.edu/2022/09/21/margaret-sanger-the-duality-of-a-ambitious-feminist-and-racist-eugenicist>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.ewtn.com/catholicism/library/margaret-sanger-mother-of-the-sexual-revolution-9605>

<sup>15</sup> [https://sanger.hosting.nyu.edu/documents/speech\\_morality\\_and\\_bc/](https://sanger.hosting.nyu.edu/documents/speech_morality_and_bc/)

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/8660/pg8660-images.html>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/8660/pg8660-images.html>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/17/opinion/planned-parenthood-margaret-sanger.html>

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## Planned Parenthood and the Hard Facts

When we examine the rate of abortion in the United States, the words of Planned Parenthood's current leader fall flat. Her implication that the racially motivated quest of their founder was true but part of the past is questionable. The Black community, in particular, has been disproportionately harmed by the evils of Planned Parenthood and Margaret Sanger. In 2020, the Centers for Disease Control reported that the abortion rate among Black women was 24.4 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15-44, while White women had a much lower rate of 6.2 abortions per 1,000 women of reproductive age. Moreover, although only 12.4% of the total U.S. population is Black, 39.2% of all abortions were performed on Black women.<sup>19</sup>

Since 1973, more than 64 million babies have been aborted in the United States.<sup>20</sup> Of this number, more than 20 million of them were Black babies.<sup>21</sup> But the disparity doesn't stop there. Not only are babies who are a racial minority aborted at significantly higher rates, but so are babies who are diagnosed with a disability. A 1995-2011 study estimates that among babies with a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome in the U.S., anywhere from 60%-93% were aborted.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, prenatal testing has a high rate of false positives. Dr. Tara Sander Lee of the Charlotte Lozier Institute writes that, "Flipping a coin would be just as accurate," as the Natera screening for Down syndrome in low-risk pregnancies. Thankfully, North Carolina passed a law in 2023 that prohibits abortions due to an unborn child's race, sex, or Down syndrome diagnosis.<sup>23</sup>

While Planned Parenthood denounces Margaret Sanger's discrimination against racial minorities and people with disabilities,<sup>24</sup> the national statistics do not back up their claims. And, while they do not speak of "weeding out the unfit," there is no question that Planned Parenthood, the largest abortion provider in the country, continues to follow eugenic practices that are more damaging to racial minorities and disabled individuals.

## A Legacy of Death and Destruction

Margaret Sanger's ideas and clinics were originally presented as a way for women to gain control over their lives and bodies under the guise of "equality." Her push for birth control ultimately helped to usher in the "free love" movement and tragically damage the institution of marriage. Today, women are still being told the lie that the fight for "reproductive rights" is simply a noble effort to protect human rights. Sadly, many are unaware that the roots of the abortion and birth control industries stem from a very dark and evil agenda. It is to our advantage to understand the past so we can fight for the future. Satan's lies have ruined and stolen countless lives. As Christians, we must boldly share the truth, courageously stand for the weak, and lovingly witness to others about the value of human life and salvation through faith in Christ. 🏰

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/71/ss/ss7110a1.htm>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.nrlc.org/communications/0123saus>

<sup>21</sup> <https://rti.org/multicultural-outreach/black-abortion-statistics/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://obgyn.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/pd.2910>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.ncleg.gov/BillLookup/2023/S20>

<sup>24</sup> [https://cdn.plannedparenthood.org/uploads/filer\\_public/cc/2e/cc2e84f2-126f-41a5-a24b-43e093c47b2c/210414-sanger-opposition-claims-p01.pdf](https://cdn.plannedparenthood.org/uploads/filer_public/cc/2e/cc2e84f2-126f-41a5-a24b-43e093c47b2c/210414-sanger-opposition-claims-p01.pdf)



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