


2015

Eugenics No Matter What?: An Investigation of the Eugenic Origin of Planned Parenthood and its Effect on Contemporary Society

Sarah McCrea
The College of Wooster

Follow this and additional works at: <https://openworks.wooster.edu/blackandgold>

 Part of the [African American Studies Commons](#), [American Studies Commons](#), [Social History Commons](#), [United States History Commons](#), and the [Women's History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

McCrea, Sarah (2015) "Eugenics No Matter What?: An Investigation of the Eugenic Origin of Planned Parenthood and its Effect on Contemporary Society," *Black & Gold*: Vol. 1.

Available at: <https://openworks.wooster.edu/blackandgold/vol1/iss1/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Open Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Black & Gold by an authorized administrator of Open Works. For more information, please contact openworks@wooster.edu.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](#).

Planned Parenthood was originally established as the American Birth Control League by Margaret Sanger in 1921. According to Students for Life of America,¹ Sanger was an active member of the Eugenics movement who developed it with the goal of “ridding the world of ‘human beings who never should have been born.’” They also argue that Planned Parenthood is still working toward that goal today.² While some of the pro-life views toward this organization are more than a little problematic, I find this assertion to be the most disturbing. In the following paper, I investigate these claims, as well as draw conclusions about the current mission of Planned Parenthood, taking into account the factor of institutional racism and its relationship to poverty and lack of resources among women of color in the United States.

The Link Between the Birth Control and Eugenics Movements

As the founder of the American Birth Control League, Margaret Sanger had a unique opportunity to encourage the application of eugenic principles. In her book, *The Pivot of Civilization*, Sanger defines these principles as ‘the study of agencies under social control that may improve or impair the racial qualities of future generations, either mentally or physically’ ...[eugenics is] the attempt to solve the problem from the biological and evolutionary point of view.”³ Many reproductive rights activists and supporters of Planned Parenthood claim that ensuring the purity and improvement of the white race was not the primary goal of Sanger’s work in the Birth Control movement; however, when one takes into account the historical evidence found in the writings of Margaret Sanger, as well as in her connections with major

¹ Students for Life of America is a non-profit organization that works with high school and college students in order to educate them about the pro-life cause and train them to be leaders in the Pro-Life movement later on in life.

² “Planned Parenthood & Racism.” *College Students for Life of America*. Accessed September 7, 2014. <http://college.studentsforlife.org/planned-parenthood-racism/>.

³ Margaret Sanger, *The Pivot of Civilization*, (New York: Brentano’s, 1922), 170-1.

players in the Eugenics movement, her intentions become clear.⁴ The American Birth Control League and the Birth Control Federation of America, which later merged to become Planned Parenthood, were, in fact, founded with population control in mind.

The story of the eugenic roots of Planned Parenthood can be traced back to the Reconstruction era. It was at this time that whites across the United States were forced to think about what would happen to the millions of slaves who were freed at the end of the Civil War. In their works *Maafa21* and “Margaret Sanger and the Racial Origins of the Birth Control Movement,” Mark Crutcher and Dorothy Roberts provide useful insights to the historical context of this time period. At the time, many whites—especially those in the South—believed that the blacks who had been enslaved were mentally incapable of functioning without the assistance of white people, and would have to be looked after by the government, which would therefore cause a drastic rise in taxes. In the words of renowned eugenicist Francis Galton, many white Americans, as well as others worldwide, felt that “[a]verage Negroes possess[ed] too little intellect, self-reliance, and self-control to make it possible for them to sustain the burden of any respectable form of civilization without a large measure of external guidance and support.”⁵ Whites also feared miscegenation – the mixing of the races through marriage or illicit sex – and the effects that it would have on the purity of the white race.⁶ These fears eventually translated to immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, when they began coming to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

⁴ Julie Rovner, “Planned Parenthood: A Thorn in Abortion Foes’ Sides,” National Public Radio, April 13, 2011, accessed November 5, 2013, <http://www.npr.org/2011/04/13/135354952/planned-parenthood-makes-abortion-foes-see-red>.

⁵ Francis Galton quoted in *Maafa21*, directed by Mark Crutcher (Life Dynamics, 2009). The information included in *Maafa21* has been cross-referenced by the author.

⁶ Dorothy Roberts, “Margaret Sanger and the Racial Origins of the Birth Control Movement,” in *Racially Writing the Republic: Racists, Race Rebels, and Transformations of American Identity*, ed. Bruce Baum and Duchess Harris (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 196-213.

Founded in 1922, the American Eugenics Society was established to deal with this perceived problem from a scientific point of view. This organization was backed by some of the most wealthy, influential, and philanthropic families in the nation, including the Rockefellers and the Carnegies.⁷ Originally, the founders of the American Eugenics Society followed in the footsteps of Francis Galton and supported positive eugenics – the idea that those who were best fit to continue the race should be encouraged to reproduce as much as possible in order to overwhelm the undesired population. In this case, the wealthy white population was encouraged to have as many children as possible in order to saturate the national population and suppress the growth of the black population. However, this changed when the American Eugenics Society became involved with Margaret Sanger and her organization, the American Birth Control League.^{8,9}

Sanger initially took up the issue of birth control in order to free women from the burden of unwanted pregnancies and to allow them to freely express their sexuality outside of the confines of marriage.¹⁰ Prior to World War I, Sanger was relatively unsuccessful in her crusade; in fact, she was arrested several times for disseminating materials that promoted the use of birth control. (These arrests occurred because of a law that classified such materials as “obscene.”) However, by the beginning of World War II, birth control was accepted and even lauded as a means of social control in the United States.¹¹ This occurred because the focus of the birth control movement shifted from ensuring the rights of women to ensuring the racial identity and purity of the American population. In this way, Sanger was able to win the support of the

⁷ *Maafa21*, directed by Mark Crutcher, 2009.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Roberts, “Racial Origins of Birth Control Movement”, 200.

¹⁰ Margaret Sanger, *Woman and the New Race*, (New York: Brentano’s, 1920).

¹¹ Roberts, “Racial Origins of Birth Control Movement”, 197.

eugenicists of her day.¹² However, their methods differed from hers. Contrary to those of Galton and the founding members of the American Eugenics Society, Sanger's beliefs did not include encouraging the "well born" to reproduce as much as possible; she felt that even when those reproducing were the people best suited to continue the race, high birthrates would lead to "extreme poverty, recklessness, deficiency and delinquency."¹³ Rather, Sanger favored the method of negative eugenics, or *preventing* births in the communities that were deemed "unfit." In *The Pivot of Civilization*, she declared that "Birth Control [*sic*], which ha[d] been criticized as negative and destructive, is really the greatest and most truly eugenic method..." and that "...[it] ha[d] been accepted...as the most constructive and necessary of the means to racial health."¹⁴ She also asserted that those who supported positive eugenics "[were] ignoring the exigent problem of the elimination of the feeble-minded."¹⁵

Sanger founded the American Birth Control League in 1921 in order to achieve these eugenic goals. In the appendix of *The Pivot of Civilization*, Sanger stated that the purpose of the American Birth Control League was to reduce the procreation of "those least fit to carry on the race" and "[t]o create a race of well born children."¹⁶ The people whose reproduction rates the American Birth Control League intended to reduce included the "feeble-minded, idiots, morons, insane, syphilitic, epileptic, criminal,...illiterates, paupers, unemployables, [and] criminals."¹⁷ It was the "unceasing and unrestrained"¹⁸ procreation of these people that Sanger considered to be

¹² *Maafa21*, directed by Mark Crutcher, 2009.

¹³ Margaret Sanger, *Pivot of Civilization*, 179.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 189.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 279-280.

¹⁷ Margaret Sanger, "My Way to Peace" (speech, Park Lane Hotel, New York, January 17, 1932), accessed November 6, 2013, <http://www.nyu.edu/projects/sanger/webedition/app/documents/show.php?sangerDoc=129037.xml>.

¹⁸ Margaret Sanger, *Pivot of Civilization*, 90.

“the most urgent problem”¹⁹ of the day. Through her writings and speeches, Sanger was soon able to convince her eugenic contemporaries of the worth of her method. She subsequently joined forces with the American Eugenic Society to implement birth control in the communities they believed needed it most. The communities included those of impoverished whites, as well as recent Southern and Eastern European immigrants and blacks.

Sanger's opinions on the aforementioned groups are evident in her writings and speeches. For example, she spoke of impoverished whites in a speech entitled “Program for the Future,” and declared that “[t]he Birth Control Movement [was] designed and organized to...make available to the poorest and most afflicted of our people, scientific information, to regulate and control the size of the family...[and to] raise the mass population to a higher intelligence and level of life.”²⁰ In the case of the Southern and Eastern European immigrants who were coming into the United States at the time, Sanger stated that a step toward peace in America would include “keep[ing] the doors of Immigration [*sic*] closed to the entrance of certain aliens whose condition is known to be detrimental to the stamina of the race, such as...[those] in the class barred from entrance by the Immigration Laws of 1924.”²¹ These laws set yearly quotas for the entry of immigrants of all national origins, and completely prohibited the entry of Asians. They applied to all immigrants, not just the “feeble-minded” ones.²²

As far as I have found, Sanger did not make any directly racist comments about blacks; however, she was not fighting for racial equality, either. If we take into account the general attitude toward blacks at the time, and consider the notion of white privilege, in addition to the

¹⁹ Ibid., 25.

²⁰ “Program for the Future,” (speech, Washington, DC, February 12, 1935), in *The Selected Papers of Margaret Sanger*, vol. 2, *Birth Control Comes of Age, 1928-1939*, 326.

²¹ Sanger, “My Way to Peace,” January 17, 1932.

²² “The Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act),” US Department of State: Office of the Historian, n.d., accessed November 11, 2013, <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act>.

things that she wrote about other non-white groups, we can reasonably infer that Sanger's defense of birth control for the purpose of preventing births in undesirable communities also extended to blacks in America. Since the era of slavery in the United States, whites have perceived blacks as lazy and too stupid to function without their guidance and leadership. We see this attitude in Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in which he argues that "blacks...[are] inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind."²³ We know from the existence of Jim Crow laws in the South and de facto segregation in the North that these attitudes did not disappear just because slavery ended. We can clearly see this in the June 1932 issue of *The Birth Control Review* (the newsletter and journal published by the American Birth Control League), in which Sanger addressed what she termed the "Negro problem."²⁴ In her article, Sanger asserted that "[t]he composite picture [threw] light on the need for birth control among the underprivileged Negroes, on the lack of...birth control work for Negroes, and...by Negroes for themselves."²⁵ Coupling this statement with the purposes of the American Birth Control League given by Sanger, we can see that her definition of feeble-minded – along with those of many Americans at the time – included blacks. She also indicated this in letters to Albert Lasker, a man from whom she received funds for her cause. On one occasion, she stated that "poor white people down South [were] not much better off than the Negroes," but that "there ha[d] at least been a start in several states to help the poor whites."²⁶ On another occasion, she exclaimed that "[she thought] it was magnificent that [she and Lasker were] in on...helping

²³ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, (1781-2; repr., New York: Library of America, 1984), 270.

²⁴ Margaret Sanger, n.t. in "The Negro Number," ed. Margaret Sanger, *The Birth Control Review*, 16, no. 6. (June 1932): 163.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Margaret Sanger to Albert Lasker, November 9, 1905, in *The Selected Papers of Margaret Sanger*, ed. Esther Katz, vol. 3, *The Politics of Planned Parenthood, 1939-1966* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 17.

Negroes to control their birth rate.”²⁷ As the editor of *The Birth Control Review*, Sanger also chose to publish pieces that discussed the desire of eugenicists to control the black population.²⁸ Because of our knowledge from her other writings of Sanger’s feelings toward poor whites, we are able to infer that the way she was interested in “helping” blacks coincided with the way she was “helping” poor whites—by working to prevent their populations from becoming a majority in the United States.

The members of the American Eugenics Society believed that “[e]ugenic goals [were] most likely to be attained under a name other than eugenics.”²⁹ It is for this reason that the organization became involved with Margaret Sanger and the American Birth Control League. Soon after, Sanger began raising funds necessary to open a birth control clinic in Harlem to serve the black community exclusively and measure “material concerning racial inter-mixture.”³⁰ Sanger also focused on bringing birth control services to poor communities (both black and white) in the South by sending researchers out to assess their knowledge of birth control methods and later set up clinics and educational projects.³¹ Throughout this process, she advocated for the use of black ministers and doctors to disseminate birth control information, because she did not “want the word to go out that [they] want[ed] to exterminate the Negro population.”³² She claimed that “the minister [was] the man who [could] straighten out [this] idea if it ever

²⁷ Margaret Sanger to Albert Lasker, July 9, 1942, in *The Selected Papers of Margaret Sanger*, vol. 3, *The Politics of Planned Parenthood, 1939-1966*, 136.

²⁸ Sanger, *The Birth Control Review*, 163-4.

²⁹ Frederick Osborn, quoted in *Maafa21*, Mark Crutcher, 2009.

³⁰ Margaret Sanger to Edward Murray East, December 31, 1929, in *The Selected Papers of Margaret Sanger*, vol. 2, *Birth Control Comes of Age, 1928-1939*, 56.

³¹ Peter C. Engelman, ed., “Birth Control or Race Control? Sanger and the Negro Project,” *Margaret Sanger Papers Project Newsletter*, no. 28 (Fall 2001), http://www.nyu.edu/projects/sanger/newsletter/articles/bc_or_race_control.html

³² Margaret Sanger to Clarence Gamble, December 10, 1939, in *The Selected Papers of Margaret Sanger*, vol. 3, *The Politics of Planned Parenthood, 1939-1966*, 26.

occurr[ed] to any of their more rebellious members.”³³ The intention was to get African-American women to accept birth control voluntarily. In the event that they did not accept birth control on a voluntary basis, Sanger supported giving “the whole dysgenic population” the options of “segregation or sterilization.”³⁴ In fact, forced sterilization was put into practice and ruled constitutional by the United States Supreme Court in the case of *Buck vs. Bell* in 1927.³⁵

Advocates of eugenics argued that birth control was the most humane method of promoting and achieving the goals of their movement. Gunnar Myrdal illustrated this in his book, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, when he claimed that “all white Americans agree that, if the Negro is to be eliminated, he must be eliminated slowly so as not to hurt any living individual Negroes.”³⁶ In addition, Myrdal's statement is in accordance with Sanger's idea that negative eugenics was a more permanent way to “awaken interest” in the issue of purifying the race of the “dysgenic population.”³⁷ In other words, eugenicists felt that it would take time for birth control to be effective in eliminating unwanted populations from the nation. Sanger created her institutions – the American Birth Control League, the Birth Control Federation of America and, finally, Planned Parenthood – as a means to this end. She ultimately intended for these organizations to have a lasting effect on the American population. That being said, it would follow that we would see evidence of a change in the racial composition of the nation today. According to the statistics, we do; however, it is the exact opposite of what eugenicists, and Sanger, hoped to achieve. Census records from 1921 indicate that non-whites comprised 10.2% of the American population that year while the 2010

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Sanger, “My Way to Peace,” January 17, 1932.

³⁵ Roberts, “Racial Origins of Birth Control Movement,” 199.

³⁶ Gunnar Myrdal, “Population,” in *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1944), 168.

³⁷ Sanger, *Pivot of Civilization*, 187.

census reports that non-whites now constitute more than 30% of the population.^{38,39} Be that as it may, it can be argued that, while the numbers of non-whites in the United States have increased over the past century, so has the number of Planned Parenthood facilities.⁴⁰

Planned Parenthood facilities continue to be found in areas with minority populations that exceed state-wide demographics. While the racial disparity in the utilization of abortion services does not directly contribute to decreasing the non-white population, it does prevent an even more rapid change in the demographic composition of the American population from occurring. A study conducted by Mark Crutcher, published in 2011, surveyed every ZIP code in the United States in which a Planned Parenthood facility was located. Crutcher then examined the minority population (by percentage) of those ZIP codes and compared them to the total minority population of the state in which each ZIP code is situated.⁴¹ Ultimately, Crutcher found that 73% of Planned Parenthood facilities were located in communities whose black and/or Hispanic populations were greater than those of their respective states. He also came to the conclusion that, out of 116 ZIP codes with more than one Planned Parenthood, 84 were “disproportionately black and/or Hispanic.”⁴² In addition to the information from this study, data from the Guttmacher Institute (the research branch of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America) and the US Census indicates that while African-American and Hispanic women account for only

³⁸ U.S. Department of Commerce, “Resident Population—Estimates by Age, Sex, and Race: July 1, 1921,” Table PE-11-1920s. <http://www.census.gov/popest/data/national/asrh/pre-1980/tables/PE-11-1920s.xls> (accessed September 10, 2014).

³⁹ U.S. Department of Commerce, US Census Data, *Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010*, by Karen R. Humes, Nicholas A. Jones, and Roberto R. Ramirez, Report C2010BR-02, US Census Data (Washington, DC, 2011), 4.

⁴⁰ It is worth noting that there are several other factors in the increase of the number of Planned Parenthood facilities in America. These include, but are not limited to, the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s, the Supreme Court rulings in *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* in 1973 and the ever-increasing disparate distribution of American wealth.

⁴¹ Mark Crutcher, *Racial Targeting and Population Control*, (Denton, TX: Life Dynamics, Incorporated, 2011), 1-22.

⁴² *Ibid*, 22.

about 14% of the US population, they receive around 55% of the induced abortion services performed in this country. This is opposed to non-Hispanic white women, who make up roughly 33% of the population and receive around 36% of induced abortion services.^{43,44} It is understandable that some would use these statistics as an indication of a modern continuation of the Eugenics movement; however, in order to have a full understanding of the communities in which Planned Parenthood facilities are located, we must also take into account their socioeconomic makeup and the role that race plays in relation to economics.

The Link Between Race, Poverty and Abortion

While Planned Parenthood's ties to the Eugenics movement are clear, it is not necessarily true that the organization's workers, volunteers, and officers are toiling to achieve Sanger's century-old eugenic goals in contemporary society. In fact, this hypothesis ignores a piece of the puzzle that is integral to our understanding of why Planned Parenthood facilities are located where they are: the link between race and poverty, and the underlying causes of that link. The origins of this relationship, like that of the Eugenics movement, can be found in the Reconstruction era. After the Civil War ended, blacks were faced with more freedom than they had ever seen in the United States and they believed that they would be treated with some modicum of equality. As we know, this was not the case. In his autobiography *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*, Frederick Douglass wrote that "[t]hrough slavery was abolished, the wrongs of [black Americans] were not ended. Though they were not slaves, they were not yet quite free...the Negro[es], after [their] emancipation...[were] in [a] state of destitution...the

⁴³ *Facts on Induced Abortion in the United States*, (Guttmacher Institute, 2013), accessed November 9, 2013, http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.html.

⁴⁴ U.S. Department of Commerce, US Census Data, *The Black Population: 2010*, by Malcolm P. Drewery Jr., Elizabeth M. Hoeffel, Tallese D. Johnson, and Sonya Rastogi. Report C2010BR-06. US Census Data. Washington, DC, September 2011, 3.

government...had made [them] free...[y]et [they] had...neither money, property, nor friends.”⁴⁵ Douglass also mentioned that white Southerners did not take kindly to the “thought of paying cash for labor that they could formerly extort by the lash.” Northerners were only slightly more willing to accept former slaves into their communities.⁴⁶ These attitudes left four million newly-freed blacks with very few opportunities to be self-sufficient, which, in turn, prevented them from rising out of the abject poverty of slavery. In her article on the societal exclusion of blacks after the Civil War, Susan Opatow indicates that this pattern of job and financial discrimination not only continued into the twentieth century, but also became institutionalized in the form of Jim Crow laws.⁴⁷ Contemporary statistical evidence suggests that it is still alive and well today, though not in such a conspicuous way.

The financial disadvantage that the black community faces directly influences its abortion rate. According to the Guttmacher Institute, 75% of women who obtain abortions do so because they feel that they are unable to afford a child. Contributing to this is the fact that 42% of women who obtain abortions annually make less than the standard of poverty, which, in 2008, was \$10,830 for an unmarried woman with no children.⁴⁸ In addition, the US Census Bureau reports that from 2007 to 2011, 14.3% of the total American population was in poverty, and that 25.8% and 23.2% of this group was black and Latino, respectively.⁴⁹ The income disparity between white and nonwhite people is best illustrated by wage data collected and published by the US Census Bureau. This information indicates that in 2009, white people made \$28,034 per capita,

⁴⁵ Frederick Douglass, *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Boston: De Wolfe & Fiske Co., 1892), <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/doug192/doug192.html>, 458-459.

⁴⁶ Susan Opatow, “‘Not So Much As Place to Lay Our Head...’: Moral Inclusion and Exclusion in the American Civil War Reconstruction,” *Social Justice Research* 21, no. 1 (March 2008): 30-31.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴⁸ *Facts on Induced Abortion*, (Guttmacher Institute, 2013).

⁴⁹ U.S. Department of Commerce, US Census Data, *Poverty Rates for Selected Detailed Race and Hispanic Groups by State and Place: 2007-2011*, by Suzanne Macartney, Alemayehu Bishaw, and Kayla Fontenot. Report ACSBR/11-17. US Census Data, February 2013, 2-3.

while black people made \$18,135, and Hispanic/Latino people made only \$15,063.⁵⁰ It is entirely possible for white Americans to attribute these statistics to laziness and feelings of entitlement on the part of blacks and Latinos, and many do, because, after all, numbers do not lie. It is believed that, if blacks and Latinos are making less money than white people, they must be doing less work. However, this principle, touted from a pedestal of white privilege, fails to take into account 500 years of attempts to tether people of color to the most menial jobs, lowest standards of education, and least-desirable housing that society has to offer. The rhetoric in favor of this scheme has changed from the 1500s to the present, but it has left one constant variable in its wake: a crippling poverty that has wracked the black community since the days of Reconstruction.⁵¹

The 500-year-old attitudes of white supremacy do not just disappear when civil rights laws are passed or when traditionally white nations elect black presidents. They are ingrained in the hearts and minds of white America, a community whose fortune was largely built on the backs of slaves. They shape, to a certain degree, nearly every interracial interaction that occurs in this nation, especially those in which people of color apply to white business owners for jobs and housing. Out of generations-old fear and misinformation, and influenced by the effects of the unequal system of education for whites and people of color, these men and women often relegate black and Latino employees to menial positions in which little money is to be made. This, in turn, causes many people of color only to be able to afford housing in the inner city, which

⁵⁰ U. S. Department of Commerce. *Income, Expenditures, Poverty, and Wealth*. Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2012. (Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, 2012), 459.

⁵¹ For the Latino/Hispanic community, this poverty came to light much later, but is equally, if not more, detrimental than that experienced by the black community.

exposes their children to the low-quality education found there.⁵² In other words, it is a vicious cycle, and it is this vicious cycle that often leads pregnant women of color to seek the services of Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers. It is in these low-income areas, populated by people of color, that these organizations feel that they can do the most good by providing medical services to women who experience unequal access to reproductive health care.⁵³

One area in which we can most clearly see how racial economic disparity influences access to reproductive healthcare is that of contraception. A study by Gina Secura and other researchers shows that limited access to effective contraceptives correlates with an increased number of unintended pregnancies and abortions.⁵⁴ Another study indicates that one of the most pervasive factors influencing a woman's use of effective contraception is affordability, and that women who experienced some form of discrimination (be it racial, socioeconomic, or sexual in nature) are more likely to use ineffective contraception than women who have not experienced discrimination. This study also found that 42% of its participants did not have health insurance, and that 37% of these participants experienced discrimination based on race.⁵⁵ While every American citizen is now required to have health coverage, there are people who are choosing to pay the \$95 penalty instead of more expensive insurance premiums.⁵⁶ Women who choose to go

⁵² For more information on the link between race and poverty, see *Locked in the Poorhouse: Cities, Race, and Poverty in the United States* edited by Fred R. Harris and Lynn A. Curtis (2000), *More than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City* by William Julius Wilson (2010), *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Post-War Detroit* by Thomas J. Sugrue, and "Separate and Unequal: America's Children, Race, and Poverty" by Marian Wright Edelman and James M. Jones in *Future of Children* (Summer 2004).

⁵³ See "Medicaid and Women" on the Planned Parenthood website (<http://www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/issues/medicaid-and-women/>).

⁵⁴ G Secura et al., "No-Cost Contraception Results in Substantial Reductions in Teen Pregnancy, Birth and Abortion," *Contraception* 88, no. 3 (2013): 437.

⁵⁵ Karla Kossler et al., "Perceived Racial, Socioeconomic and Gender Discrimination and Its Impact on Contraceptive Choice," *Contraception* 84, no. 3 (2011): 275.

⁵⁶ Tami Luhby, "No Thanks, Obamacare. I'll Pay the Penalty," *CNNMoney*, September 20, 2013, sec. Economy, <http://money.cnn.com/2013/09/20/news/economy/obamacare-penalty/>.

this route lack access to affordable and effective birth control and are, therefore, more likely to seek abortions.

A portion of the black community, including Dr. Alveda King, niece of Martin Luther King, Jr., views the disproportionately high rate of abortion for black women as a tremendous loss of black life.⁵⁷ In fact, at nearly 300,000 per year, the rate of abortion in the black community is higher than the death tolls of the top ten leading causes of death among blacks combined.⁵⁸ Whether or not it is realized or intended, the Planned Parenthood Federation of America—as the single largest abortion provider in the nation—plays a role in the making of that number. I believe that this has less to do with a secret racist agenda and more to do with a genuine desire to aid struggling women;⁵⁹ however, Planned Parenthood’s approach is only a temporary fix at best—it does not get at the roots of what is causing women of color to struggle in the United States. Both pro-life and pro-choice advocates need to look at the broader context of abortion and acknowledge that a woman’s racial and economic identities play a role in the decisions that she makes for herself and for her family. When these identities remove her from the white, middle-class community, the white, middle-class community cannot expect her to be receptive to its arbitrary societal expectations. Women of color face unique challenges in the United States. In all areas of society, we must recognize these and other manifestations of institutional racism and actively work to expunge it from the record of America’s present and future.

⁵⁷ Scott, Courtney. “Dr. Alveda King Tell Students of Modern Day Black Genocide.” *The College Fix*. May 1, 2014. <http://www.thecollegefix.com/post/17277/>.

⁵⁸ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “Deaths: Leading Causes for 2008,” *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 60, no. 6 (2012): 10.

⁵⁹ Some may argue that, in light of Sanger’s attitudes toward the impoverished, Planned Parenthood’s desire to aid struggling women is nothing more than a poorly disguised attempt to wage war on the poor. However, because of the evidence to the contrary, this is not the position that I subscribe to.

Bibliography

- Crutcher, Mark. *Maafa21*. Documentary. Life Dynamics, 2009.
- . *Racial Targeting and Population Control*. Life Dynamics Incorporated, 2011.
- Douglass, Frederick. *The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass*. Boston: De Wolfe & Fiske Co., 1892. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/dougl92/dougl92.html>.
- Edelman, Marian Wright, and James M. Jones. “Separate and Unequal: America’s Children, Race, and Poverty.” *Future of Children* 14, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 134–37.
- Engelman, Peter C., ed. “Birth Control or Race Control? Sanger and the Negro Project.” *Margaret Sanger Papers Project Newsletter*, no. 28 (Fall 2001). http://www.nyu.edu/projects/sanger/newsletter/articles/bc_or_race_control.html.
- Facts on Induced Abortion in the United States*. Guttmacher Institute, October 2013. http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.html.
- Harris, Fred R., and Lynn A. Curtis, eds. *Locked in the Poorhouse: Cities, Race, and Poverty in the United States*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000.
- Jefferson, Thomas. “Query XIV.” In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 270. New York: Library of America, 1984.
- Katz, Esther, ed. *The Selected Papers of Margaret Sanger: Birth Control Comes of Age, 1982-1939*. Vol. 2. 3 vols. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006.
- Katz, Esther, ed. *The Selected Papers of Margaret Sanger: The Politics of Planned Parenthood, 1939-1966*. Vol. 3. 3 vols. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010.
- Kessler, Karla, Lindsay M. Kuroki, Jenifer E. Allsworth, Gina M. Secura, Kimberly A. Roehl, and Jeffrey F. Peipert. “Perceived Racial, Socioeconomic and Gender Discrimination and Its Impact on Contraceptive Choice.” *Contraception* 84, no. 3 (2011): 273–79.
- Luhby, Tami. “No Thanks, Obamacare. I’ll Pay the Penalty.” *CNNMoney*. September 20, 2013, sec. Economy. <http://money.cnn.com/2013/09/20/news/economy/obamacare-penalty/>.
- “Medicaid & Women.” *Planned Parenthood*, 2014. <http://www.plannedparenthoodaction.org/issues/medicaid-and-women/>.
- Myrdal, Gunnar. “Population.” In *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, 157–81. New York: Harper & Bros., 1944.

- Opotow, Susan. ““Not So Much As Place to Lay Our Head...”: Moral Inclusion and Exclusion in the American Civil War Reconstruction.” *Social Justice Research* 21, no. 1 (March 2008): 26–49.
- “Planned Parenthood & Racism.” *College Students for Life of America*. Accessed September 7, 2014. <http://college.studentsforlife.org/planned-parenthood-racism/>.
- Roberts, Dorothy. “Margaret Sanger and the Racial Origins of the Birth Control Movement.” In *Racially Writing the Republic: Racists, Race Rebels, and Transformations of American Identity*, edited by Bruce Baum and Duchess Harris, 196–213. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.
- Rovner, Julie. “Planned Parenthood: A Thorn in Abortion Foes’ Sides.” *National Public Radio*, April 13, 2011. <http://www.npr.org/2011/04/13/13534952/planned-parenthood-makes-abortion-foes-see-red>.
- Sanger, Margaret. “My Way to Peace.” Speech presented at the New History Society, Park Lane Hotel, New York, January 17, 2013. <http://www.nyu.edu/projects/sanger/webedition/app/documents/show.php?sangerDoc=129037.xml>.
- . “Program for the Future.” Speech, Washington, DC, February 12, 1935.
- . *The Pivot of Civilization*. New York: Brentano’s Publishers, 1922.
- . *Woman and the New Race*. New York: Brentano’s Publishers, 1920.
- . Edited by Margaret Sanger. *The Birth Control Review* 16, no. 6 (1932): 163.
- Scott, Courtney. “Dr. Alveda King Tell Students of Modern Day Black Genocide.” *The College Fix*. May 1, 2014. <http://www.thecollegefix.com/post/17277/>.
- Secura, G, T Madden, J Mullersman, Q Zhao, and J Peipert. “No-Cost Contraception Results in Substantial Reductions in Teen Pregnancy, Birth and Abortion.” *Contraception* 88, no. 3 (2013): 437.
- Sugrue, Thomas J. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton University Press, 2005.
- “The Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act).” *US Department of State: Office of the Historian*, n.d. <http://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act>.
- U.S. Department of Commerce. *Income, Expenditures, Poverty, and Wealth*. Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2012. Washington, DC: US Census Bureau, 2012. <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0704.pdf>.

- U.S. Department of Commerce. “Resident Population—Estimates by Age, Sex, and Race: July 1, 1921.” Table PE-11-1920s. <http://www.census.gov/popest/data/national/asrh/pre-1980/tables/PE-11-1920s.xls> (accessed September 10, 2014).
- U.S. Department of Commerce. US Census Data. *Overview of Race and Hispanic Origin: 2010*, by Karen R. Humes, Nicholas A. Jones, and Roberto R. Ramirez. Report C2010BR-02. US Census Data. Washington, DC, 2011, 4.
- U.S. Department of Commerce. US Census Data. *Poverty Rates for Selected Detailed Race and Hispanic Groups by State and Place: 2007-2011*, by Suzanne Macartney, Alemayehu Bishaw, and Kayla Fontenot. Report ACSBR/11-17. US Census Data. February 2013. <http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/acsbr11-17.pdf>.
- U.S. Department of Commerce. US Census Data. *The Black Population: 2010*, by Malcom P. Drewery Jr., Elizabeth M. Hoeffel, Tallese D. Johnson, and Sonya Rastogi. Report C2010BR-06. US Census Data. September 2011. <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-06.pdf>.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. “Deaths: Leading Causes for 2008.” *National Vital Statistics Reports* 60, no. 6 (2012): 10.
- Wilson, William Julius. *More than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City (Issues of Our Time)*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.