

WILL THE REAL MARGARET SANGER PLEASE STAND UP!

By Stephen L. Bakke  August 17, 2015



Will the Real Margaret Sanger Please Stand Up!

Margaret Sanger, Planned Parenthood's founder, is a controversial legend. Supporters categorically deny that Sanger was anything less than a social justice devotee. One observer will find only darkness in Sanger's motivations and actions. Another will find only inspirational social activism.

Supporters acknowledge that Sanger was a controversial "eugenicist" (improving mankind, using reproduction control – emphasizing positive traits and eliminating undesirable ones). They often dismiss this by pointing out that "most intellectuals of the time" also held these beliefs.

Some things attributed to Sanger are "trumped up" for sure, but studying her is intriguing and informative. Let's take a look. I've made a sincere attempt to verify the accuracy of these quotes by identifying multiple sources and attributions. I omitted several quotes for which I could not find convincing attribution, or couldn't associate it with a verifiable speech or publication.

Many are skeptical of her motivations and transparency!

Consider these facts and quotes:

- In 1921 Sanger wrote a paper ("Eugenic Value of Birth Control Propaganda") in which she stated: "(eugenics is) the most adequate and thorough avenue to the solution of racial, political and social problems."
- "As an advocate of Birth Control, I wish to point out that the unbalance between the birth rate of the "unfit" and the "fit," admittedly the greatest present menace to civilization"
- "In this matter, the example of the inferior classes, the fertility of the poverty stricken classes, should not be held up for emulation to the mentally and physically fit"
- "The most urgent problem today is how to limit and discourage the over-fertility of the mentally and physically defective."
- As an advocate of a proposal called the "American Baby Code," she wrote: "the results desired are obviously selective births."
- Directors (should) "direct and control the population through birth rates and immigration"
- "Birth control is not contraception indiscriminately and thoughtlessly practiced. It means release and cultivation of the better racial elements in our society, and the gradual suppression, elimination and eventual extirpation of defective stocks – those human weeds which threaten the blooming of the finest flowers of American civilization."
- While she is adamant she would contact and discuss her opinions with anyone who would listen, it did include KKK affiliates and even Nazi elements. I don't believe she supported the underlying philosophy of these organizations.
- One of Sanger's favorite slogans, so much so that it adorned the masthead of her *Birth Control Review*, was this: "Birth Control: To Create a Race of Thoroughbreds."
- A member of her Board of Directors, Lothrop Stoddard, published the following book in 1920: "The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy."

- Historian Mike Perry found that Sanger attacked programs providing "medical and nursing facilities to slum mothers" because they "facilitate the function of maternity" when "the absolute necessity is to discourage it."

On August 7, 2015, a group of black clergymen sent a letter to the Smithsonian Institution's Portrait Gallery "Struggle for Justice" exhibit. They respectfully requested removal of Sanger's statue stating: "Sanger may have been a lot of things, but a 'champion of justice' she definitely was not. Perhaps the Gallery is unaware that Ms. Sanger supported black eugenics, a racist attitude toward black and other minority babies; an elitist attitude toward those she regarded as 'the feeble minded'



The obvious incongruity is staggering! Perhaps your institution is a victim of propaganda advanced by those who support abortion. Nevertheless, a prestigious institution like the National Portrait Gallery should have higher standards and subject its honorees to higher scrutiny." The Smithsonian has taken no action, and none is anticipated.

Planned Parenthood proclaims Sanger's lofty intentions and status!

Those who support Sanger emphasize her dogged fight to legalize birth control – which is an absolutely accurate observation. They publicly deemphasize, as did Sanger, the importance and necessity of abortion rights. Supporters view Sanger as a visionary, an unrelenting warrior for basic human rights who piled up "heroic accomplishments" in her lifetime. Yet they acknowledge her as an eccentric personality who is bound to attract significant skepticism. Here's how the PP website attempts to diminish or deflect the expected barrage of criticism and accusations:

- "Margaret Sanger was no saint."
- "Her life story provides a portrait that is colorful, bold, fascinating, formidable, and very human."
- "Like all women and men, Sanger had many human flaws. She could be cranky, vain, and scandalously unconventional in her personal life."
- "In her professional life, she could be single-minded to a fault, territorial, fanatical, patronizing, and rhetorically overblown."
- "She also held some decidedly outmoded, embarrassing, and hurtful opinions."

Racist? Heroic social justice advocate? Perhaps something else? You be the judge!