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Before we get any further into Black History Month, I thought I'd help pass on some information of significance. This is not to belittle what others have said or might say. It's just that, well, so much of what black history really means to America has been commercialized or reduced to trivial pursuits of the first black this and the first black that. And, although we still need to be reminded of the short distance between here and not-so-far-back there, we also occasionally need to take stock. So here goes.

You know who the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was, and most of us know, or at least think we know, what he stood for, right? I said "think we know" because I offer up what portends to be a little-known black history fact. Margaret Higgins Sanger, the mother of Planned Parenthood and grand dame of latter-day women's lib balderdash, hoodwinked the good reverend doctor — who, in his May 1966 acceptance speech of the Margaret Sanger Award, granted by Planned Parenthood Federation of America, mentioned a striking "kinship between our [civil rights movement] and Margaret Sanger's early efforts." Poor King, moving orator though he was, misspoke.

First, a little about the socialist herself. Sanger, born in 1879 into an Irish Catholic family, was encouraged by her father to be a nonconformist. While in nursing school, she married architect William Sanger and they had three children. The Sangers first lived for many years in Hastings, an affluent suburb of Westchester, N.Y., but her wanderlust lured her to New York City. As a visiting nurse on the Lower East Side, it was there that she adopted the cause of birth-control (and, shh, abortion) as one sidebar to her eugenics-based radicalism after a poor woman died following an "un-

'The Negro Project'

Planned Parenthood's philosophy isn't what you think

wanted" pregnancy. In 1916, Sanger opened her first birth-control clinic, an illegal birth-control clinic, setting in motion abominable ends to the beauty of giving life.

Over three generations, Sanger founded the Birth Control Review, which, regularly published pro-eugenics writings. Also during that time, she was jailed for passing on obscene literature and chastised repeatedly by the religious community. She had even shamelessly abandoned her own family in the name of, ahem, the cause, and took up with several men — including the English novelist H.G. Wells — and fled America to avoid prosecution. Underterred and unbowed, Sanger and a precursor to Planned Parenthood, the Birth Control Federation of America, decided to turn their attention to black folk. They devised a plan for an "experimental" clinic that Sanger said would "reduce the birth rate among ... elements unable to provide for themselves, and the burden of which we are all forced to carry," writes Tanya L. Green, author of "The Negro Project: Margaret Sanger's Eugenic Plan for Black Americans."

Sanger convinced black ministers, doctors and teachers — including NAACP co-founder W.E.B. DuBois — and others who straddled the upper echelons of black America, that so-called family planning programs (in-

cluding abortion, hush-hush) were a good thing. Blessedly, not all were so easily convinced. After holding a mass meeting on Sanger's behalf at the hugely popular and powerful Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, many blacks sensed the undercurrent of eugenics. In fact, the Rev. Adam Clayton Powell Sr., whose son succeeded him in Abyssinian's pulpit and later became a congressman, was an adviser to Sanger and her band of population-controllers, and took considerable criticism for his role for allowing "that awful woman in his church," Ms. Green writes. "Eventually, the Urban League took control of the clinic, an indication that the black community had become ensnared in Sanger's labyrinth." (You can read more about this at www.cwfa.org.)

Any woman who dares to claim that Planned Parenthood has strayed from Sanger's insidious "Negro Project" has got to be mad, a sister from another planet.

So, people, do not miss the point. Please don't get hung up on the word Negro, it was the preferred and respectable word of choice in those days and, Lord knows, we have been, and are, called far worse. And please don't go that other route, that victim route. Don't you dare let me hear you say, "Oh, the poor ignorant Negroes just couldn't comprehend the wonders of

birth-control!"

Stick to the issue. Sanger shrewdly used the influence of prominent blacks to reach the masses of those least in position to help themselves. But, instead of offering them charity and comfort, she misled these women — be they poor, ignorant, black, Irish, Jewish or otherwise — to believe that the real conspirators were men who wanted to control their bodies. (Do all whores think that way?)

Make no mistake: Margaret Sanger's views were bigoted, racist and sexist, and she was cunning to boot. Read Sanger's own words for yourself. "We do not want word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population," she once wrote.

I can't for the life of me figure out how women continue to sing the praises of such a woman — a woman who rebelled against her Catholic upbringing in particular and God in general, spat at her mother for having 11 children, rebelled against her own motherhood and rebelled against marital monogamy by fitting from man to man.

Please, visit Ms. Green's writings at cwfa.org and see how Sanger's twisted legacy took root. Then, perhaps, you'll better understand why I chose this topic as my first column honoring Black History Month.

Deborah Simmons is deputy editorial page editor for The Washington Times. Her column appears on Fridays. E-mail: dsimmons@washingtontimes.com.



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