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By Tanya L. Green

Sanger deceived Martin Luther King Jr. ✓ How Planned Parenthood targetted blacks

You can't celebrate Black History Month without mentioning Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. But what isn't mentioned is the twisted thread of irony woven between two events commemorated last month. Jan. 21 marked the observance of the 73rd birthday of the slain civil rights leader, and the following day marked the 29th anniversary of the landmark abortion decision Roe vs. Wade. People gathered in Washington in the same place as King's historic March on Washington, to protest Roe. For a black woman like myself, the two events could not have been more opposite in the freedoms gained and rights lost.

Few are aware that in May 1966, King was among the first recipients of Planned Parenthood Federation of America's Margaret Sanger Award, for what Planned Parenthood calls on its web site the "connection" between King's crusade for social equality and Sanger's birth-control movement. In the context of his acceptance speech, deliv-

ered by his wife Coretta Scott King, he said there was a "striking kinship between our movement and Margaret Sanger's early efforts."

Was King misled when he likened the struggle for equal protection and simple human dignity under the law to a campaign that resulted in denying fundamental human rights to unborn babies?

Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger formed the organization to implement the eugenic ideology that prevailed in the early 20th century. The eugenicists with whom she aligned herself espoused belief, as Sanger put it, in the "supremacy" and "purity" of certain races of people, notably the Aryan race. They believed the "fit" should be encouraged to reproduce, while the "unfit" should

constrain their numbers. The "unfit" were the poor, racial minorities and certain groups of immigrants, and the physically and mentally handicapped. They sought to accomplish this through sterilization, birth-control and, eventually, abortion.

In its early days, Planned Parenthood's international work was housed in the offices of the Eugenic Society. Sanger's publication, "The Birth Control Review" (founded in 1917) regularly featured pro-eugenic articles. Eugenicists financed Planned Parenthood's early projects, such as the opening of birth-control clinics and publication of pro-birth-control literature, and constituted most of the organization's board members.

Planned Parenthood denies that Sanger was a racist or an eugenicist, but there's truth to the

adage that we are known by the company we keep.

Particularly insidious is the obscure 1939 Negro Project created by Sanger and Planned Parenthood (then called the Birth Control Federation of America). They designed two southern rural Negro Project "demonstration programs" to show how birth-control "could improve the general welfare of Negroes" through maternal and infant death reductions and child spacing. But some blacks saw this as an extermination plot.

Sanger herself revealed concern over that impression in a letter to a colleague: "We do not want word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population, and the minister is the man who can straighten out that idea if it ever occurs to any of their more rebellious members."

She succeeded in convincing many black leaders, including ministers, of birth-control's "family planning" benefits. Eventually, these same "benefits," and more, would segue into the justification of abortion. So it is unsurprising that although blacks comprise a mere 12 percent of the population, black women account for 36 percent of all abortions performed (according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's December 2000 report). Or that a disproportionate number of "family planning" clinics are located in urban areas largely populated by low-income blacks and other minorities.

"I truly believe [King] was not aware of the duplicity of Planned Parenthood's agenda," King's niece, Alveda King-Bookes told me. She buttresses this with a di-

rect quote from him: "The Negro cannot win . . . if he is willing to sell the future of his children for his personal and immediate comfort and safety."

Mrs. King-Bookes said her uncle's words do not align themselves with the condoning of abortion. "Abortion is a violent act, and the unborn are the victims," she said.

Denial of the most basic human right — the right to live — is the premise for abortion. Sadly, some today have been led to confuse a "right" to an abortion with traditional civil rights. The irony is that while King heroically struggled to win equality for blacks, another movement was working subversively to reduce the number of black children born. What better way to limit the "Negro problem" than by decreasing the number of "Negroes" — and by persuading leaders in the black community to endorse it.

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