

Pavla Voborníková
B.A. Thesis Evaluation
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Eugenická minulost Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Pavla Voborníková has opted to tackle the thorny issue of eugenics in her B.A. dissertation. I must say that it is impressive to see such a wonderful, sensitive soul tackle such a controversial topic. As somebody with very strong views on the matter, I personally could not dream of analyzing it objectively. Pavla has managed to do what would be impossible for me to achieve. She deserves to be praised for this.

The dissertation is well-referenced throughout and contains an introduction, four main chapters, and a conclusion. Pavla consulted various aspects of the text with Professor Raková, Jana Sehnálková, and me. Of course, Svatava Raková and Jana Sehnálková deserve the most credit for consulting the content. I only helped on a few technical matters.

In the introduction, Pavla clearly spells out the course of the work and she points out why the activities of Margaret Sanger are key to the connection between the eugenics movement and the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. As the founder of the American Birth Control League (the predecessor of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America), Sanger was active throughout the period analyzed by Pavla. An excellent overview of the relevant literature is also provided.

Chapter 1 deals with the dreary issue of eugenics. As somebody who concentrates on the twentieth century, I am aware of the horrific effects of eugenics on countless people who were victims of Nazism and certain Communist regimes. Pavla defines eugenics as controlled reproduction. She more than adequately depicts fears expressed by eugenics supporters of a deterioration of the gene pool. The notion of sterilizing the unfit and encouraging reproduction of the fit is explained. The historical background of the

eugenics movement is outlined and then Pavla analyzes the birth of the American eugenics movement and its connection with the contraception cause. I am heartened by the fact that eugenics as such were discredited after the Second World War (at least in the civilized, democratic world).

Chapter 2 discusses the connection between the American Birth Control League and the eugenics movement. The Comstock Act of 1873, which regulated postal circulation of materials deemed obscene or immoral, provoked diehards like Margaret Sanger. Margaret Sanger then began to familiarize herself with Malthusians and other such types and then embarked on a huge publishing career complemented by various forms of activism.

Chapter 3 sheds light on other controversial activities undertaken by Margaret Sanger. Sanger's speech to the Ku Klux Klan, her contraception advisory center in Harlem, and the Negro Project in Harlem are all scrutinized. From this chapter, the reader can develop a fairly good picture of Margaret Sanger's dedicated activism.

Chapter 4 goes into great detail about the testing of contraception and sterilization on poor women throughout the United States. The main personality involved here is Dr. Clarence Gamble, who was closely tied to Sanger. The successes and failures of these efforts are analyzed in a balanced manner.

In the conclusion, Pavla states her opinion that Sanger was not a racist, but rather merely a woman dedicated to negative eugenics. She goes to great lengths to justify her opinion and I respect her point of view.

Overall, Pavla Voborníková has done a good job. One minor criticism I have is the number of typographical errors present in the text. I suspect WORD is the main culprit, but she should have proofread her work more thoroughly. It is not my place to offer my

personal opinion of Margaret Sanger's activities and I will refrain from doing so. I
recommend an **excellent** mark.

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