

Margaret Sanger



By Farid and Andrew

Time frame

- No reproductive rights, but “voluntary motherhood”
- We need full sexual freedom



Who was she?

- Birth control activist and educator
- Founder of American Birth Control League, which became Planned Parenthood Foundation of America
- Impetus?
 - Large family
 - Witnessed too many botched attempts

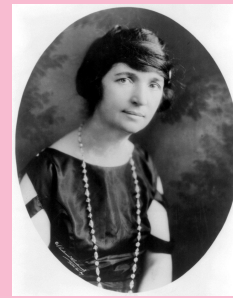


What did she do?

- Circulated contraceptive information
- Opened clinic in 1916
- Why did she do this?
 - Women's health & personal freedoms
 - Voluntary motherhood
 - Eugenics
 - Overpopulation



Activism and Work



- Launched “The Woman Rebel” newsletter (1914)
- Started family planning and birth control Clinic (1916)
- Founded American Birth Control league (1921)
- Published *Woman and the New Race* (1920)
- *Griswold v. Connecticut* Fully Legalized birth control (1965)

Rationale and Beliefs

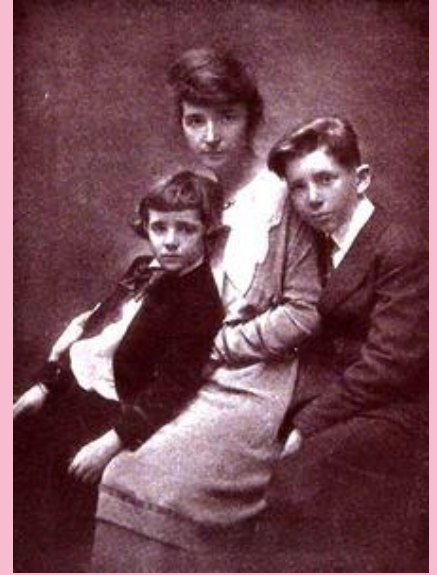


“children should be

1. Conceived in love
2. Born of the mother's conscious desire
3. And only begotten under conditions which render possible the heritage of health.

Therefore we hold that every woman must possess the power and freedom to prevent conception except when these conditions can be satisfied”

-principles of American birth control League



“Woman and the New Race” (1920)

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“Nor have famine and plague been as much ‘acts of God’ as acts of too prolific mothers...causes in overpopulation”

“Through birth control she will attain to voluntary motherhood...the basic freedom of sex, she will cease to enslave herself and the mass of humanity”

Comparison to Sojourner Truth

“Let it be realized that this creation of new sex ideals is a challenge to the church”



-Sanger, Women and the New Race (1920)

“That little man in black there, he says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Jesus Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him.”

-Sojourner Truth, Ain't I a Woman speech (1851)

Criticism

- Criticized for eugenic Beliefs (unfit should not reproduce) and sterilization advocacy
- However, did not advocate racist ideologies and worked with black communities to open clinics

Margaret Sanger Defends Her Battle For the Right of Birth Control

Mrs. Sanger, author of the accompanying article, editor of the short-lived *Woman Rebel* and one of the pioneers in the grand movement for allowing birth control in the United States, is at present in England carrying on her work, for the recent imprisonment of her returns to the United States and carries on the same work here. When her book, "What Every Girl Should Know," was published serially by *The Sunday Mail*, the postal authorities endeavored to suppress it, and held up one installment several weeks. Her husband, William Sanger, recently served a jail term in New York for giving one of Mrs. Sanger's pamphlets to a collector who represented himself as a friend of the movement, but turned out to be a spy employed by the Mr. Anthony Comstock. The imprisonment of Sanger brought about a national organization for repeal of the laws prohibiting the giving of birth control information. The death of the *Woman Rebel* is Chicago only an impediment to this propaganda, which will be laid before Congress with a demand that the Federal censorship be abolished. Mrs. Sanger, by the way, is the mother of three children.

By MARGARET SANGER.

It is quite natural and consistent with capitalist laws that there should be a heavy penalty for imparting information on birth control among the workers, when we view these laws in the light of our present-day society.

In the South, little, pale-faced children made welcome by society, and given dross and 10 years of age, wend their way to the mills early in the wintery mornings, before the sun is up, grinding their souls and bodies into and return, after twelve hours' toil, profits, as is done today.

A LARGE FAMILY OF CHILDREN is one of the greatest obstacles for the working man and woman in obtaining economic freedom. It is the greatest burden to them in all ways.

It is the man with a large family who is most often the burden in a strike. It is he who is the most difficult to bring out on strike, for it is he and his wife are the greatest sufferers through its duration. One could enumerate various instances where two or three groups of



told the working women these things and more.

As editor and publisher of *The Woman Rebel* I felt a glow of hope and inspiration in the response which came from the working girls and women all over the United States.

I saw the women of wealth, the masters' wives, obtain birth control information with little difficulty.

I saw that, if the working man's wife refused to have more children, she was compelled to resort to abortion. Over 50,000 abortions are performed in the United States each year, and 25,000 deaths occur as the result of them.

I saw that it is the working woman who fills this death list, for though the master's wife may resort to abortions, too, she is given the best care and attention which money can buy.

I saw that the Comstock laws produce the abortionist, make him a growing and thriving necessity, while the lawmakers close their Puritan eyes.

I resolved to give my time and efforts to defy the law, not behind a barricade of law books and legal technicalities, but by spreading the information among the workers directly, in factory and workshop. My magazine was confiscated and I was compelled to flee to a place where I could carry out my work unmolested.

When I have accomplished all that can be gained in this way, I shall return to take up the legal end of the case, ever delighting in the fact that

Legacy

- Sanger increased access and the legalization of birth control
- Spread awareness and education of female health and sex pushing for reproductive rights
- Supported research that eventually resulted in oral contraception
- Helped create the International Planned Parenthood Federation

Questions

How does Planned Parenthood benefit women today?

How has control over women's bodies changed? Are women fully autonomous with their body today?

What effect does birth control have on a woman's moral development?

What do you think about the pro-life or pro-choice debate?

Sources

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Images from Google images -> “Margaret Sanger”

Freedman, Estelle B. *The Essential Feminist Reader*. Modern Library, 2007.

<http://time.com/4081760/margaret-sanger-history-eugenics/>