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## The Advocation for Contraception in South Carolina: Planned Parenthood Around the Capital City in the Years Following the Pill

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**The Advocacy for Contraception in South Carolina:  
Planned Parenthood Around the Capital City in the Years Following the Pill**

**By**

**Madison Lee**

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of the requirements for  
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## Summary

Contraception found the most practical method in family planning with the emergence of the birth control pill. Finally, women could take birth control, and their lives, into their own hands. It was revolutionary in feminism and would bring about major progression in society. As the courts ruled that contraception could legally be prescribed to married women in 1965, it would be expected that this critical breakthrough would cause rejoicing among women in communities all over the nation for finally having access to the contraceptives they deserved. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

Especially in the southern region, the social taboos surrounding contraception generated strong controversy over birth control. Pre-existing issues, such as lack of proper sexual education and limited access to healthcare, contributed to these taboos. Not to mention, tensions remained high as these states had just been forced into desegregation and the United States was currently involved in the Cold War. However, the fight for contraception accessibility for all women continued. Staring at the face of all these challenges, advocates for improved contraception in the state of South Carolina were able to use the issues that opposed them to their advantage and strategically promote their cause throughout these communities.

From the beginning, these advocates, operating mainly under local chapters of the national Planned Parenthood organization, exploited the themes of overpopulation and the threat of communism in the form of scare tactics as a way of rallying support for the cause and expressing the urgency of the situation. They wanted people to see family planning as an unprecedented matter that needed rapid attention. Given the status of segregation and the Cold War, advocates drew on popular rhetoric of the time period and the pre-existing racism instilled in the citizens of South Carolina to evoke emotions of fear in persuasion of the cause. But,

Planned Parenthood wanted more than just for the people to accept the birth control pill, they wanted them to believe in it. They wanted them to actively support the cause because they believed it would be the key to better family planning and improved standards of living. There was a call to action that urged support from the population.

As unoriginal fear-evoking strategies became worn out, Planned Parenthood of Richland and Columbia Counties evolved the strategic way in which the organization functioned as a unit and within the local society. One avenue of promotion they used was a newsletter publication. It helped not only to spread the word about the organization's intentions and beliefs, but also to showcase the positive ways in which the organization was impacting the community. They sought to maintain a heroic image amongst the community through taking progressive stance and action against other issues that were brought to light in the debate over contraception, including the lack of sexual education and women's lack of access to healthcare. These endeavors allowed the organization to influence a greater portion of the community and promote contraception in an all-encompassing fashion. Planned Parenthood advocates were successful because they were not afraid to directly confront controversial aspects, such as the subject of morality, that they recognized in their communal audience and made efforts to penetrate surrounding Christian communities through their religious leaders. Additionally, their general emphasis on education indicated an effort to rebrand contraception as a medical, family planning decision rather than a moral one.

While only showcasing one battle in the midst of the grand war in advocacy for contraception, these advocates serve as an inspiration for change. As the trials of pandemic expose the fallacies of both public health and health care systems in the United States, this research gains value as it displays the persisting weakness in education and awareness.

Additionally, it demonstrates the intellectual diligence and rare drive involved in progressive movements, what it takes on both an organizational and societal level. As someone hoping to enter the field of medicine and public health one day as a physician, I am motivated to seek out issues that exist or could potentially arise and address them—I will not sit idle by, but attack these issues at the root and in their entirety to ensure success. I recognize, yet again, the power of education and intend to continuously promote it. I have always said that I don't just want to be a part of medicine, I want to change it. Perhaps, one day I will come back and say that this thesis was the reason why I changed it the way that I did.

## Introduction

“The days of controversy are pretty much in the past – the response to our program in South Carolina has been too good to have had it considered controversial. However, what is wrong with controversy? Controversy does not make a thing right or wrong. It merely denotes a difference of opinion. Was progress ever made without it?”<sup>1</sup> When the Planned Parenthood of Kershaw County claimed this in the early 1960’s, they were potentially unaware or extremely optimistic about the days of controversy that remained ahead of them over the next couple decades. They would face continuous backlash in the fight for legal and accessible contraception methods, especially the birth control pill. Despite the challenges ahead, these advocates were passionate and persuasive, but most of all, they were strategic. The way in which Planned Parenthood in the late 1960’s went about organizing their campaign, engaging with their target community, and drawing support for their cause worked cleverly well in helping them to reach their goals.

While hoping to make influences of their own, the work of the Planned Parenthood organization was not done in a vacuum. By the 1960’s a powerful consensus had developed at home and abroad that equated overpopulation with poverty and identified people of color as particularly susceptible to overpopulation.<sup>2</sup> In the U.S. south, this consensus behind racism, overpopulation, and poverty produced a decades long eugenic movement, especially in states like North Carolina.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret R. Otis, *South Carolina: On The Horns Of A Dilemma—Unplanned Parenthood* (Kershaw: Planned Parenthood of Kershaw County, 1963), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Michael E. Latham, “Technocratic Faith: From Birth Control to the Green Revolution,” in *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development, and U.S. Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011), 93-122.

<sup>3</sup> Kevin Begos, Danielle Deaver, John Railey, and Scott Sexton, *Against Their Will: North Carolina's Sterilization Program and the campaign for reparations* (Apalachicola, FL: Gray Oak Books, 2012).

Despite those cultural and social obstacles, advocates and supporters of the birth control movement in South Carolina were zealous and driven. Although their challenges were great, they developed a number of strategies when approaching their task to gain communal support and run their organization. In the Spring of 1967, the Planned Parenthood of Richland and Lexington Counties began a newsletter to be distributed to the areas surrounding the capital city of Columbia, South Carolina. The run of *Checkmate* was only expected to have lasted five years, but in that brief time span it demonstrated the motivations, actions, and transformation of organization as it went about attempting to gain support within the community. These publications, designed specifically for public consumption, provide insight into the functioning of the organization as well as the strategies utilized in promoting birth control methods.

How did contraception advocates in South Carolina, specifically those involved with Planned Parenthood of Richland and Lexington Counties, encourage their local community to support birth control from the 1960's through mid 1970's, even in the midst of a powerful national backlash against desegregation and the broader international threats of the Cold War? While their earlier rhetoric strategy utilized both national and international racism in order to evoke fear over the issue of overpopulation along with the threats of authoritative government and loss of freedom to socialism, these advocates eventually revolutionized their strategy by working to establish themselves as a positive, integral part of the community through heavy involvement as well as advocating for preexisting issues such as lack of sexual education and limited access to healthcare.

## A National Organization Takes Shape

In October of 1916, Margaret Sanger, with the help of her sister and another activist, opened the very first birth control clinic in Brownsville, Brooklyn. Though at this time the birth control pill was not available, the women distributed different types of mechanical birth control as well as other contraceptive information and advice. A few years later, in 1921, this collection of clinics united to form the American Birth Control League. Due to disputes surrounding the name, the League would ultimately become the Planned Parenthood Federation of America in 1942. The organization grew remarkably over this course of time and takes pride in being founded on the revolutionary idea that women should have the information and care they need to live strong, healthy, and independent lives. There was a strong belief in the strength of education and awareness as part of promoting ideas surrounding birth control. By 1960, the organization consisted of clinics and local chapters throughout hundreds of communities across the nation<sup>4</sup>. The most prominent chapter in the capital city of South Carolina, Planned Parenthood of Richland and Lexington Counties, was not founded until the next year, 1961.<sup>5</sup> Around a decade later, this local chapter would be renamed Planned Parenthood of Central South Carolina in 1971.<sup>6</sup>

As the national organization worked toward national expansion, the smaller state chapters struggled for funding and to make an impact. Local populations continued to resist access to contraception, because although the pill had been approved by the Food and Drug Administration, federal and state laws kept it illegal to prescribe. Then on June 7, 1965, advocates received a fresh wind. In a seven-to-two decision, the Supreme Court in the famous

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<sup>4</sup> Lawrence Balter, *Parenthood in America: An Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> *Checkmate*, "Planned Parenthood and Community Acceptance", Spring 1967, 3, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina. Hereafter SCL.

<sup>6</sup> *Checkmate*, "Name & Symbol Changed", Spring 1971, 1, SCL.

*Griswold v. Connecticut* case ruled that the Constitution protected the right of married couples to have privacy against state restrictions on contraception<sup>7</sup>. This came only five years after the birth control pill was approved by the FDA. In 1972, with the decision of *Eisenstadt v. Baird*, single women were given the same rights to contraception.<sup>8</sup>

Although it had now become legally accessible throughout the United States, contraception remained for the most part socially unacceptable, especially in conservative parts of the country. Many South Carolinians, for example, expressed confusion and general discomfort surrounding the morality of family planning. Planned Parenthood was confronted with questions such as: Will knowledge of planned parenthood increase immorality? Are contraception and abortion the same thing? Does planned parenthood interfere in people's private lives? When or at what point does parental responsibility for a baby begin?<sup>9</sup> Additionally, lack of sexual education created fears surrounding biological science behind contraception, prompting the questions: Is contraception harmful? Will using these methods keep me from having a baby later? Might not practicing birth control prevent the birth of a genius?<sup>10</sup> Whether due to outstanding social pressure or conventional social norms, women in the southern part of the United States especially were not inclined, and often discouraged by male authority, to speak out about women's rights and desires.

As the commotion caused by the introduction of the birth control pill ignited the public conversation into debate over contraception, outstanding issues that were already manifesting in communities across the United States were brought to light—most importantly, the overall lack of sexual education. Historically, the first organized, school-based sexuality education program

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<sup>7</sup> "Griswold v. Connecticut." Oyez. Accessed April 16, 2020. <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1964/496>.

<sup>8</sup> "Eisenstadt v. Baird." Oyez. Accessed April 16, 2020. <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1971/>.

<sup>9</sup> Otis, *Unplanned Parenthood*, 3-6.

<sup>10</sup> Otis, *Unplanned Parenthood*, 3-6.

was introduced in Chicago in 1913.<sup>11</sup> From that point forward, similar programs were implemented across the nation, but received backlash and were often subjected to the bigoted views of the community in which they were introduced. Prior to the 1960's, sexual education was being subjected to the family life education movement. Instead of discussing sexual matters, skills were taught in daily family living such as, “balancing a checkbook, applying for a job, learning to date, planning a wedding, finding a hobby... jewelry and furniture shopping.”<sup>12</sup> Along conservative lines, the goals were more concerned with social hygiene and moral purity—emphasizing limited sexual expression until marriage and discouraging masturbation<sup>13</sup>.

The 1960's and 1970's brought a sexual revolution and times began to change. There was a revival of sexuality education that stemmed from advocacy and promotion of sexuality as a positive aspect of the human experience that encompassed more than just coitus and reproduction. Dr. Mary Calderone, who cofounded the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) in 1964 in order to create formal informational materials about sexuality, asked the question, “If our culture has portrayed human sexuality to our young people in all of these negative or over-emphasized ways, and also as a *problem*, something to be controlled, is it not our social responsibility to balance these aspects with the positive and creative aspects of the sexuality with which man was endowed?”<sup>14</sup> However, as advocacy for improved sexual education increased, so did the backlash from the opposition. Organizations like Parents Opposed to Sex and Sensitivity Education (POSSE) and Mothers Organized for Moral

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<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey P. Moran, “‘Modernism Gone Mad’: Sex Education Comes to Chicago, 1913,” *The Journal of American History* 83, no. 2 (1996): 481, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2944944>.

<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey P. Moran, *Teaching Sex: The Shaping of Adolescence in the 20th Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 150.

<sup>13</sup> John P. Elia, “School-Based Sexuality Education: A Century of Sexual and Social Control,” in *Sexuality Education: Past, Present, and Future Issues* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009), 46-47.

<sup>14</sup> Mary S. Calderone, “Sex and social responsibility,” in *Sex Education: Issues and Directives* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1969), 108.

Stability (MOMS), emerged and were effective in the reduction of sexuality education measures at the state and local governmental levels. The entire decade was marked by intense controversy between the progressives, hoping to refresh and push sexual education forward, and the conservatives, resisting and holding onto outdated moral justifications.<sup>15</sup> These conflicts were particularly sharp in South Carolina.

Thus, as Planned Parenthood advocates in South Carolina approached contraception, they found themselves in the middle of the timeworn arena over birth control and sexual education that had taken shape on both a national and state level well before they began their work. Lack of education and the moral standards of the time period acted as additional opponents when gaining support for contraception. Their program going forward initially succumbed to the ideological logic that was already being exploited in persuasive propaganda. It would be several years before they were able to adapt rhetorical strategy independent of exhausted ideals.

### **Race and the Rhetoric of Overpopulation**

In the years closely following the legalization of birth control pill for married women, advocates for contraception wanted to excite the community and ignite the conversation. As a relatively new chapter of the organization, Planned Parenthood of Richland and Lexington Counties was eager to establish themselves as a powerful force within ongoing debates and begin to build support. Their campaign at this stage, however, was hardly what one might consider “progressive.” One prominent persuasive strategy that emerged immediately was the use of scare tactics in order to enliven public opinion. The essence of these scare tactics was racism, as they tapped into powerful reproduction and population discourses evident at both the national and

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<sup>15</sup> John P. Elia, “School-Based Sexuality Education: A Century of Sexual and Social Control,” in *Sexuality Education: Past, Present, and Future Issues* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009), 48.

international level. Advocates were aware of their target audience and the racial sentiments instilled in their respective communities and sought to use them to their advantage.

This was a tactic that had already been employed earlier in the 1960's. In 1963, Planned Parenthood of Kershaw County in South Carolina had set about enlightening their local community about the population problem they referred to as "The Dilemma." The problem being referred to is the way in which the pressures of increasing population negatively affected the overall quality of life of all members of the society. Whether this issue is valid based on logical explanations or not, this was their reality of the situation, and would serve their purpose well in a region marked by the eugenics movement. In these early years of their activities in South Carolina, Planned Parenthood presented the issue of overpopulation aggressively, slightly accusatory, and very directly. They explained that, "South Carolina's population profile punctuates the dilemma: South Carolina's population profile emerges as one of vast population growth, with steadily increasing problems of illiteracy, illegitimacy, unemployment, school dropouts, juvenile delinquency, family instability and ominous clouds of mounting taxes hovering over her economic growth. The time has come to re-examine old concepts and face the realities of today. If population automatically produced prosperity, India and China would lead the world."<sup>16</sup>

The racism here works on a few different levels. Around this time in conservative South Carolina, these increasing problems mentioned would have been associated with racial minorities. The federal Civil Rights Act wouldn't be passed until roughly a year later, meaning South Carolina was currently a completely segregated state.<sup>17</sup> This combined with the influence

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<sup>16</sup> Otis, *Unplanned Parenthood*.

<sup>17</sup> "Civil Rights Act of 1964 - CRA - Title VII - Equal Employment Opportunities - 42 US Code Chapter 21." Accessed April 26, 2020. <https://finduslaw.com/civil-rights-act-1964-cra-title-vii-equal-employment-opportunities-42-us-code-chapter-21>.

of the eugenics movement created a strong desire within society to significantly reduce reproduction of colored people. The advocates utilized preconceived notions and capitalized on them to incite anger or disgust along with fear of the potential terrors that await if things continue the way they are. To a degree, there was the implication that the society as a whole, including the elite and white majority, would have to band together to control these side effects that stem from the minority groups. While morally questionable, there was an underlying call to action, a sense of urgency that began to be associated with the problem as well. On another level, there is a degree of racism evident from the references to China and India. The direct contradiction between prosperity and high population countries like China and India works to appeal to nationalist values. The concept of international racism is closely associated with panic that America has to maintain a certain status, in comparison with the other nations of the world, in order to retain its hegemonic position in power among the other leading powers of the world. Here it appeared as a warning against untamed growth and impending fall from superiority.

After the birth control pill became legal, overpopulation scare tactics continued to be employed. As Planned Parenthood of Richland and Lexington Counties set out to create digestible content for the local population in 1967, the intentions of *Checkmate* were spelled out on the cover of the first issue of the newsletter, "Our aim, then, is not to preach birth control, but to acquaint you with the way our organization (Planned Parenthood) functions and to emphasize to you the urgency of the population problem."<sup>18</sup> Of the two main goals, addressing overpopulation as one demonstrated high priority and the fixation on this issue in strategy from the beginning.

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<sup>18</sup> *Checkmate*, "We Go To Press...", Spring 1967, 1, SCL.

The newsletter continued to argue that societal issues currently being addressed within the community, including “long range planning for hospital facilities, schools and a system of city-county freeways,” would be irrelevant if population control efforts were not improved. Similar to the Kershaw County chapter, they hoped to elevate the issue of family planning above all other societal issues and emphasize that it must be addressed immediately. Planned Parenthood, in general, continuously emphasized that family planning was an issue that is of higher-ranking importance as it effects all members of the society. This strategy worked well by creating an overarching sense of urgency that was more likely to gain support quickly.

Moving into the latter part of the decade, while continuing to stress the overpopulation issue, there was a subtle shift in the racial focus of this rhetorical strategy. Due to the effects of the Civil Rights Act as well as the abolishment of Jim Crow Laws in 1965, South Carolina would have made slow progress towards desegregation at this point. However, legal desegregation did not equate to the end of ingrained racism, especially in the south. As a progressive organization in the rigid environment segregation left behind, it was clear Planned Parenthood quickly saw the limitations of nationally focused racism to their cause. They hoped to win the support of as many of the local population as possible, regardless of color. Rather than falling into divisive forces of racism in the United States, they attempted to unify all Americans against a common enemy—foreign nations.

Internationally directed racism persisted in threatening overpopulation rhetoric. Planned Parenthood’s accusation was based on the idea that, “The more people the less food, land, etc. to go around. This is clearly demonstrated by Asian countries where increasing population has meant a lower standard of living for all.”<sup>19</sup> They attempt to exploit existing sentiments of

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<sup>19</sup> *Checkmate*, “...Why Plan?”, Summer 1967, 1, SCL.

American exceptionalism, the idea held by many of its citizens that America is a country that can and should triumph over all others. The advocates harnessed the condescending view of foreign nations due to racist ideals held by their audience to influence their emotions regarding the population problem. Then, by means of comparison, they utilized those views to emphasize the greatness of the United States as a nation, enticing feelings of patriotism and nationalism. At this time in history, international knowledge and experience was limited as technology remained relatively primitive. Any well-known information about Asian countries would have stemmed from the limited media content, which often took the form of biased propaganda. This aided the use of these scare tactics concerning foreign nations as the people were left to use their imagination to picture the alleged tragedies of overpopulation, scarce food, and poverty.

By the beginning of the 1970's, the effects of desegregation in society finally started to become apparent as there was now not only an obvious shift away from national racism, but an open stance against it as well. Around 1971, Mr. Douglas Steward, from National Planned Parenthood, spoke on, "Minorities and Population Control – Is it Genocide?" to students at the University of South Carolina. He warned them that when working in family planning, "their purpose and efforts are often questioned by persons in the minority groups – especially the young black male." He expressed his concern of focusing attention only on the "problems of the population explosion without simultaneously attacking the problems of poverty and racism," and reminded them that the "population explosion is primarily caused by the 1700 million middle class and affluent and not by the 30 million poor and near poor." Whether the result of backlash specifically against contraception advocates or backlash for racism altogether, the major shift in rhetoric strategy is clear here. The local chapter of Planned Parenthood seemed to be taking steps to address racially loaded strategy.

Overall, the strategy employed by Planned Parenthood organizations over the course of the 1960's relied heavily on the use of scare tactics that gained their power from the intense racism that consumed the hearts of the Southern communities they hoped to persuade. It is clear they relied on these tactics to elevate the issue of contraception by deeming all other issues insignificant in comparison. However, while earlier advocates relied heavily on racism on a national level through eugenic appeal, later advocates shifted the racial focus internationally to unify all citizens of the United States against nations abroad.

### **Grafting the Cold War: Anti-Communism and Contraception**

A lower standard of living was only one of the consequences of overpopulation. A much more alarming effect: the potential for communism. Planned Parenthood advocates found themselves in the middle of the Cold War, which had begun in 1947 and wouldn't end until over twenty years after this time in 1991. The mutual distrust that had built up between the Soviet Union and the United States had led to an arms race that threatened the peace of the world.<sup>20</sup> Around this time, global expressions of the Cold War, such as the interminable fight in Vietnam, were at the forefront of news and public conversation as the government elicited a great deal of anti-communist propaganda with familiar tones of fear and horror. Advocates were aware of the nature of media exposure and in turn the emotional susceptibility of the audience. Tailoring their strategies to take advantage of the impressionable population through Cold War rhetoric was irresistibly simple, especially in South Carolina.

Again, this was not a new tactical addition to the Planned Parenthood rhetoric. It had previously been exploited in the campaign in Kershaw County. "From Adam and Eve to 1830 - 1

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<sup>20</sup> History.com Editors, "Cold War History," History.com, A&E Television Networks, October 27, 2009. <https://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/cold-war-history>.

billion people ; 1930 - 2 billion ; 1963 - 3 billion; 70 years from now quadrupled to 12 billion - and then? ? SAME PLANET – NO LARGER! Too many people for two few jobs = more poverty = feeding ground for communism!”<sup>21</sup> The crisis of overpopulation was escalated from a problem that could cause issues within the community to a problem that had the potential to completely wreck the governmental structure currently in place and implant the most dreaded government system on the planet: communism. It’s theatrical but helped to catch the attention of the population. “The urgency, the difference, is that Planned Parenthood strikes at the source of many of the ills which plagued life today. Unlike mental health, polio, crippled children (the list is endless) which affect only certain segments of the community, Planned Parenthood touches and affects the lives of every living soul. These ills, unchecked can lead us to the total welfare state.”<sup>22</sup> Advocates were eccentrically direct and willing to use sharp comparison to other issues, even sympathetic ones such as medical conditions, to raise contraception issues above all others. It was melodramatic, but also urgent and demanding. “Responsible parenthood is the strength - the very foundation of a nation, irresponsible parenthood - it's ruin. Planned parenthood is responsible parenthood. The leaders of our state with the support of the voters and taxpayers of the state, by seizing the dilemma firmly by the horns, can control it.”<sup>23</sup> Given the challenges due to illegality of contraception, advocates had to rely on dramatic language and hyperbole in building an imperative case for contraception. The call to seize the moment, to take action, was vital to the organization’s attempts to impart a heroic image and trigger the desired response from the community.

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<sup>11</sup> Otis, *Unplanned Parenthood*, 7.

<sup>22</sup> Otis, *Unplanned Parenthood*, 7-8.

<sup>23</sup> Otis, *Unplanned Parenthood*, 8.

In 1967, even after legalization of the pill, this anti-communism strategy continued to weave its way into the pro-contraception campaign. The rhetorical tone shifted away from theatrics but maintained the threat of urgency. Overexaggerated language about population explosion leading to communism was replaced with the subtle inclusion of facts regarding rapid increasing population numbers or other statistics showcasing the dangers of overpopulation<sup>24</sup> scattered throughout the earliest newsletters. When directly addressing the problem, Planned Parenthood of Richland and Lexington Counties argued that, "...as population rises, our government necessarily will become more authoritarian and our lives more strictly limited and controlled."<sup>25</sup> They indicated here that without better contraception, the government would be forced to implement more socialist values to increase their power to be able to support the masses. Anti-communism remained a major theme in the media and in the minds of Americans at this point and the strong emotions against it were just as sharp as earlier in the decade. They continued the clever strategy of drawing on those sentiments and forcing the citizens to consider the issues that lack of contraception would cause. However, there was clear evolution in the way these advocates shifted their focus toward liberty. Beyond the distaste of communism, there was also engrained resolve for freedom amongst the target audience. Americans do not wish to give away their freedoms, and Planned Parenthood, quoting Roderick Seidenberg, warned that, "The autonomy of the individual... is doomed to shrink as society becomes ever more highly organized. At length, the individual as such will have vanished into the anonymity of the masses."<sup>26</sup> This was essentially a direct expression of the collective terror associated with communism. The blatant inclusion of it in the newsletter not only lended itself well to the scare

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<sup>24</sup> *Checkmate*, Spring 1967, 4; Summer 1967, 2, SCL.

<sup>25</sup> *Checkmate*, "...Why Plan?", Summer 1967, 1, SCL.

<sup>26</sup> *Checkmate*, "...Why Plan?", Summer 1967, 1, SCL.

tactics but emphasized the security of liberty and freedom of choice provided by American democracy as a means of rallying support for contraception.

Themes of American exceptionalism, or the idea that America is unrivaled and above the rest of the world—the exception to all the rules, continued into the fall issue that year. A civic luncheon was held with guest speaker General William H. Draper, a chairman from the Planned Parenthood-World Population Organization, who explained how, “The United States and other progressive nations are not those menaced by overpopulation. Africa, Latin America, India, Egypt, and other developing areas are in dire peril of a mass starvation...”<sup>27</sup> Mass starvation was clearly the residue of scare tactics being employed here through racial comparison between the sophisticated, exceptionally progressive nation that is the United States to the weaker, developing nations that should be looked at condescendingly. Continuing a direct quote from General Draper, “The key to the future lies in education. Progressive nations have already learned that limiting the birth rate means better health, better education, and longer lives for their people.”<sup>28</sup> This quote showcased a much more positive approach to dealing with this topic. Instead of focusing on the detrimental effects of overpopulation, it described the benefits of family planning and promoted education above all.

It cannot be overlooked that the speaker mentioned has the title of general. Throughout her history, along with the rest of the U.S. south, South Carolina had been characterized by a very pro-military culture so this would have resonated well. In some ways, it helped normalize the idea of family planning. The much-respected title provided a credibility to the speaker as well as a linkage to the government that seemed to give the impression that the United States, and its

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<sup>27</sup> *Checkmate*, “Civic Luncheon Meeting”, Fall 1967, 4, SCL.

<sup>28</sup> *Checkmate*, “Civic Luncheon Meeting”, Fall 1967, 4, SCL.

government, are in support of contraceptive methods. It also subtly worked as a reminder about the accomplishments of contraception as far as legalization in recent years.

The use of distinguished, governmental namedropping was a common detail amongst the rhetorical strategy used throughout the 1960's. Specifically, advocates included references to the presidents in office at the time to imply relevance and distinguish the issue. In 1963, advocates explained that, "President Kennedy has expressed deep concern over the population explosion and has said, 'In Latin America the magnitude of the population growth is already threatening to outpace economic growth.' Now, when you have a world leader of his faith making such a statement, it cannot be discounted as population propaganda. You are forced to accept it for what it is – the truth!" This was intended to validate the issue through direct explanation of the quote from the famously first Catholic President. There was also a hint of racism aimed at Latin American countries as well. In 1968, President Johnson was mentioned, "The President has spoken to the population problem more than 40 times since January 1965."<sup>29</sup> Again, namedropping promoted the issue as current and significant. Part of the success of the scare tactic was the urgent idea that this issue was so grave, the leader of the free world had spent considerable time discussing it within the past two years.

Overall, contraceptive advocates were able to embrace the anti-communist rhetoric of the time period and employed it as a means of gaining support within their local communities. While early advocates in Kershaw County used harsh, exaggerated language to describe the potential threats of communism, later advocates near the capital of South Carolina evoked the sense of freedom in contrast to the constraints of socialism as a means of persuasion. This rhetoric was strengthened by demonstrating presidential concern. By exploiting a strategy commonly used

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<sup>29</sup> *Checkmate*, "A Quote from Time Magazine – March 15, 1968", Spring 1968, 3, SCL.

throughout the Cold War, advocates were able to use established sentiments to bring a sense of urgency to their cause. However, as themes of anti-communism became increasingly exhausted alongside those of overpopulation and racism, Planned Parenthood realized the necessity to adapt and progress their strategy to cater to their rare community.

### **Strategic Innovation: Planned Parenthood and the Local Community**

In the modern world of public health, no initiative, no matter how powerful, can be successful without the support of the community. It is clear that Planned Parenthood of Richland and Lexington Counties knew this from the beginning. From the first issue of the newsletter, Planned Parenthood discussed how they credit their success to the wisdom and foresight of their leaders, “they knew that our program, to be successful, must be something the community realized it needed, it wanted, it understood and would accept, and these were our first goals.”<sup>30</sup> This insight was critical to the organization’s approach to their task. They wanted more than legalization—they wanted support. Throughout the next few years, this strategy would continue to escalate as advocates focused their efforts more and more on becoming an integral part of the community as a whole.

The emergence of the *Checkmate* was the first major facet of this strategy. The newsletters were an avenue the organization used in order to spread and make their opinions known on all matters. The publication showcased the chapter as active in the community and allowed it to maintain a neighborly image of itself. The newsletters contained advertisements for educational films available to borrow from the Planned Parenthood office on Assembly Street. There were stories of contributions the organization had made, including one of a \$50 cash prizes

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<sup>30</sup> *Checkmate*, “Planned Parenthood and Community Acceptance”, Spring 1967, 3, SCL.

they donated for a school newspaper competition on the topic of overpopulation. A sentimental tale of how home visits that were used for educating the women they came in contact with, allowed them to discover a family whose home was destroyed by a fire and they took additional actions to help get the youngest girl in school.<sup>31</sup> There were even a number of cartoons included in the newsletters. These strategic additions reflected positively on the image of the organization as well as further demonstrated the operating strategies of the organization. They showcased the nature of the organization's interaction with the community. Not only did they wish to inform and educate, they sought interest and involvement of local community members in the ongoing activities of the organization. Not only did they want the pill to be legal and accessible, they wanted communal support of contraception in general.

The overall light-natured, neighborly tone within the newsletters helped establish the organization as honest, simple, and working for the greater good, while the publication as a whole allows for the organization to remain transparent to the community. One issue featured a letter written by the executive director of the chapter, Mrs. Nettie S. Allen. She wrote, "And your Director who tries to keep her eye to the future, her ear to the ground, her foot out of her mouth, her shoulder to the wheel, and her finger in the pie! Yes, the work of Planned Parenthood goes on—always the same and yet always changing."<sup>32</sup> Despite the authors high rank in the organization, it was casual and relatable. It was encouraging and demonstrated the optimistic nature of the leadership, as well as the organization. It worked to unify others to the cause and recruiting active members and staff. Throughout the collection of newsletters from Columbia, community was clearly at the forefront of the efforts of the organization. The details exposed the

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<sup>31</sup> *Checkmate*, "A Picture Is Worth...", Summer 1967, 3; "Eau Claire High School Newspaper", Summer 1967, 4; "The Extra Mile", Summer 1967, 4, SCL.

<sup>32</sup> *Checkmate*, "As Your Director Sees It --", September 1970, 1, SCL.

approach of the organization in creating an empathetic, compassionate image for themselves. However, as it goes, actions speak louder than words. And brilliantly, advocates for contraception seemed to fully aware of this.

Planned Parenthood of Richland and Lexington Counties, as a result of their communal involvement, was fully aware of the taboos against sexual education in the region and were unhesitant to speak on these issues. In 1967, they commented that, “Now, more and more, the home and church are silent, or their contact with young people is so tenuous that there is no communication of ideas and values.” Instead, the public-school system was being relied on to not only, “impart biological facts to children, but also to instill in them a healthy and responsible attitude toward their own sexuality.”<sup>33</sup> While Planned Parenthood emphasized that communities must make individualized and situational plans for the improvement of sexual education,<sup>34</sup> there was no evidence of action, only observations. The issue remained that school-based sexual education programs did not accomplish the aforementioned goal and as a result, an extremely high volume of the population remained severely under-educated in regard to reproductive anatomy and sexual relations. Education was arguably the basis of all persuasion tactics being employed by Planned Parenthood at the time. How could these advocates hope to get their local population to support the birth control pill if they were clueless in all other aspects of sexuality?

A subsequent newsletter issue featured an example of another chapter of Planned Parenthood making an impact on sexual education in Georgia. It involved a woman in the chapter attempting to implement a pilot sexual education program for eighth graders. She felt as though, “Our organization (Planned Parenthood) must serve as a catalyst in the community by

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<sup>33</sup> *Checkmate*, “Where Does Sex Education Begin?”, Fall 1967, 1, SCL.

<sup>34</sup> *Checkmate*, “Where Does Sex Education Begin?”, Fall 1967, 1, SCL.

creating, encouraging, and supporting interest and action in this area.”<sup>35</sup> In general, the story served as a hopeful source of inspiration to the community members who received the publication, but also possibly to Planned Parenthood itself as well. It indicated that progress was being made elsewhere by other facets of the organization and highlighted the potential impact that local chapters in South Carolina could have also. Furthermore, this addition seemed showcase the way in which Planned Parenthood, the organization as a whole, hoped to be the superhero of the society. It demonstrated the strong ambitions behind their work, and that their reach went far beyond the birth control pill. It was as if Planned Parenthood of Richland and Lexington Counties was declaring their stance against the issue and hopes that sexual education would become an integral part of the standard school curriculum. In realizing the strain that the lack of sexual education placed on their ability to advocate successfully within the community, the turning point in strategy came when they began to pursue action.

By 1970, the Planned Parenthood of Richland and Lexington Counties was taking matters into their own hands and began offering a program called, “Sex Education for Parents,” that was for “parents who are struggling in their attempts to do an adequate presentation of human sexuality for their children.”<sup>36</sup> As making drastic changes to the educational curricula was a tedious project requiring longevity, taking action in the meantime demonstrated effort and passion. Again, it was aligned with Planned Parenthood’s intentional focus on education as a means of persuasion. It appealed to the community by means of offering support, especially to the parents who are struggling with matters of sexual education within their own households but were not comfortable discussing it with others. Strategically as well, creating their own programs

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<sup>35</sup> *Checkmate*, “Pilot Project”, Spring 1968, 3, SCL.

<sup>36</sup> *Checkmate*, “New Directions”, September 1970, 3, SCL.

gave them the opportunity to emphasize and promote contraception in the manner of their choosing and creativity.

Young adolescents and their parents weren't the only effected members of the community as lack of sexual education extended into higher education as well. In 1971, advocates called for the introduction of Planned Parenthood into college society as well. It described the campus scene of colleges and universities and the students as having "serious lack of knowledge concerning sex, contraception, and an understanding of their own sexuality..." as well as concerns regarding the medical service problems associated with "college students and their efforts to avail themselves of birth control services at (our) clinic."<sup>37</sup> Here again, Planned Parenthood spoke out about these issue and the extent to which they effect the society. These young adults were being sent away to college, gaining new levels of independence and temptation, without proper knowledge concerning sexuality and reproduction. They were desperate for access to proper health care. Addressing the issues as they resonate across all age groups demonstrated an all-inclusive nature to the organization.

Due to years without sufficient sexual education, the majority of the adult female population at this time was also gravely undereducated in sexual matters. Because of this, informational pamphlets were created as a main method of providing information regarding contraception. They detailed the way in which the birth control pill worked, instructions for use, along with major risks and typical concerns. One that was most likely distributed during the early 1970's by the Department of Health and Environmental Control entitled "The Pill", even included a chart template for keeping record of the menstrual cycle while on the pill. Advocates were strategic in creating these types of documents. Not only were they able to recognize the

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<sup>37</sup> *Checkmate*, "The Campus Scene", Spring 1971, 1, SCL.

need for improved distribution of information, the design and word choice throughout the pamphlet are critically catered to the target audience. Vocabulary such as womb, tube and birthing canal are used in the place of more anatomically correct terminology uterus, fallopian tube, and vagina. Simplifying the language would increase comprehensibility in an undereducated audience. The birth control pill had only been widely available for five to ten years prior and while women were desperate for a contraceptive option as easy as one pill a day, increased understanding and knowledge on the subject had the ability to ease any doubts or paranoia.<sup>38</sup> Advocates remained meticulous in the hopes of reaching a wide-ranging audience and persuading them of the positive force of contraception.

Over the years, while taking action was limited by governmental policies, Planned Parenthood and other advocates saw involvement in the matters of sexuality education as a strategic part of contraception advocacy. Not only did they hope to alleviate the obstacles presented by an undereducated audience when rallying support for their cause, they continued to improve their relationship with their local community and enhance their overall image. They were able to recognize the way in which their platform lent itself to also advocating for other issues. Strategically, by presenting strong stances against additional, related societal problems, not only did Planned Parenthood widen their support scope, but allowed them to be cleverly involved in multiple facets of progress. This put them at the forefront of the connected issues that would come together to achieve the ultimate goal: increased family planning. Sexual education was only one of these.

Another prominent problem hovering in the public conversation during this period in history was women's limited access to health care. From the earliest issues of the *Checkmate*

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<sup>38</sup> Department of Health and Environmental Control, *The Pill*, (197-), 2-10. Pamphlet consulted at the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina.

publication, Planned Parenthood took a resolute stand on this issue. In 1968, estimates from the Planned Parenthood-World Population organization were that out of the 5.3 million indigent women in the United States, 118,460 live in South Carolina, and 14,900 in the Columbia Metropolitan area. “Of these, it is estimated that 12,930 need and want subsidized birth control services and are not receiving them.” These statistics, although estimations, provide significant insight into how drastic access to health care was limited for women. Following this, the newsletter displayed a poem that started with a list of regular characteristics of a woman—that she’s married, with three kids, living in or near the poverty area of a big city, she works unless she has to stay home with children—and ends with, “She is typical of the five million American women who are not now receiving the subsidized birth control services they want and need.”<sup>39</sup> There was artistic flair to including a riveting sample of literature. The poem revealed the relevance of the issue. Since the woman described could be anyone, the inclusion was relatable and demonstrated that Planned Parenthood stood to raise awareness of this issue. The birth control pill was deemed legally accessible to married women three years prior and the alarming fact was that these women were still unable to obtain the contraceptive they were desperate for. Educating the audience as to the scale and value of the situation was employed here as a means of persuasion.

However, one of the most admirable qualities of the Planned Parenthood organization, as seen previously, was their ability to reinforce their words with actions. “Just as a carriage is no good without a horse, and a bow is no good without an arrow; neither is an educational and motivational campaign (in Planned Parenthood) complete without a clinical program.” As with the issue of sex education, Planned Parenthood went beyond demonstrating the problem and took

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<sup>39</sup> *Checkmate*, “Our Target”, Spring 1968, 1, SCL.

action against it as a means of strengthening communal support. Information pertaining to the clinical program Planned Parenthood had enacted at Richland County Health Department on Gregg Street described how, “Twenty-two clinics held per month” in total were conducted by a single team of three physicians, four registered nurses, two clerks, and a nurse’s aide. Two of the clinics were held at Gregg Street and five were held in rural areas in order “to further meet the expectations of OEO (Office of Economic Opportunity) that services must be ‘readily available and easily accessible.’”<sup>40</sup> The OEO provided the grant that allowed the local chapter to operate under specific guidelines, one being the clinical component. These clinics were major strides toward providing better access to contraceptive methods than before. The beginning of Planned Parenthood had centered around the establishment of the first contraception clinic and clinical support in the community had remained one of the critical aims of the organization. The clinics in South Carolina did not revolve solely around birth control, but instead, were described as, “Waiting to render the service each woman needs; nor is service confined to birth control information and devices. One of the best features of the clinical service is that it can include all types of Public Health services. Each woman is given a Chest X-Ray, blood test and limited physical on her initial visit, and she is privileged to bring her children for routine immunizations.”<sup>41</sup> This accentuated the way Planned Parenthood remained aware of their community and identified the severe need for improved health care access—to birth control methods as well as general care. It highlighted the extreme measures that they were taking in order to provide for the community, especially the women.

Through involvement in healthcare access and sex education, there was a conscious effort made by advocates to rebrand contraception as a medical decision, rather than a moral one. At

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<sup>40</sup> *Checkmate*, “Richland County Health Department”, Spring 1968, 2, SCL.

<sup>41</sup> *Checkmate*, “Richland County Health Department”, Spring 1968, 2, SCL.

one point, Planned Parenthood quoted Dr. Avram Goldstein of Stanford University concerning college-aged females, “A girl who goes to the health center for contraceptives is not asking for advice about morality. She is asking for medical information, and we have the obligation to give her the best.”<sup>42</sup> By the 1970’s, Planned Parenthood of Central South Carolina also contained a Medical Advisory Committee, that was tasked with, “the formulation of all medical policy standards.”<sup>43</sup> This indicated their effort to appeal to the logical side of humanity, rather than the spiritual.

However, as previously seen, these advocates exemplified communal awareness and understood religion would remain an issue despite their efforts. Throughout its history, part of what made the topic of contraception so controversial was the question of the morality of family planning. Southern states had become notoriously known for potent religious beliefs after a geographer named Wilbur Zelinsky published an article labeling the region dominated by Southern Baptists, Methodists, and evangelical Christians as the “bible-belt.”<sup>44</sup> Limited sexual education played a role, but the high concentration of religious devotion created a “taboo” surrounding the topics of sexuality, sexual relations, and birth control that continued to carry tones of racism as well. People were not fully able to understand how the birth control pill worked, much less decide whether their god and their conscience approved. Rather than disregard these facts, Planned Parenthood remained confrontational. They recognized the influence of this issue on persuading and gaining support and continued to adapt their strategy toward action. By addressing the question of morality, they hoped to shift the association of contraception towards medical, lifestyle choices.

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<sup>42</sup> *Checkmate*, Spring 1967, 2, SCL.

<sup>43</sup> *Checkmate*, “Medical Advisory Committee”, Spring 1971, 3, SCL.

<sup>44</sup> Matt Rosenberg, “Where and What Is the Bible Belt?” ThoughtCo, last modified January 28, 2020, <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-bible-belt-1434529>.

Strategically, advocates attempted to penetrate the religious communities by gaining the support of those in religious authority. One newsletter identified a number of members of the community that had been recruited to the cause. Among the list were a couple reverends, including one that is Presbyterian and the other that is Christian Methodist Episcopal.<sup>45</sup> While not specifically advocating that contraception was morally just, the name dropping of leaders of religious groups demonstrated the support of those congregations by association.

Two years later, this tactic was employed to an even greater extreme. The members of Clergymen's Advisory Committee, a specific committee of Planned Parenthood of Richland and Lexington Counties, were listed. The list contained an intriguing variety of denominations being represented, including Baptists, Episcopalians, and Lutherans. The goal of the group was explained to, "explore ways in which the committee members can interpret to their churches, congregations and the community as large the concerns and goals of Planned Parenthood."<sup>46</sup> This strategy urged the expansion. Advocates were able to recognize the highly religious section of the population as a subset that would potentially be the most difficult to persuade and went about targeting that subset specifically. The way in which the leaders ran their campaign allowed them to influence the religious niche and take advantage of the devotion the citizens had to their spiritual endeavors. There were impressive gains to be made by using the most influential members of the society, like these reverends, in order to appropriate the ideas into the community. These men would have been trusted by their congregations, especially in regard to morality, and therefore possessed the ideal platform to open their minds to these progressive, social issues.

By establishing themselves within the community, advocates with Planned Parenthood revolutionized their strategy to become much more progressive. They focused on involvement as

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<sup>45</sup> *Checkmate*, "Reinforcements", Spring 1968, 2, SCL.

<sup>46</sup> *Checkmate*, "Clergyman's Advisory Committee", Spring 1971, 2, SCL.

a means of generating a positive image and gaining trust of community members. Through this interaction, they remained aware and perceptive to the outstanding issues. They shifted from rhetorical strategy to active support of the manifesting problems in sexual education and healthcare access. This, combined with efforts to penetrate the religious subset of the community, worked together to rebrand the birth control pill as a medical choice, not a moral one. In the years following, it would be this strategy that allowed Planned Parenthood to maintain its respected position within the community in Columbia, South Carolina.

## **Conclusion**

It is interesting that there were few traces of feminine empowerment within the newsletters themselves. The only evidence of feminism addressed by Planned Parenthood of Central South Carolina discussed how, “The average American woman lives 74 years. She spends the first quarter of her life (to age 18.5) getting an education, the next quarter (to age 37) bearing and raising children, and then what? The second half of her life is blank – to be filled with productivity or stagnation. Women need legitimate and fulfilling roles in society quite apart from motherhood.”<sup>47</sup> As it appeared in the final issue of the available collection published in 1971, it demonstrated the way in which progressive marks to society must be taken one step at a time. In the earlier years of the campaign, focus was kept on societal issues to gain widespread support through the Cold War and civil rights movement. The men of different colors, who were already in conflict over who was superior, were not ready to discuss the women in the room. Then finally on the tail end, there was suggestion of a feminist approach as public conversation

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<sup>47</sup> *Checkmate*, Spring 1971, 5, SCL.

pushed movements against racism and women found their place in the fight for equality in South Carolina.

From the earliest newsletter in the collection, Planned Parenthood of Richland and Lexington Counties provided the justification for their advocacy, “Our task was simply one of public information and education... for morally and medically approved methods of child spacing.”<sup>48</sup> Conclusively, the aforementioned evidence suggests that while eventually the organization would embrace a strategic approach to this task rooted in their relationship with the community, earlier Planned Parenthood advocates fell into the overused racial and anti-communism rhetorical themes. The *Checkmate* collection provides extensive information into the beliefs and motivations behind the work they did and the way in which this local advocacy chapter functioned as a basic entity and within the respective community. One of the most fundamental components of the rhetoric that Planned Parenthood used was their ability to be proactive and confrontational about the issues at hand. Earlier advocates were direct and threatened the popular issues of overpopulation, such as poverty and communism, through the use of scare tactics to emphasize the urgency of the situation. However, later advocates learned to value the community. Through intentional communal involvement, they were aware of their target community and recognized the pre-existing conditions that would prove opposite their cause, including the lack of education, lack of access to health care, and the predominance of religious influence on morality. They were able to express their opinions and bring related issues into the discussion of contraception, especially those considered controversial, in a serious manner, while also maintaining a neighborly, heroic image that helped build trust between themselves and the community. Planned Parenthood of Central South Carolina was able to be

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<sup>48</sup> *Checkmate*, “Planned Parenthood and Community Acceptance”, Spring 1967, 3, SCL.

successful in their task of improving awareness, education, and access to birth control methods in Columbia, South Carolina and to this day remains there as an active clinic and advocate for women.

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### **Dedication**

This thesis serves as a tribute these advocates and their efforts to bring the conservative South Carolina community into the age of progress, not through sheer will, but through radiant strategy and devotion.