



Written by [Lisa Shaw](#) on May 7, 2018

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## Don't Abort Down's Babies

*From the print edition of The New American*

Since the Supreme Court decision on *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, abortion has claimed the lives of untold millions. Each of these lives is as important as the other, regardless of sex, color, race, or health. Not one life is more deserving than another of a chance to live. Yet it seems that a certain group has been targeted with a vengeance for extinction, calling many pro-lifers to immediate action, not just in America, but worldwide.



A chromosomal abnormality, Down syndrome has become the spotlight of the abortion debate, as the fight to eradicate the condition is being met with determination to save the lives of those diagnosed with it.

### A Bleak Future, and Present

The future of children diagnosed with this disease seems bleak, especially in countries such as Iceland intent on eliminating the deficiency by eliminating those who carry it. Prenatal tests were introduced in the early 2000s in the country, and while optional, nearly 85 percent of expectant mothers choose to have the screening done.

According to a CBS report in 2017, the abortion rate in Iceland due to a diagnosis of Down syndrome is nearly 100 percent, with the exception of one or two children per year who fly under the radar of the prenatal testing.

Hulda Hjartardottir, head of the Prenatal Diagnosis Unit at Landspítali University Hospital, where approximately 70 percent of Iceland's babies are born, stated in an interview with CBS, "Babies with Down syndrome are still being born in Iceland. [However] some of them were low risk in our screening test, so we didn't find them in our screening."

Just steps behind Iceland is Great Britain and our own America, where approximately 90 percent of unborn babies diagnosed with the syndrome are murdered.

Why the fear of Down syndrome and the determination to wipe out those who have it? Chairman of the Down Syndrome Research Foundation Peter Elliott, whose son has Down syndrome, surmised, "Why are the abortions at such a high rate unless they have been given the impression the situation was terrible and it warranted an abortion?" He went on to say, "I don't think the choice is presented to the parents in the light of the true situation where the children have a good life and are in fact viewed as a blessing to the parents, not a curse, and I don't think these parents getting abortions know much about Down syndrome at all."

While Elliott may be accurate in his assumption, his theory seems to address the subject of these abortions in direct proportion to the understanding someone may or may not have of Down syndrome. Still, there are those who have researched the disease and understand it, and they realize the life-



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altering effects it will have, good and bad, on those connected to it, as well as the misapprehensions surrounding the illness, and still decide to end the life of the child. Among their arguments are inconsistent mantras calling for the prevention of suffering for the disabled child, or decrying the inhumanity of the lack of opportunities provided for the child once born. In essence, to prevent pain and struggle for the child in the future, he should be murdered now.

Of course, “murder” is not the word that is used by those who prefer to blur the lines. Landspítali University Hospital’s Helga Sol Olafsdóttir counsels pregnant women dealing with chromosomal abnormalities. Her advice to them is, “This is your life, you have the right to choose how your life will look like.” She goes on to insist, “We don’t look at abortion as a murder. We look at it as a thing that we ended. We ended a possible life that may have had a huge complication ... preventing suffering for the child and for the family. And I think that is more right than seeing it as a murder — that’s so black and white. Life is grey.”

## **Logic of Muddled Minds**

The “greyness” that Olafsdóttir fondly speaks of should be more accurately described as smog. In this smog lies a culture that holds tolerance — a fair, objective, and permissive attitude toward those whose opinions, beliefs, practices, racial or ethnic origins, etc., differ from one’s own — to be the equivalent of a virtue, even when it comes to killing innocent life. While advocating for the equality of people with Down syndrome or other disabilities, many individuals and groups keep silent about, and in some cases support, the decision to end a life because of disabilities. It seems they can’t balance a sense of justice with a sense of entitlement.

*Photo: AP Images*

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While states such as Ohio have created laws to protect the lives of unborn children with Down syndrome, they have met with resistance from those who say it is not fair to burden either the parents or the child, a burden that will befall them as a result of educational funding or healthcare costs — therefore, unashamedly advocating for the deaths of these same “disadvantaged” individuals before they even have the chance to be treated unfairly.

This murkiness produces a mind-numbing hypocrisy, allowing a divide to be created between those who should be tolerated and those who should not. This chasm is not random, and its origin is not new. It is an idea planned and perpetuated with a very deliberate agenda. It is, in fact, eugenics in action.

Eugenics is the “study of or belief in the possibility of improving the qualities of the human species or a human population, especially by such means as discouraging reproduction by persons having genetic defects or presumed to have inheritable undesirable traits or encouraging reproduction by persons presumed to have inheritable desirable traits.”

In 1921, Margaret Sanger, founder of Planned Parenthood, wrote an article entitled “The Eugenic Value of Birth Control Propaganda.” In the piece she unapologetically stated, “The most urgent problem today is how to limit and discourage the over-fertility of the mentally and physically defective.”

These disturbing words, which at the time were written to, and accepted by, only a select group of people, have blossomed nearly 100 years later to be welcomed by many. They find their place as a



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fundamental belief in society, as whole segments of the world's population are being obliterated owing to the same ideals of eugenics and birth control that Sanger advocated, only wrapped in a more palatable package. Sanger, whose organization is now the leading abortion establishment, wrote in the same article, "Birth control propaganda is thus the entering wedge for the Eugenic educator," and, "Possibly drastic and Spartan methods may be forced upon society if it continues complacently to encourage the chance and chaotic breeding that has resulted from our stupidly cruel sentimentalism."

As we stare into the abyss of lost and missing lives now sacrificed to abortion, whether for poverty, convenience, or disability, Sanger's path from birth control to eugenics isn't difficult to trace. However, it isn't one we have to continue on, either.

Jerome Lejeune, the French geneticist who discovered the chromosomal premise for Down syndrome, was a devout Catholic and ardent pro-life advocate. He was disheartened by the course his discovery took as it led to the development of prenatal diagnosis and eventually to the abortions of those affected. He worked diligently in the cause for life, including serving as president of the Pontifical Academy for Life, until his death in 1994.

We find in Lejeune a passion in direct contradiction to that of Sanger, a passion for humanity that could be accused of "sentimentalism," as he asserted, "People say, 'The price of genetic diseases is high. If these individuals could be eliminated early on, the savings would be enormous.' It cannot be denied that the price of these diseases is high — in suffering for the individual and in burdens for society. Not to mention what parents suffer! But we can assign a value to that price: It is precisely what a society must pay to remain fully human."

### **Stopping the Violence**

In a fully human society, violence against the weakest and most vulnerable, with or without disabilities, would not be tolerated. It seems there are many steps that need to be taken to reach that end, which some states are in the process of. Ohio, as mentioned above, is the third state to ban abortions due to a diagnosis of Down syndrome, following North Dakota and Indiana. Still other states — Arizona, Kansas, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and again North Dakota — have banned abortions based on the sex of the baby, with Arizona including race in its ban. While it could seem that these abortion bans favor the lives of some unborn (i.e., female, minority, disabled, etc.) over others, in reality they help pave the way for the protection of all unborn infants, as well as address the onslaught of those marked for demise for more than just being considered unnecessary. We must remember that the acceptance and legalization of abortion didn't happen in one step, but incrementally as society was conditioned to view the unborn as less than human. In this same way, incremental steps must be taken to unveil the humanity of lives hidden in the womb.

William Wilberforce, a British politician and avid abolitionist, became known for his determination to abolish slavery in a society where it was not uncommon to believe slaves to be less than human. Wilberforce continued for years to introduce abolition bills, even though it seemed he was getting nowhere. Finally, with the introduction of a bill that only seemed to partly address the slave trade, and with strengthening support of a growing population of abolitionists, the "Slave Trade Act" was eventually established. Though this act did not abolish slavery as a whole, it did encourage the abolition of the slave trade, paving the way for the eventual ending of the dehumanizing industry of slavery. The movie *Amazing Grace* depicts Wilberforce's struggle to end the slave trade, which included his victories



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and discouragements. A pivotal scene shows Wilberforce's close friend and British Prime Minister William Pitt encouraging the abolitionist to continue his repetitive work during a time of shifting politics in Parliament and a changing of public attitude, saying, "Next time, you will be pushing at an open door."

In this same way, we can support the rising tide of the states, organizations, and individuals who are similarly working to end the dehumanization of the unborn by myriad legislative actions.

Whether an unborn child will eventually be taken care of or neglected, be treated justly or unjustly, or be healthy or diseased isn't for us, in our humanity, to assume. Determining the fate of an individual based on our own presuppositions is arrogant and dangerous, and leads to a distorted view of life, a view that applauds the murder of the innocent under the guise of protecting them from injustice and harm.

There is a big difference between "thinking" and "blindly following." As Malcolm Muggeridge was fond of saying, "Only dead fish swim with the stream." For those who are thinking, it is obvious that tolerance holds no place for hypocrisy. For those who are following, it seems tolerance holds no place for thinking. And to an unthinking society, killing the weakest and most vulnerable becomes an acceptable practice justified by a lack of "stupidly cruel sentimentalism."

As with slavery, we see that dehumanizing a segment of the population comes from a lack of understanding. This lack of understanding of the value of human life has led to the slaughter of millions of lives. These lives that are missing from our society and from our families — sons and daughters who would have been brothers or sisters, or grown to be aunts, uncles, mothers, fathers, even best friends — can never be replaced. However, through diligent effort we can strive to save other lives from the fate of abortion by changing the hearts and minds of our society. And in this endeavor, we, like Wilberforce, can eventually find ourselves "pushing at an open door."

*Photo: AP Images*



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