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COMMITTEE ON  
NATURAL RESOURCES

COMMITTEE ON  
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## CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Honorable Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III  
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June 25, 2020

Honorable Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III;

Thank you for your service, especially during these challenging times.

In recent weeks, our nation has confronted the issue of racial injustice with the killing of George Floyd. Seeing a police officer kneeling on Mr. Floyd's neck for almost nine minutes while he screamed, "I can't breathe," sent shock waves through America, re-igniting a national conversation on race and inequity in our society.

Thousands of citizens have marched, prayed, taken part in protests, and engaged in moving conversations as we collectively try to grasp and understand the pain of our African-American brothers and sisters, and discuss how to establish a more just society for all.

One of the most powerful ways we can do this is looking back for inspiration and guidance from "voices and sages" of the past, who also faced difficult seasons, and overcame them.

Mr. Secretary, in your statement on the National Portrait Gallery website you share:

*"Although it will be a monumental task, the past is replete with examples of ordinary people working together to overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges. History is a guide to a better future and demonstrates that we can become a better society—but only if we collectively demand it from each other and from the institutions responsible for administering justice."*

I could not agree more.

These voices act as a cultural lighthouse in the midst of storms and turmoil, guiding us to safety and hope. They provide a path for us that we could not find alone.

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You reinforce this concept as you go on to say:

*"Will we heed the call of courageous figures throughout history who spoke out against slavery, marched on for voting rights, and sat in for basic equality? Will we challenge the nation to live up to its founding ideals? In the memory of those taken from us and for the good of the country, I hope that we do."*

I share in your hope.

That is why it is so troubling the National Portrait Gallery features a bust and portraits of Margaret Sanger, Founder of Planned Parenthood. As our nation struggles to address racial injustice, it is unconscionable that an avowed racist and eugenicist is featured so prominently. Ms. Sanger is not the kind, inspirational figure you refer to when you talk about challenging our nation *"to live up to its founding ideals."*

Ms. Sanger's writings and teachings stand in sharp contrast to America's founding principles which embrace equality, justice and human rights for all.

Please consider some of Ms. Sanger's words, values and philosophy as identified below, in context with the very serious discussion America is having today on equality.

*"By all means, there should be no children when either mother or father suffers from such diseases as tuberculosis, gonorrhoea, syphilis, cancer, epilepsy, insanity, drunkenness and mental disorders. In the case of the mother, heart disease, kidney trouble and pelvic deformities are also a serious bar to childbearing. No more children should be born when the parents, though healthy themselves, find that their children are physically or mentally defective." (Woman and the New Race," 1920, Chapter 7)*

*"The second step would be to take an inventory of the second group, such as illiterates, paupers, unemployables, criminals, prostitutes, dope-fiends; classify them in special departments under government medical protection and segregate them on farms and open spaces." (My Way to Peace 1932)*

In this speech, Ms. Sanger was clearly thinking communities of color:

As reported in her autobiography, she gladly accepted an invitation to speak at a KKK rally in New Jersey. Here is how Ms. Sanger described the event. *"I accepted an invitation to talk to the women's branch of the Ku Klux Klan ... I saw through the door dim figures parading with banners and illuminated crosses ... I was escorted to the platform, was introduced, and began to speak ... In the end, through simple illustrations I believed I had accomplished my purpose. A dozen invitations to speak to similar groups were proffered."* (Margaret Sanger, "An Autobiography," Page 366)

*"Finally, Ms. Sanger shaped the eugenics movement in America and beyond in the 1930s and 1940s. Her views and those of her peers in the movement contributed to compulsory sterilization laws in 30 U.S. states that resulted in more than 60,000 sterilizations of*

*vulnerable people, including people she considered "feeble-minded," "idiots" and "morons." -- Arina Grossu.* Once again, many of these included African-Americans.

In this hinge moment of America's history, when the light is shining so brightly concerning racial injustice, it is critical that our national institutions lead the way in creating positive platforms for healing and equality. Sadly, the racist views of Ms. Sanger greatly dim this light.

As a member of the United States House of Representatives, but more importantly as an American citizen deeply concerned about racial justice, I am respectfully asking that you remove the bust and portraits of Margaret Sanger from the gallery.

I hope you will fulfill the lofty goals set forth on the gallery's website as it proclaims, "*... these Americans—artists, politicians, scientists, inventors, activists, and performers—form our national identity.*" A racist and eugenicist like Margaret Sanger should not help form our national identity.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter and I look forward to hearing from you. Let us all work to have a nation in which there is equality and justice for every American.

Sincerely,



Russ Fulcher  
Member of Congress  
Idaho's First District