

Erratum

In the review of the book, “The Selected Papers of Margaret Sanger. Vol. 1: The Woman Rebel, 1900–1928” (book edited by Esther Katz) by Vern L. Bullough, Ph.D., published in *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Volume 33, Number 6 (December 2004), pp. 611–612, the name Sanger was incorrectly spelled as Sander throughout the entire book review.

The publisher and typesetter regret the repeated error that was introduced at a late stage of production.

Below please find the corrected version of the entire book review.

The Selected Papers of Margaret Sanger. Vol. 1: The Woman Rebel, 1900–1928. Edited by Esther Katz. University of Illinois Press, Urbana, Illinois, 2003, 512 pp., \$65.00.

*Reviewed by Vern L. Bullough, Ph.D., D.Sci., R.N.*⁵

This is the first volume of a multivolume edition of archival material on Margaret Sanger, the recognized founder and leader of the birth control movement in the United States (a term which she and her friends coined in 1914). She was also a leader in globalizing birth control through her part in organizing international conferences and cultivating contacts among scientists, economists, social reformers, and population leaders around the world. Interestingly, her international work was kept independent of her leadership of the American movement. She continued to be the dominant figure in that movement (not without some battles with others) until her death in 1966 and remained an international icon. It was through her initiative in the 1950s that money was raised for the successful efforts of Gregory Pincus and his team to find an oral contraceptive pill.

The records about Sanger and by her are voluminous. Katz, the editor of this volume, heads a project at New York University to gather the sources together, annotate them, and eventually publish them in succeeding volumes, no easy task because she reports that there is an archive of over 120,000 letters, speeches, diaries, pamphlets, book-

lets, and organizational and legal records documenting her long and eventful life. Because the sources are scattered in many libraries and private collections, searching them out itself requires major detective work by a large number of students, researchers, librarians, archivists, and others working to bring everything together. Because Sanger knew everyone in the world associated directly with sexual reform or research and, for a time, was very active in radical politics, her range of correspondents was enormous, ranging from sexologists such as Havelock Ellis, to birth control pioneers such as Marie Stopes, to the communist Emma Goldman, the labor union organizer, Big Bill Haywood, the philanthropist, John D. Rockefeller Jr., and writers and intellectuals such as H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw. Few individuals, outside of kings or presidents in history, have had their lives as intensely researched as this project will do for Sanger. When completed, it will be a must source for researchers trying to find information about sexual practices in the first half of the twentieth century.

Though Sanger wrote two autobiographies, these were in part conceived by her as propaganda tools, and were sanitized to remove the complexities, nuances, and contradictions which show up in her papers. What appears in this first volume, which covers her life from 1900 to 1928, is a woman constantly discovering new things about herself. Though her father was an atheist and socialist, her mother was a devoted Catholic who died of tuberculosis and the burden of having 11 children and numerous miscarriages. Sanger attended a parochial elementary school but then with the help of 2 of her older sisters she went to a private boarding school and then nursing school, which she left after two years to marry William Sanger. The couple was active in socialist and left wing causes, although it was only gradually that Margaret became more outspoken. Both later became active in the IWW (the International Workers of the World). William Sanger, who had earned a good living as draftsman after 8 years of marriage, decided he wanted to become an artist and to help out financially as he cut back on his work, Margaret returned to work as a part-time nurse. It was here that she encountered the desperately poor women recovering from multiple pregnancies or unhygienic abortions that led her

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to become interested in birth control and sexuality, and found the cause that dominated the rest of her life.

During the period covered in this volume, Sanger began her travels to spread the message of birth control throughout much of the world, but it also records her experience on picket lines with striking textile workers, her stays as a house guest at many lavish English country estates, the time she spent in jail, her first national lecture tour, and her establishment of the nation's most successful birth control organization.

This collection is mainly of letters she sent or articles or pamphlets she wrote and some diary entries. Letters of response to her are also included where the originals of her own are lost. Occasionally, the editor adds brief narrative snippets about what was going on in her life when the

correspondence is not always clear. There is an attempt by the editor to identify every individual mentioned in a letter or elsewhere. Sometimes in her later writings, Sanger herself censored some of her earlier statements and such changes are marked and noted. There are still other documents and letters dealing with this period that will be covered in later volumes.

This volume, however, marks the first publication of what is a major project which should be in libraries everywhere. It is scholarship at its highest level and when complete will be a standard work of reference for anyone interested in the development of birth control or the history of sex education not only in the United States but also in the rest of the world. It will also record the life of one of the most influential women of the twentieth century.