

“A house divided against itself cannot stand.” Abraham Lincoln borrowed the words of Jesus from today’s Gospel when he addressed the State Republican Convention in 1858. He was running to be a senator for the state of Illinois.

Prior to the Civil War, he recognized the divisive issue of slavery could not continue in its then present state. Slaves were treated as property throughout the South while the peoples’ basic human rights were suppressed. Africans’ human rights were not recognized by slave owners in the South who sought to hold onto their wealth and power at the expense of their slaves. Abraham Lincoln reasoned: “I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half *slave* and half *free*. I do not expect the Union to be *dissolved* - I do not expect the house to *fall* - but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become *all* one thing, or *all* the other.”ⁱ

Five years later as a wartime president during the civil war, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation to set the captive slaves free. Two years later, with the nation still at war, President Lincoln lost his life to the assassin John Wilkes Booth. Ultimately, slavery was abolished, the Union was preserved, and the role of the federal government was strengthened.

“Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste and house will fall against house” (Lk 11:17). Once again, we live in a divided nation and the specter of racism still rears its ugly head especially in the divisive issue of legalized abortion. Planned Parenthood advocates for the reproductive health of an expectant woman at the expense of the unborn child within her womb.

Last year, the president of Planned Parenthood acknowledged that the founder of the organization, Margaret Sanger, was racist. “Up until now, Planned Parenthood has failed to own the impact of our founder’s actions. We have defended Sanger as a protector of bodily autonomy and self-determination, while excusing her association with white supremacist groups and eugenics as an unfortunate ‘product of her time.’”ⁱⁱ For example, Sanger endorsed the Supreme Court’s 1927 *Buck v. Bell* decision allowing states to sterilize people deemed ‘unfit’ without their consent and at times without their knowledge. This Supreme Court decision was flawed just as is the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision which helped to legalize abortion.

Planned Parenthood’s defense “ring hollow.” “Whether they personally identify with Sanger’s ideology or not, they continue to carry out her mission, by serving as the leading executioner of our children.” These very strong words are not my own but those of Black pro-life activist and former NFL player Benjamin Watson.

The arguments for slavery of Africans in the 19th century ultimately revolved around denying slaves fundamental human rights. The arguments for abortion assert that a child in the womb has lesser rights since the reproductive right of the mother is more important than that of the child. This denies a child the unalienable right to life, a right that is more fundamental than the right of a person to take that life away.

“Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person - among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life” (CCC 2270).

We all must pray fervently for a greater respect for life and end to the social sins of our age which blind so many to the devil’s work of division and destruction of life.

ⁱ [nps.gov/liho/learn/historyculture/housedivided.htm](https://www.nps.gov/liho/learn/historyculture/housedivided.htm)

ⁱⁱ [catholicnewsagency.com/news/247330/pro-life-advocates-planned-parenthood-cant-just-wish-away-margaret-sangers-racism-eugenics](https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/247330/pro-life-advocates-planned-parenthood-cant-just-wish-away-margaret-sangers-racism-eugenics)