

Forced Sterilizations in Peru — Paid for by US Taxpayers

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In countries under heavy US influence or occupation, the US government has a habit of pushing political programs that would be too unpopular to implement in the United States.

In Japan, for example, the US occupation after World War II offered an opportunity for American bureaucrats to push abortion policies they couldn't win support for in the United States.

As part of a larger agenda of pushing a Japan-style New Deal and other US-styled interventionist policies, the US occupiers were more than happy to help the new Japanese regime impose a eugenics-friendly program designed to combat alleged overpopulation.

[According to](#) Holly Coutts:

“ The centralized government in Japan, coupled with a political culture infused with socialist ideas and traditional loyalty to a strict hierarchy, allowed policymakers to create a far-reaching program. This same type of program was impossible in the US and South Korea [another country under heavy US influence] as it would not have corresponded to their public ideas...¹

Japan would become the first country to legalize abortion for socioeconomic reasons.

But, at least in these cases, women, for the most part, took part in these programs voluntarily — the aborted children, of course, were not consulted.

But consent on the part of the women apparently doesn't trouble American policymakers when it comes to funding and supporting population-control policies in foreign countries.

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In recent months, mainstream media outlets [have been highlighting](#) the rarely-mentioned forced sterilizations that took place during the Alberto Fujimori years. Part of the renewed interest is due to the fact that Fujimori, who is 79-years-old, and [back in prison](#) after a failed attempt at a pardon, now faces charges for his part in the sterilization program. The program is said to have led to the forced sterilization of over 200,000 women in the late 1990s.

Like many programs aimed at reducing fertility and population growth, the program was largely aimed at lower-income women and members of indigenous populations living in the Peruvian highlands.

And, as with so many government coups and policies of questionable morality found in Latin America, we find the hand of the US government. The *National Catholic Register* [reported on Tuesday](#) that the US Agency for International Development — the US's primary foreign "aid" agency — had essentially taken control of the Peruvian national health system during the period of the sterilizations:

“ An unsettling aspect of the entire Peruvian campaign is the involvement of the U.S. government. The specific agencies that were involved in Peru’s sterilization campaign were the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the NIPPON Foundation (a Japanese nonprofit). It is known that UNFPA donated \$10 million for the forced-sterilization campaign.

“An important document was published by E. Liagin with the title ‘USAID and Involuntary Sterilization in Peru,’ in which she analyzes the action[s] made between 1995 and 1997,” said Polo. “According to her, ‘the internal archives of USAID show that in 1993 the United States basically took charge of the national health system of Peru. ... The bilateral accord of 1993 that put the United States in such advantageous position, known as Project 2000, was signed by the Peruvian and American authorities in September 1993 and was effective for seven years, ending in 2000. An examination of this document shows that USAID-PERU, the office in Lima of USAID, was in any conceivable form in control of the Peruvian health sector, before and during the years that the abuses took part.”

In the case of Japan, Coutts notes that “Japan’s eugenic legacy caused [a focus] on abortion among the poor and inferior when dealing with their perceived population problem.”

It appears that Peru in the 1990s fell victim to similar sentiments.

International planners, of course, have long been notable for a belief that much of the world is overpopulated and that this problem must be “solved” with government action. USAID workers may have sensed an opportunity to partner with the Peruvian regime — which itself viewed the impoverished Indians in the Andean highlands as “problematic” — in efforts to implement a eugenics program in Peru. It’s not a coincidence that efforts at combating overpopulation usually end up targeting ethnic and socio-economic groups most lacking in both economic and legal resources.

Similar programs, of course, would face widespread opposition in the US. The brief history of eugenics here in the US is heavily tainted with a legacy of white-supremacist and anti-poor-people sentiments. Moreover, forced medical procedures are unpopular, as we can see even today in the ongoing opposition to mandatory vaccinations.

Nevertheless, forced sterilizations in the name of “improving” or shrinking the global population has long been an element of Progressive politics in the US as is [well documented](#) in Angela Franks’s 2005 book [*Margaret Sanger’s Eugenic Legacy: The Control of Female Fertility*](#).

In the US, though, objections arising from either religious beliefs or politically *laissez-faire* sentiments have led to problems with implementation in the US. But poor Indians in rural Peruvian villages are much easier targets, and USAID likely knew it. The end result was American taxpayers once again found themselves paying for government policies that they would never want implemented in their own communities.

The Peruvian case is especially horrific because so many of the sterilizations were forced. But, even if only subsidized or “encouraged,” programs of this sort are nothing more than government attempts at central planning of demographics.

This fact [was emphasized by Ludwig von Mises](#) who noted that population-control programs are, ultimately, attempts by government planners to determine who gets born and when. This motivation, Mises wrote, is not qualitatively different from what drove some of

the world's most horrific regimes in their own attempts at eugenic planning:

“ It is vain for the champions of eugenics to protest that they did not mean what the Nazis executed. Eugenics aims at placing some men, backed by the police power, in complete control of human reproduction. It suggests that the methods applied to domestic animals be applied to men. This is precisely what the Nazis tried to do. The only objection which a consistent eugenicist can raise is that his own plan differs from that of the Nazi scholars and that he wants to rear another type of men than the Nazis. As every supporter of economic planning aims at the execution of his own plan only, so every advocate of eugenic planning aims at the execution of his own plan and wants himself to act as the breeder of human stock.

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- 1 “From population control to reproductive rights : constructing abortion and contraception in postwar Japan” by Holly Coutts, 2006, University of British Columbia. <https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/831/items/1.0078406#downloadfiles>



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