# Following Women's Money: Population, Development, and Indo-American Birth Control Politics in the Mid-Twentieth Century

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# Following Women's Money:

## *Population, Development, and Indo-American Birth Control Politics in the Mid-Twentieth Century*

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*Abstract: This article traces the history of a transnational birth control movement centered on India and the United States during the 1950s, a transitional decade that followed Indian independence from the British Empire and that witnessed growing US hegemony in a cold war world. I focus on one key philanthropic organization, the Watumull Foundation, and the activities of its leader, Ellen Jensen Watumull. The Watumull Foundation funded birth control activists in India and the United States, including Dhanvanthi Rama Rau and Margaret Sanger, and supported a growing turn toward population control as a chief purpose of the transnational birth control movement. The result was an Indo-American birth control politics in the 1950s that drew upon racialized networks of kinship, marriage, and friendship; was controlled largely by women; and mobilized small donors to bring American philanthropy into Indian development planning.*

During a speaking tour in the United States in 1953, Dhanvanthi Rama Rau, who was president of the Family Planning Association of India (FPAI), spoke at a private reception in Los Angeles. Leading figures in the American birth control movement were among the event's sponsors, including Margaret Sanger, the well-known activist, and Katharine McCormick, who was funding the scientific research behind the birth control pill. Other sponsors may have been less known among birth control activists, but they were influential among the small Indian diasporic population in the United States. They included Vivian Thind, whose husband had been denied US citizenship due to his Indian origins in the precedent-setting Supreme Court case *US v. Bhagat Singh Thind*. Also among the sponsors was Sakharam Ganesh Pandit, who had served as Thind's lawyer; Sujata and Asoka, who were Indian professional dancers; and Govind Puttiah, a philosopher and lecturer who had arrived from India during the 1930s.[1]

This unusual sponsorship list, which brought American birth control activists together with leading members of the Indian community, was created by Ellen Jensen Watumull (1897–1990).[2] With her husband, Gobindram Jhamandas Watumull (1891–1959), she headed the Watumull Foundation, an organization created in 1942 to promote India's "national efficiency" and foster "better understanding" between India and the United States.[3] Along with the Planned Parenthood Center of Los Angeles,

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the Watumull Foundation was an institutional sponsor of Rama Rau's reception, and Watumull had personally invited the guests. Her guest list drew upon the widespread contacts among Indians in the United States that she and her husband had built through years of struggle contesting Indians' exclusion from US citizenship and supporting Indian independence from the British Empire. Watumull also mobilized her contacts in a growing transnational movement for contraception and family planning. Having met Rama Rau during a visit to India in 1950, Watumull made family planning a critical component of the foundation's philanthropy. In 1952 the Watumull Foundation became the first American donor to the International Committee for Planned Parenthood's conference in Bombay, an event organized by Rama Rau and Sanger.

The funding networks behind Rama Rau's Los Angeles reception illuminate the politics of an Indian diasporic community in transition at midcentury, a period of decolonization in India, and of growing US hegemony in a cold war world. Earlier struggles had connected the citizenship rights of Indian migrants to the political independence of the subcontinent. However, after Indians gained rights to US citizenship in 1946, and in the aftermath of independence and partition in 1947, Ellen and Gobindram Watumull shifted their philanthropy to new horizons of Indo-American relations. The Watumull Foundation allied itself with the Nehruvian government's development planning and began to position diaspora Indians as donors who could mobilize American resources and technocratic expertise to alleviate Indian poverty, promote social welfare programs, and further state-led economic growth. At the same time, the Watumulls continued and repurposed their efforts to interpret India for an American audience, selectively drawing upon orientalist tropes of Indian tradition, alongside modernizing visions of technological change, to make a case for Indian belonging in the United States. The foundation's support for Rama Rau and the FPAI made birth control a central part of these diasporic development aims.

The Watumull Foundation's turn to family planning was also part of a shifting landscape of transnational birth control politics. During the 1950s birth controllers increasingly prioritized population control as the reason for contraception; they put former colonies, especially India, at the center of their efforts.[4] This focus on birth control as a technology for population control, rather than for reproductive choice or autonomy, originated in neo-Malthusian and eugenic ideas.[5] By midcentury these ideas gained ground alongside a developing science of demography and a push for state-led planning in many parts of the world. Planning births via contraception seemed to be an extension of planning for agricultural output and industrial development.[6] The Indian government was at the forefront of population planning and, in 1952, became the first in the world to announce a state-sponsored program of birth control to align population size with economic needs.[7] Birth control activists like Rama Rau and Sanger seized upon this association of contraception, population control, and development planning to advance their case for "planned parenthood" globally. This vision underpinned their decision to hold the international conference in Bombay in 1952 and to build the International Planned Parenthood Federation as a population control network

in the years that followed. For Watumull, who was intimately involved in funding and planning the Bombay conference, the transnational movement for birth control became a way to link American philanthropy with an Indian development agenda.[8]

By the 1960s this approach to birth control would pave the way to top-down, sometimes coercive population control programs. Population control became a massive network that spanned continents and mobilized millions of dollars. Propelled by its own apocalyptic logic to defuse a "population bomb" at all costs, it became, in Matthew Connelly's memorable terms, a "system without a brain."[9] Yet understanding the creation of a transnational movement during the 1950s makes clear that the mobilization of population control was not brainless or inevitable but was shaped in part by the personal connections, donor funds, and political affiliations that linked Americans and Indians in the aftermath of Indian independence. These personal links brought together women who mobilized their earlier histories of birth control activism to shape a postwar and postcolonial focus on development during the transitional decade of the 1950s.

Scholarship on transnational population control has emphasized changes at the state level, which led the Indian government to include population in its development planning and prompted the US government to propel these development efforts.[10] This article shifts attention from state directives to on-the-ground initiatives by activists like Rama Rau and Watumull, whose efforts encouraged changes in state policy. These efforts relied on small donor funds, were contingent on intimate friendships and relationships, and claimed to center women within cold war and postcolonial development regimes. Although historians have rightfully called attention to large funders like the Ford Foundation and the US Agency for International Development in shaping population policies, this article demonstrates that smaller amounts—funds that were controlled largely by women—created and maintained links between American donors and Indian birth control activists.

I recount this history through a focus on the Watumull Foundation and the funding activities of Ellen Watumull. Although she was a small player within the American donor landscape, Watumull's efforts were critical to creating an Indo-American birth control politics that centered neo-Malthusian ideas of population and mobilized the Indian diasporic community to support Nehruvian development planning. I begin with the biographical contexts of Watumull's politics from the 1920s to the 1940s, focusing on the family's migration and citizenship, the Watumull business, and their connections to Indian diasporic organizations. The article then examines two key moments in the Indo-American history of birth control in the 1950s: the partnership among Sanger, Rama Rau, and Watumull to hold the Bombay conference in 1952, and Rama Rau's American speaking tour in 1953. Attention to these connections among women in India and the United States illuminates a little-studied history of the birth control movement, when contraception became enmeshed in a transnational struggle around population, when Indian population control became central to a global movement, and when Indians in the diaspora channeled American dollars into India's development regime.

## Biographical Contexts

Watumull's decision to fund birth control efforts in India had multiple genealogies. Among them was likely her marriage and the struggles that ensued regarding US citizenship, which produced the Indian diasporic networks that the Watumull Foundation would later mobilize in its philanthropy. The then Ellen Jensen met her future husband in Hawaii, where she had arrived from Oregon in 1920 to work as a music teacher. Her boarding house in Honolulu was near an East India store, which was managed by Gobindram Watumull.[11] When the couple decided to marry in 1922, they faced opposition from the bride's Danish-immigrant parents, who "did not like the idea of making it some sort of international marriage." They also faced opposition from the government. In San Francisco they were denied a marriage license by an official who demanded to see papers proving that Gobindram was of "high caste." The couple then tried in Redwood City, California, where they were asked no questions, given a license, and subsequently married.[12]

The couple again encountered the state's suspicions when Gobindram applied for US citizenship.[13] While his application was pending, the US Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Bhagat Singh Thind v. US* (1923), which determined that Indians were ineligible for US citizenship. A lower court in Portland had previously determined that Thind's "deportment"—a reference both to class and caste—rendered him eligible, and other Indian men had successfully made similar claims. The Supreme Court, however, rejected this argument. Its judgment divided "white" from "Asiatic" races and reaffirmed what the court termed a "common sense" that Indians could not be treated as white for purposes of citizenship and legal rights.[14] The citizenship of Indian men who had naturalized was revoked; for Gobindram, who was in the application process, it was denied. His wife, although born in the United States, lost her US citizenship due to the Cable Act, which tied a wife's citizenship to her husband's status. After the Cable Act was amended in 1931 to allow a wife to retain citizenship even if her husband was ineligible for naturalization, Watumull applied for US citizenship, a process she described as becoming "a two-hundred-percent American."[15]

The Watumulls' citizenship struggles connected them to a developing network of Indian men married to white American women, including Bhagat Singh and Vivien Thind, Sakharam Ganesh Pandit and Lillian Stringer, and Taraknath and Mary Keating Das. Watumull saw potential in marriages like these to forge more equitable relationships between Indians and Americans—and between their countries. As she wrote to Sripati and Ann Chandrasekhar, another Indian and American couple, "it is marriages like yours and ours, where husbands and wives work together in a cause, that help East and West to appreciate and understand each other a little better."[16] However, such marriages represented an elite section of the Indian population in the United States. The men came from upper-caste backgrounds, had accrued some measure of financial stability or educational attainment in the United States, and were married to white women. Their arguments for citizenship rested upon these other markers of status. When the men were denied citizenship, their wives' disenfranchisement provoked

some media outcry. By contrast, hundreds of Indian men who had married Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and African American women remained less visible in these citizenship debates.[17] They also did not appear in the Watumulls' networks, whose connections remained rooted in markers of caste, class, and race that were implicit in their claims to citizenship.

The Watumulls' connections in the Indian diaspora developed alongside their growing business, the East India store, which was established in 1915 to market Indian textiles, home furnishings, and jewelry to a wealthy clientele.[18] To source their merchandise, the family likely relied upon kinship and business networks that stretched from their homeland in Sindh (now Pakistan), across Japan, the Philippines, and Hong Kong.[19] Eventually renamed as the Watumull Store, the business also began to sell an orientalized image of Hawaii, in particular aloha wear, to a tourist market.[20] The financial success of the family's business was the basis for establishing the Watumull Foundation in 1942. Connecting the political struggle for Indian independence to the philanthropic motivations of the Watumulls, foundation documents claim that the "stirring events" of 1942—likely the Quit India Movement—"gave faint hopes of ultimate independence."[21] In that year of nationalist upsurge, Gobindram Watumull established the foundation with a threefold purpose: "(1) The promotion of India's national efficiency. (2) The promotion of better understanding between India the land of his birth, and the United States, the land of his adoption. (3) The support of educational, cultural and philanthropic institutions in Hawaii."[22] Over the next two decades, the foundation funded scholarships for Indians to receive advanced training in India and the United States, supported food and medical aid to India, gave book prizes and achievement awards, and supported cultural and educational institutions in Hawaii.[23] Among these efforts, support for Indian family planning—which ranged from essay competitions to contraceptive research to sponsoring Rama Rau's Los Angeles reception—remained a consistent part of the foundation's philanthropy.

## Freeing and Feeding India: Diasporic Politics of Independence

In 1942, the same year they established the foundation, Ellen and Gobindram Watumull moved from Honolulu to Los Angeles, where they strengthened their ties to the Indian diaspora in California. Diasporic politics in this period built upon the networks of previous decades, when the Ghadar Party, a revolutionary group that aimed to overthrow British rule in India, organized Indians along the West Coast of the United States. Several interracial couples in the Watumulls' circle had been involved with Ghadar. Taraknath Das, a leader in the movement, had been convicted alongside other Ghadar activists for anti-British activities in the so-called Hindu-German arms smuggling conspiracy case in 1917.[24] Bhagat Singh Thind, although not an active Ghadar member, supported Ghadar activists.[25] The Watumulls also associated with Bhagwan Singh Gyanee, a Ghadar organizer and conspiracy case defendant who was a supporter of Sanger and birth control.[26] Through their adult daughter Lila, the Watumulls had

another Ghadar connection; she was a close friend of Vidya Chandra, whose father was Ghadar leader Ram Chandra, a defendant in the conspiracy case who was shot in the courtroom in a dispute among party members.[27] With its heyday during World War I, the Ghadar Party was no longer active in the 1940s, when the Watumulls arrived in California. However, they provided financial support, both as individuals and through the foundation, to former Ghadar members, many of whom continued their activism for Indian independence. For instance, a Watumull Foundation fellowship enabled Taraknath Das to return to India as a visiting professor in 1952 after years of exile from the country.[28] The Watumulls also supported Bhagwan Singh's return to India in 1958, where he was received with fanfare by the government of Punjab.[29]

Alongside these personal connections to Ghadar networks, Gobindram Watumull became involved with the leading diasporic organizations of the time, the National Committee for India's Freedom (NCIF) and the India League of America (ILA). Established in 1944 by Anup Singh, a former Ghadar member, the NCIF lobbied the US government and mobilized American public opinion in favor of Indian freedom. The NCIF worked alongside the ILA, which was led by J. J. Singh, an Indian businessman based in New York City.[30] Gobindram Watumull, who served as a Los Angeles regional representative of the NCIF and was likely a major funder of the organization, was able to connect NCIF leaders to Indians on the West Coast.[31] Meanwhile, Ellen Watumull served on committees for foreign students at the University of California at Los Angeles and was involved in NCIF efforts to mobilize Indian students to support the Indian National Congress.[32]

The ILA and NCIF joined forces to campaign for Indian independence and to support citizenship rights for Indians in the United States. They were successful in the second goal in 1946, when the Luce–Celler Act made Indians eligible for naturalization and introduced an annual quota of one hundred immigrants from India; Gobindram Watumull became the first Indian to be naturalized under the new law.[33] Meanwhile, both organizations waged a public relations campaign to support Indian nationalists. Their efforts came to a head over the question of Indian representation at the UN Conference in San Francisco in 1945.[34] Two years later members of the ILA and NCIF witnessed the end of the British Empire in the subcontinent, alongside the violence of the partition.

Alongside these political struggles, the Watumulls joined the NCIF and ILA to advance an economic critique of British imperialism that mobilized Indians in the United States to send food and funds to India. The roots of this critique were in the Bengal famine that began in 1942. As news of the famine made its way around the world, NCIF and ILA leaders called upon the US government to support food aid to India. Otherwise, by acceding to British wartime food policy, ILA leader Syud Hussain proclaimed, "America [was] losing the moral leadership of the East and Orient because it has allowed itself to appear that it is condoning European imperialism over colonial peoples."[35] The NCIF also reached out to Indians in the United States to provide support on an individual level. For instance, a 1946 notice in the *Voice of*

*India*, a monthly publication of the NCIF, called upon readers to pledge not to eat rice for one year. In that time, it implored them to "share your food with India" and send an eleven-pound package of rice, powdered milk, and split peas each month to Congress House in Bombay.[36] The appeal drew upon a Gandhian politics of food, which persistently connected the dietary habits of elites with hunger among the poor. It also positioned Indians in the United States as charitable supporters of India in crisis.

Another diasporic organization, the American Wives of India (AWI), similarly linked Indian need to American donations. Watumull was an executive board member of this Los Angeles group, which was founded by Gertrude Nasri in 1946 in response to the Bengal famine and was composed of women "related by blood, or marriage, to some person of East Indian origin."[37] Among its first activities was a benefit performance for "India famine relief" by the renowned modern dancer Ruth St. Denis. Capitalizing on American exoticization of India, the group advertised that the "Goddess Saraswati presides" over events including a "snake charmer," a "Tagore poem," and "costumes from the whole of Asia."[38] Figuring India as at once spectacle and aid recipient and featuring St. Denis as an American interpreter of the "orient," the AWI raised $1,500 from the performance.

When centering food in their politics, the NCIF, ILA, and AWI were not alone. Within India, the question of food was paramount in nation-building and economic development projects at midcentury. The country faced shortfalls in its food production after independence and partition, and in 1950 famine threatened the provinces of Bihar and Madras. The government proclaimed that responsible citizenship required attention to diet, and campaigns urged Indians to skip meals and eat nontraditional foods in order to reduce dependence on wheat and rice imports. Food choices thus became a site to demonstrate a citizen's commitment to nation-building and development planning.[39]

For Indians in the United States, food likewise became a national development project; truly freeing India required feeding its people, and the diaspora had a role to play. The Watumulls, already involved with food campaigns through the NCIF and AWI, turned to the nonprofit organization Meals for Millions (MFM). Formed in 1946, MFM promoted Multi-Purpose Food, a protein-rich food product developed at the California Institute of Technology to address food scarcity globally. With the outbreak of famine in 1950, the Watumull Foundation worked with MFM to create the United Emergency Committee, which Watumull joined while serving on the organization's board of directors.[40] She mobilized her connections among Indians in the United States and among Indian nationalists in India to collect and send donations of Multi-Purpose Food.

The Watumulls' turn to Multi-Purpose Food aligned with the Indian government's call to Indians to change their diets and mobilized American scientific expertise to reduce Indian dependence on imported wheat and rice. Following from earlier NCIF and AWI efforts, it also enabled Indians in the diaspora to make a direct contribution to feeding India and thus support the country's development plans. The Watumull

Foundation and the United Emergency Committee were somewhat successful in reaching these goals; they sent large amounts of Multi-Purpose Food to India, including a donation of over ten thousand pounds to the All India Women's Conference, whose leaders, including Rama Rau, used it in rural health and nutrition programs.[41] However, while well-intentioned, as historian Joanna Simonow argues, this scientific approach to food substitution ultimately turned "attention away from the structural causes of malnutrition—above all, poverty," and the use of Multi-Purpose Food would decline by the mid-1950s.[42] Yet, as we shall see next, this turn to food as a tool of development aid, and as a point of connection between diasporic Indians and the government's Five-Year Plans, laid the groundwork for a focus on birth control after 1950. That is, the question of feeding India's growing population became a central concern for an emerging transnational birth control movement.

## Forging an Indo-American Birth Control Politics

The Watumull Foundation joined the transnational birth control movement with a five-thousand-dollar donation that enabled the FPAI to host a conference of the International Committee on Planned Parenthood in 1952.[43] This conference was momentous as it led to the creation of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), which would soon become one of the most influential population control organizations in the world. However, in tracing the origins of the foundation's interest in birth control, Watumull began not with this 1950s donation but looked farther back in time, to the insurgent politics of Sanger's birth control campaigns. Watumull first encountered Sanger in Portland, Oregon in 1925. "Being a young married woman with one child," she professed herself "intrigued to read in the papers that Margaret Sanger was giving a lecture on birth control." [44] At the lecture, Watumull was compelled by Sanger's "compassion for all women, wanting, longing to free them from slavery to their own biological functions."[45] After the speech, Watumull witnessed Sanger's arrest for violating obscenity laws and recalled that a "number of Portland women begged to be arrested with her, but they were denied the opportunity."[46] Watumull's description of this event echoes Sanger's own representations of the origins of her activism, which centered women and framed birth control as a liberation struggle.

Watumull did not return publicly to birth control advocacy for twenty-five years after her Portland encounter with Sanger, and by then much had changed in the movement. Sanger herself, who gathered allies across the political spectrum, had partnered with neo-Malthusians and eugenicists to promote birth control during the 1930s and 1940s.[47] Her quest to make contraceptive advocacy "respectable" had turned away from an insurgent anarchist, labor, and feminist politics and in the process had decentered women's needs and desires.[48] At the same time, facing obstacles to the movement in the United States, Sanger sought support from abroad, including from India, where she had visited in 1935–1936 at the invitation of the All India Women's Conference (AIWC).[49] In India as well, support for contraception was changing by the 1940s.

AIWC activists narrowed their earlier wide-ranging contraceptive advocacy to a more restricted focus on controlling births to promote women's health and welfare alongside national development. Adopting a neo-Malthusian view, they held population increase responsible for poverty. When Rama Rau and her allies established the FPAI in 1949, they institutionalized this neo-Malthusian turn and brought contraception into the purview of the postcolonial state's development planning.[50]

This was the political and scientific landscape that Watumull negotiated when, during a visit to India in 1950, she was confronted with questions about contraception. As she later recalled, Indians asked her about birth control methods, and Americans living in India were seeking methods that "could be used by the poorest people of India to help them space their families." The question re-emerged when Watumull was invited to dinner at the home of Rama Rau, where birth control was a topic of discussion among the guests.[51] The two women may have found common ground in a discussion of food aid as well. Rama Rau, who had joined the AIWC delegation to Bengal during the famine, brought a concern about hunger to her support for contraception. She would soon promote Multi-Purpose Food at camps for partition refugees and at the FPAI's birth control clinics.[52] The moment was ripe, in other words, for the Indian and American guests gathered at Rama Rau's home to discuss contraception and population, alongside food aid, as part of India's nation-building plans.

Returning to Los Angeles, Watumull connected her new interest in Indian birth control to the Watumull Foundation's existing networks for delivering Multi-Purpose Food to India. She contacted the executive secretary of MFM, Florence Rose, who was her collaborator on the United Emergency Committee. Rose had been Sanger's assistant for thirteen years, and it was she who linked Watumull to Sanger. A meeting with Rose led to a visit in January 1951 to Tucson, Arizona, where Rose, Watumull, and Gobindram Watumull spent a day with Sanger.[53] Soon after that visit Watumull wrote to Rama Rau: "To say that Mrs. Sanger was enthusiastic about the possibility of expanding the work in India is to put it mildly. She is very eager to cooperate in every way possible and said that a possibility of an international conference on planned parenthood in India in late 1952 has been formulating in her mind. Would your association be interested in such a conference?" If so, Watumull pledged that her foundation would "be happy to cooperate."[54] Sanger then wrote to Rama Rau, formally inviting the FPAI to host the conference.[55]

The decision to hold an international conference in India spoke to the interests of all three women, Rama Rau, Sanger, and Watumull. For Rama Rau, it offered an opportunity to bring an international limelight to the FPAI, a fledgling organization. For Sanger, holding the conference in India promoted a neo-Malthusian perspective that linked contraception to population control. Limiting population growth was a central component of the FPAI's vision, and in this neo-Malthusian turn, Sanger saw an opportunity to reinvigorate the birth control movement, which had stalled amid the cultural conservatism of the 1950s in the United States.[56] For Watumull, funding an international conference in India supported the foundation's goal to improve

Indo-American relations. She saw the conference as an opportunity to use American scientific expertise to promote contraception as a technology for Indian development. For all three together, the questions before the conference gained urgency given rising fears in both India and the United States about population growth.

Yet even while making population central to the Bombay conference, Sanger, Rama Rau, and Watumull were excluded from an emerging network of researchers who, during these same years, were developing a "scientific" population agenda. Moving beyond the broad neo-Malthusian argument that linked population size to poverty and plenty, this group of American researchers, who were mostly men, generated quantitative data and theoretical frameworks that connected fertility rates to prospects for American-style modernization and capitalist growth.[57] They created a new science of demography whose academic center in the 1940s and 1950s was the Office of Population Research at Princeton. These demographic appeals were further fueled by the US struggle for hegemony in the Cold War. American officials feared that a growing population in the "third world" would lead to communist revolutions, and they eventually began looking to population control measures to secure capitalist, rather than communist, transformations globally.[58]

Although demographers eventually came to share with birth control advocates a conviction that contraceptive measures would be necessary to control population, they actively disassociated themselves from activists like Sanger as a way to underscore the "scientific" rather than political underpinnings of demography.[59] For instance, in 1952, the year of the Bombay conference, a group of prominent demographers, alongside other scientists, came together to create an advocacy organization, the influential Population Council, with financial support from John D. Rockefeller III. The Population Council, which considered no women for leadership positions, claimed to be scientifically based and included only Americans among its board of trustees.[60] This contrasted with the international organization envisioned by Sanger, Rama Rau, and Watumull, which as Sanger described to Rama Rau, sought sponsors "among an equal number outstanding men and women representing the sciences, public health, medical research, demography, as well as outstanding religious and civic leaders" from the United States, India, and other countries.[61]

The Watumull Foundation provided material support for this international vision with an open-ended donation. Watumull asked Rama Rau to provide an estimate of monthly office expenditures and to submit budgets for other expenses. But even prior to receiving this documentation, Watumull wrote to Rama Rau, "We want you to know that you can count upon this amount."[62] Rama Rau would later credit these funds for making the conference possible, noting that "money was our great problem, for we had practically no working capital, but just in time we received a donation of $5000 from Mrs. Ellen Watumull of the Watumull Foundation."[63] Watumull also mobilized financial and political support among her network of Indians in the United States. Her longtime associate, former Ghadar leader and Watumull Foundation fellow Taraknath Das, was among the US sponsors of the Bombay conference, as was ILA

leader J. J. Singh. Watumull's appeals also brought in Gobind Behari Lal, a former Ghadar leader and a Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist, and, more unusually, Swami Nikhilananda, leader of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York.[64] The result was a network of Indian supporters for birth control who occupied the relative margins of American society but who had been central figures of anticolonial diasporic activism for much of the twentieth century. Before the US government began funding Indian population control, these smaller amounts of money connected Indian and US birth control movements and enabled a flow of people, ideas, and technologies that made India central to a transnational population control network.[65]

The proposed agenda for the Bombay conference reflected the priorities of its organizers. Decisions about topics and invited speakers were made, alongside Sanger, Rama Rau, and Watumull, by International Committee on Planned Parenthood affiliates including Abraham Stone, the medical director of the Margaret Sanger Research Bureau in New York, and C. P. Blacker, the British head of the Eugenics Society. In these discussions, Watumull emphasized a focus on food scarcity and population growth as reasons to promote birth control. In a letter to Rama Rau, she suggested that the event be called the "International Conference on Food and Population as the two are certainly very closely related and the pressure on the land not only in India but in many other densely populated countries is becoming too great."[66] To make the connections even clearer, she called for the conference program to combine presentations on contraceptive methods and clinics with papers on health, economics, and food production.[67] A section of the conference was ultimately devoted to "population problems" in relation to economy and resources.

This vision for contraception's purpose actively marginalized other ideological currents in the transnational birth control movement. Sanger and Rama Rau opposed approaches that would put "more stress on the cultural aspects of the sexual problem than on the neo-Malthusian ones."[68] Sanger sidelined the Dutch delegation to the conference, who she was convinced had "Marxian" views and would focus on "sex education" rather than population.[69] Instead, the conference pivoted firmly in the direction of neo-Malthusian population anxieties and linked "planned parenthood" to economic development rather than to sexual or gender liberation. Promoting this agenda, Watumull advised on specific topics, participated in organizational decisions about expenditures, and responded to requests from Rama Rau and others about the need for additional support.[70]

Insofar as population control became the purpose of the movement, for Rama Rau, Sanger, and Watumull, contraceptive technology became the method. All three women promoted technological solutions to control reproduction in India. Rama Rau made these commitments clear from the outset. Unlike in the United States, she noted, there was no moral or religious objection to birth control in India; to the contrary, there was widespread public interest. Consequently, there was no need for a conference whose main objective was "propaganda for family planning." More than ideas, Rama Rau was convinced that the movement's major stumbling block in India

was an absence of scientific research that could invent and test new contraceptives and a lack of trained personnel who could do this scientific work. She called for the conference to emphasize "the scientific and practical side, so that India could begin to implement the many ideas that so far remain in the realm of wishful thinking."[71]

Centering birth control technology aligned with Watumull's commitments as well. She and Rama Rau corresponded about finding effective contraception that could meet Indian needs. They worked together to secure materials to produce inexpensive and "foolproof" diaphragms in India.[72] She also had high hopes for hormonal methods, noting that she was "tracking down information regarding injections that can be given to render both men and women temporarily sterile, which may be the solution to our problem and which may be the cheapest and simplest form of birth control."[73] The turn to contraceptive research and its implied promise to invent a way out of social problems also aligned with Watumull's approach to philanthropy and to Indo-American relations at midcentury. The Watumull Foundation's investment in Multi-Purpose Food, in other words, was comparable to its support for diaphragms. Both were a means for donor funds to shape the direction of scientific solutions to poverty in India, and both relied on Indian networks in the United States to mobilize American support for interventions in the country.

With the conference agenda set to focus on population control and contraceptive technology, Sanger and Watumull traveled to Bombay in November 1952, where they joined delegates and attendees from fourteen countries and from across India. For Sanger, the journey represented a culmination of her efforts to shift the geographic focus of the planned parenthood movement to Asia. Inaugurating the conference, India's vice president, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, endorsed reproductive control as in line with the country's tradition and necessary for the nation's modernization. This endorsement from a high-level official far exceeded possibilities in the United States, where birth control remained illegal in some states. In Rama Rau's terms, it was thus in Asia—and India in particular—that a global planned parenthood movement would focus attention "on this very vital question of population control."[74] At the close of the conference, delegates gave this vision a concrete organizational shape when they voted to create the IPPF. Sanger would serve as the new organization's first president, and Rama Rau would be its third.

Historians have highlighted the role of male-led organizations like the Population Council, alongside the power of large donors like the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, to chart the emergence of a movement for population control in the mid-twentieth century.[75] They were certainly crucial, but attention to the networks and negotiations underlying the Bombay conference complicates the historical narrative. In the absence of large donors or US government support, smaller organizations like the Watumull Foundation and its network of diasporic Indian sponsors helped pay the bills that led to the IPPF's creation. Moreover, the Bombay conference makes clear that the link between birth control, population control, and economic development was not exclusively the brainchild of elite demographers and their supporters

in the Population Council, who then bulldozed over an earlier generation of more women-centered birth controllers. Instead, the Bombay conference perhaps served as a rejoinder to an emerging masculinist and US-centered population network that marginalized American birth control advocates, such as Sanger, and ignored Asian women leaders, such as Rama Rau. In asserting their authority to address global population, women birth controllers helped to make contraception into a development initiative in a postcolonial and cold war world. To do so, however, they linked birth control less to women's reproductive autonomy and more to food crisis, population growth, and economic development. Population control, like food aid, became part of a flow of technologies, gendered personal networks, and ideological commitments that together forged an Indo-American birth control politics at midcentury.

## Promoting Indian "Planned Parenthood" in the United States

One year after the IPPF was created in Bombay, Rama Rau brought the case for Indian reproductive control to the American public. In a lecture tour across thirty-five US cities in October and November 1953, including the Watumull Foundation event that began this article, Rama Rau addressed college students, women's clubs, church groups, and Planned Parenthood chapters about "India's Social Revolution."[76] She brought the neo-Malthusian vision of population that was crafted in Bombay to an American public that, she discovered, sometimes misunderstood and sometimes rejected her message. Her fraught encounters point to some limits of a midcentury Indo-American birth control politics that aimed to connect American contraceptive technology to Indian economic planning and that imagined a shared "planned parenthood" movement across both countries.

Rama Rau hoped her tour would convey to American audiences "some of the excitement we in India were experiencing in nation building and the part we were playing in the social-welfare field."[77] Continuing her focus on scientific innovation as a solution to India's population question, she told the *Los Angeles Times* she aimed to "stimulat[e] American research chemists to develop a cheap, simple method of birth control" that would not require a doctor's supervision.[78] Similarly, as *Newsweek* magazine reported, Rama Rau hoped an American birth control expert would be willing to travel to India to research the country's birth control needs and support research for a dependable oral contraceptive.[79] Her emphasis on promoting funding for American contraceptive research perhaps shaped the speaking tour's orientation toward elite sponsors and donors. Alongside the Watumull Foundation, her West Coast sponsors were Katharine McCormick and Anne Banning, wife of Hancock Banning, a major California real estate developer. Sanger was a sponsor as well.[80]

In touring the country to mobilize American support for India, Rama Rau followed the footsteps of several Indian nationalist women leaders, including Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit. Whereas Chattopadhyay, in 1939–1941, and Pandit, in 1944–1945, had made the case for India's freedom from the British

Empire, Rama Rau confronted a changed geopolitical terrain in 1953. Rather than calling for India's freedom, her talk about "India's social revolution" aimed to win American audiences to the cause of India's modernizing development. She explained the "gigantic tasks we were undertaking and . . . convey[ed] to them some of the excitement and enthusiasm we Indians felt."[81] Moreover, unlike ILA or NCIF efforts in the 1940s, Rama Rau's tour did not connect conditions in India to the situation of the Indian diaspora in the United States, nor did it pursue a critique of American foreign policy regarding India or Asia more broadly. Instead, her American visit advanced a vision of Indo-American relationships in a postcolonial and cold war era that centered state-led economic development, looked toward transnational elites, and turned away from some of the grassroots solidarities that had shaped Indian and diasporic politics before World War II. As historian Antoinette Burton argues in a different context, Rama Rau's tour became an opportunity to define "the parameters of acceptable anticolonial nationalism" in the wake of Indian independence.[82] While referencing Gandhi and the legacies of anticolonial struggle, she spoke about India's first Five-Year Plan and recounted the government's policies regarding democratic government, education, and agricultural and industrial development.[83]

Rama Rau centered population in her nationalist vision: "The question of population naturally figured in my assessment of the general situation in India and the future prospects of its developing economy. We were on the threshold of a new era of independence."[84] In seeking sponsors for Rama Rau's tour, Watumull similarly centered the former's work with the FPAI and IPPF, noting the role of birth control clinics in meeting "humanitarian need."[85] Yet Rama Rau confronted opposition to any discussion of birth control, which was deemed too controversial in an American context. Some women's groups asked her not to mention contraception; even when she offered to discuss birth control only in the context of India and not speak about the United States, they disagreed. At a lecture in Santa Barbara, California, for instance, the president of the Women's Club insisted that Rama Rau make no mention of population growth. Sanger, who had accompanied Rama Rau to the talk, walked out in protest, and Rama Rau was left to face the audience alone.[86] What Rama Rau had understood to be a central pillar of Indian development plans and had anchored the international conference in Bombay became literally unmentionable in many American contexts.

Discomfort with birth control also existed in behind-the-scenes negotiations about Rama Rau's speaking tour. Watumull was involved in these negotiations for Rama Rau's California engagements, and this put her in conflict with the Columbia Lecture Bureau, which organized the logistics of the tour. Representatives of the bureau warned of the "delicacy" of the relationship between Planned Parenthood branches and other sponsors of her talks and insisted that Rama Rau give no lectures to Planned Parenthood groups that might stir controversy or draw attendance from her lectures to other organizations.[87] Watumull countered that the Columbia Lecture Bureau had misunderstood Rama Rau's global importance: "To her other local sponsors she is another distinguished speaker but to the Watumull Foundation she is a great personality

who is able to do much . . . to promote international understanding and good will. And to the Planned Parenthood Federation she is the spokesman of a very important message."[88] Watumull also emphasized that her donor dollars gave the foundation a prior claim on Rama Rau's time and availability. "Because of our long association with Lady Rama Rau," she wrote, "and because the Watumull Foundation made the International Conference on Population Control and Planned Parenthood held in Bombay last year possible," the foundation ought to receive priority for events in California.[89]

These obstacles notwithstanding, Watumull organized the private reception in Los Angeles I discussed at the start of this article. Funded by the Watumull Foundation, and cosponsored by the local Planned Parenthood branch, this talk, unlike others on Rama Rau's tour, was contracted to "stress . . . family planning and planned parenthood."[90] Moreover, this event brought in a number of Indians as well as Americans connected to the diasporic community, including the AWI.[91] For Watumull, the event served as an opportunity to strengthen the connections between the Indian development goals that Rama Rau championed, and a diasporic community mobilized to support those goals ideologically and financially.

Even as Rama Rau saw herself as an ambassador for the postcolonial Indian state's development planning, she was disappointed by the responses to her lectures. After speaking of India's "social revolution" and the goals of the government's first Five-Year Plan, she was stunned by the questions that followed: "I cannot describe the disappointment and the sense of deflation I felt when the questions on the floor were: 'Can you explain to us how the Indian sari is worn?' or 'What is the significance of the red spot on the forehead?'"[92] Confronted with these exoticizing and orientalizing questions, Rama Rau felt that the message of her talk had not been heard. Newspaper coverage of Rama Rau's tour echoes this emphasis on her appearance and clothing. The *Los Angeles Times*, for instance, described her as "sari-clad visitor."[93] The *Chicago Daily Tribune* wrote, "From India, tall, stately, garbed in a flowing sari and with a ruby caste mark on her forehead, came the wife of Sir Benegal Rau."[94] The *Chicago Defender* noted that in the daytime Rama Rau wore silk saris from south India but preferred saris from Benares for formal functions.[95] Some newspapers described Rama Rau only as the wife of India's former ambassador, and virtually nothing was reported about the content of her speeches or her leadership in the FPAI and IPPF.[96]

The gendered and racialized exoticization that Rama Rau faced on her tour had been confronted by Indian women who had preceded her in the United States. This was rooted, as Burton suggests, in a midcentury racial calculus that associated "elite South Asians with the hegemonic whiteness of postcolonial America."[97] This association had a long history that was deeply intertwined with caste. In the era of citizenship exclusion, evidence of "upper-caste" background had enabled some Indians to establish enough proximity to whiteness to obtain citizenship, and, as seen in the case of Gobindram Watumull, proof of caste status was one avenue for Indian men to legally marry white women. This is the context in which we might understand references to Rama Rau's complexion and height in the media. In a tour that featured wealthy and

elite white sponsors, her presence was at once welcomed as near enough to whiteness to be legible as well as exoticized.

Although this exoticization was likely not unfamiliar to Rama Rau, she professed herself unwilling to tolerate it. In her memoir, Rama Rau recalled that she "went home with a better knowledge of America, the country and the people, their problems and their deep-seated prejudices and fears." However, she never agreed to another American speaking tour: "I did not think my lectures penetrated deep enough or could help to educate Americans about the vital issues of another country."[98] Rama Rau's Indo-American vision for contraception and population control understood the United States as a source of research and technology that might promote Indian development. Failing this, she claimed herself unwilling to represent an "exotic" traditional India alongside a postcolonial, modernizing one. At the same time, the American tour may have buttressed claims she made to Sanger and Watumull when organizing the Bombay conference, that India was at the forefront of a global shift toward population control and therefore that India, and implicitly not the United States, might set a transnational population agenda in the decades ahead. Her American lectures, and the difficulty she had in raising the subject of contraception, perhaps solidified Rama Rau's view of Indian leadership and pointed to the limits of an Indo-American planned parenthood movement.

## Conclusion

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, across shifts in her personal circumstances, in the family business, and in the wider contexts of transnational population control, Watumull renewed her commitments to Indo-American ties through contraceptive research and other development initiatives. She and her family left California and returned to Honolulu in 1953. Two years later the family business was divided. Gobindram, who acquired the family's real estate holdings, would no longer manage the Watumull Stores; its representations of India and "the Orient" in Hawaii were taken over by his brother Jhamandas.[99] Watumull's connections to India were strengthened in a different way with her daughter Lila's marriage in 1957 to Brij Lal Sahney, a high-level official in the Indian Food Ministry. With his Indian government connections, Sahney expanded the networks of policymakers that Watumull and the foundation had been building through the relationship with Rama Rau and the FPAI.[100] Watumull herself obtained an official connection to the government of India in 1963, when she was appointed the first honorary consul of India in Hawaii.[101] During these years, Watumull seemed committed to bringing India to a US audience in ways large and small. She was a regular speaker on Indian topics. One typical example, in 1955, featured her lecture on "the history of India, the customs, religions, problems and great advances made in India," alongside the modeling of sari-wearing by her nieces. Apparently embracing the exoticism that Rama Rau eschewed in her own lecture tour, Watumull was reported to weave "a fabric as colorful and intriguing as the Indian saris" in a speech that addressed Indian development goals alongside customary sartorial practices.[102]

Watumull's interest in interpreting India in the United States continued alongside her ideological and philanthropic commitments to transnational planned parenthood and population control. She was a regular attendee at IPPF regional conferences and served as Sanger's private administrative assistant at IPPF international conferences in Tokyo in 1955 and New Delhi in 1959.[103] Moreover, the Watumull Foundation continued to fund population control efforts in India. Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, the foundation provided direct support to the FPAI, funded contraceptive research, and sponsored an essay competition on "population control in relation to food in India."[104] Through its scholarship program, the foundation supported demographers, physicians, and other scientists. Several grantees would become leading figures in the Indian population establishment, most notably S. Chandrasekhar, who directed the Indian Institute for Population Studies and served as the minister for health and family planning.[105] The foundation also sponsored Watumull Memorial Awards, which recognized senior population leaders, including B. L. Raina, who headed the government's Central Family Planning Institute, as well as Rama Rau.[106]

The Watumull Foundation's continued involvement occurred across a rapidly changing landscape of population control. In contrast to Rama Rau's tour in 1953, when birth control was literally unmentionable in many American contexts, the US government made contraception a key component of its development aid in the 1960s. American panic about a third-world "population explosion" whose epicenter was India led to massive investment from the Ford Foundation and the US Agency for International Development in Indian population control and helped to shape increasingly draconian policies that disregarded reproductive autonomy in favor of target-driven programs to slow population growth.[107] While Watumull remained a vocal proponent of population control ideologies, her relatively small donor dollars and intimate personal networks could no longer set the agenda of an Indo-American birth control movement or chart the relationships between an Indian diaspora in the United States and the development planning of the Indian government.[108] Her efforts were dwarfed by the increased funding and the high-level government connections that linked Indian and American population control efforts.

Although the landscape shifted after the 1950s, this transitional decade makes visible how an Indian diasporic politics moved from a focus on the political rights of citizenship and independence toward a commitment to India's postcolonial development regime after 1947. This was a moment when the diaspora pivoted toward a donor relationship to the subcontinent, a shift that would have major repercussions with increasing US immigration from India after 1965. At the same time, attention to intimate networks—of kinship, of marriage, of friendship—suggests that gendered and racial contingencies shaped these Indo-American relations and points to how a politics of food, population, and contraception helped to forge those relationships. These connections, as we have seen, were created by women who worked with relatively small amounts of money. Although Watumull, Sanger, and Rama Rau all described their work as women-centered and challenged women's exclusion from scientific and

demographic policy circles, they also developed policies that promoted controlling population at the expense of the liberatory possibilities of birth control. In this sense too, the transitional decade of the 1950s offered many, sometimes contradictory possibilities, both for a postcolonial Indo-American politics and for a transnational birth control movement that was moving toward population control.

## Notes

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[1]Invitation card (1953), Shrimati Dhanvanthi Rama Rau: Correspondence and printed material, Watumull Foundation records, Sophia Smith Collection, SSC-MS-00377, Smith College Special Collections, Northampton MA. Hereafter cited as WF Records.

[2]I refer to Ellen Watumull by her surname. To refer to other members of the Watumull family, I use first name and surname.

[3]*Watumull Foundation Report*, *1942–1967*, p. 5, Watumull Family and Foundation, Jean Charlot Collection, University of Hawaii at Manoa Libraries. Hereafter cited as *Foundation Report.*

[4]Mytheli Sreenivas, *Reproductive Politics and the Making of Modern India* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2021), chap. 3.

[5]Sanjam Ahluwalia, *Reproductive Restraints: Birth Control in India, 1877–1947* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press), chap. 3; and Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and US Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press), chap. 3.

[6]Linda Gordon, *The Moral Property of Women: A History of Birth Control Politics in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 245–246; and Mytheli Sreenivas, "Feminism, Family Planning, and National Planning," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 44, no. 2 (2021): 316–321.

[7]Government of India, Planning Commission, *The First Five Year Plan* (New Delhi: Government of India, 1953), 522.

[8]On philanthropy and birth control, see Joan Marie Johnson, *Funding Feminism: Monied Women, Philanthropy, and the Women's Movement 1870–1967* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), chap. 6 and 7.

[9]Matthew Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2009), chap. 8. See also Alison Bashford, *Global Population: History, Geopolitics and Life on Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[10]Connelly, *Fatal Misconception*; and Mohan Rao, *From Population Control to Reproductive Health: Malthusian Arithmetic* (New Delhi: Sage, 2004).

[11]Ellen Watumull, interview by Katherine Allen, June 22, 1972, The Watumull Foundation Oral History Project, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library, https://hdl.handle.net/10524/48579.

[12]Ellen Watumull, interview by Pauline King Joerger, November 28, 1978, The Watumull Foundation Oral History Project, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library, https://hdl.handle.net/10524/48579.

[13]Ellen Watumull, Allen interview.

[14]Nayan Shah, *Stranger Intimacy: Contesting Race, Sexuality, and the Law in the North American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 241–247.

[15]Ellen Watumull, Allen interview.

[16]Watumull to Ann and S. Chandrasekhar, August 6, 1960, Sripati Chandrasekhar Papers, MSS–189 Box 17, S1 Correspondence, Ward M. Canaday Center for Special Collections, University of Toledo. Hereafter cited as SC Papers.

[17]Shah, *Stranger Intimacy*, 252–254.

[18]David G. Watumull, interview with author, February 26, 2022.

[19]Gobind Sahney, interview with author, March 5, 2022; Darius Homayounpour, interview with author, March 1, 2022; and *Watumull's 100 Years, 1914–2014*, Watumull Family Materials, South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA), https://www.saada.org/item/20140604-3590.

[20]Homayounpour, interview with author; and Anu Kumar, "The Story of the Indian Family That Built an Empire in Hawaii and Helped Popularise Aloha Wear," *Scroll.in*, accessed April 1, 2022, https://scroll.in/global/984760/the-story-of-the-indian-family-that-built-an-empire-in-hawaii-and-helped-popularise-aloha-wear.

[21]*Foundation Report*, 5.

[22]*Foundation Report*, 5.

[23]*Foundation Report*, 5–10. In its first decade, the foundation gave $435,671. Lois Stewart, "The Watumull Foundation," *Honolulu Advertiser*, December 14, 1952.

[24]Harold Gould, *Sikhs, Swamis, Students and Spies: The India Lobby in the United States* (New Delhi: Sage, 2006), 209–226; and Harish Puri, *Ghadar Movement: A Short History* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2011), 146–149.

[25]Shah, *Stranger Intimacy*, 242; and Maia Ramnath, *Haj to Utopia: How the Ghadar Movement Charted Global Radicalism and Attempted to Overthrow the British Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 127–128.

[26]Bhagwan Singh to Ellen Watumull, March 23, 1960. Bhagwan Singh Gyanee Materials, SAADA, https://www.saada.org/item/20120724-860, hereafter cited as Gyanee Materials; and Florence Rose to Stella Hanau, November 22, 1935, Gyanee Materials, https://www.saada.org/item/20120322-696.

[27]Gobind Sahney, interview with author; and Puri, *Ghadar Movement*, 148–149.

[28]Mukherjee, Tapan K., *Taraknath Das: Life and Letters of a Revolutionary in Exile* (Calcutta: National Council of Education Bengal, 1998), 213–215.

[29]Bhagwan Singh to Ellen and Gobindram Watumull, December 6, 1958, Gyanee Materials, https://www.saada.org/item/20120723-837.

[30]Dinyar Patel, "'One-Man Lobby'? Propaganda, Nationalism in the Diaspora, and the India League of America during the Second World War," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 49, no. 6 (2021): 1110–1140; and Robert Shaffer, "J. J. Singh and the India League of America, 1945–1959: Pressing at the Margins of the Cold War Consensus," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 31, no. 2 (2012): 71–73.

[31]Gould, *Sikhs, Swamis*, 341–342; "Report on the activities of the India League of America," April 15, 1943, India Office Records (IOR) L/P&J/12/487, British Library, London UK. British officials suspected that Watumull's funding helped to create the NCIF agenda.

[32]Ellen Watumull, Biodata, The Watumull Foundation Oral History Project, University of Hawai'I at Mānoa Library, https://hdl.handel.net/10524/48579; and Godha Ram Channon to Ellen Watumull, December 23, 1946, Papers of Godha Ram Channon, SAADA, https://www.saada.org/item/20141107-3933.

[33]"G. J. Watumull Dies; Services Slated Friday," *Hawai'i Tribune-Herald*, August 13, 1959.

[34]"India: The Skeleton at the Feast," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), April 12, 1945, A9; and "Free India: Public Meeting," *San Francisco Examiner*, April 27, 1945.

[35]James White, "India Asks Food," *Times Recorder* (Zanesville, OH), March 5, 1946, 4.

[36]*Voice of India*, n.d., cited in "Appeal from India," *Honolulu Advertiser,* June 29, 1946, 16.

[37]"Information about the American Wives of India," pamphlet (1949), Ram Bagai Materials, SAADA, https://www.saada.org/item/20130716-2999.

[38]Publicity Materials for Ruth St. Denis, Ram Bagai Materials, SAADA, https://www.saada.org/item/20130716-3003.

[39]Benjamin Siegel, *Hungry Nation: Food, Famine and the Making of Modern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), chap. 3.

[40]Joanna Simonow, "The Rise and Demise of Multi-Purpose Food in India: Food Technology, Population Control and Nutritional Development in the Post-War Era, c. 1944–66," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 44, no. 1 (2021): 167–184, 170–176.

[41]Simonow, "Multi-Purpose Food," 175–176.

[42]Simonow, "Multi-Purpose Food," 167–168.

[43]Watumull to Rama Rau, January 10, 1952, WF Records. This amount would be worth about $53,000 in 2022.

[44]Ellen Watumull, "Margaret Sanger as I Knew Her," *Journal of Family Welfare* 13, no. 1 (1966): 6–11, 5.

[45]Ellen Watumull to Madeline Gray, June 26, 1971, WF Records.

[46]Watumull, "Margaret Sanger," 7.

[47]Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Vintage, 1997), 56–81.

[48]Gordon, *Moral Property*, chap. 8, 9, 11.

[49]Ahluwalia, *Reproductive Restraints*, 58–60.

[50]Sreenivas, "Feminism, Family Planning," 316–321.

[51]Watumull, "Margaret Sanger," 7.

[52]Rama Rau to Watumull, March 2, 1954 WF Records; and Watumull to Rama Rau, August 17, 1954, WF Records.

[53]Watumull, "Margaret Sanger," 7.

[54]Watumull to Rama Rau, January 25, 1951, WF Records.

[55]Rama Rau to Sanger, September 5, 1951, Margaret Sanger Papers, series III, subseries 1—Correspondence, Margaret Sanger Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Libraries, Northampton MA.

[56]Sreenivas, *Reproductive Politics*, 108–109.

[57]Emily Klancher Merchant, *Building the Population Bomb* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), chap. 3, 4.

[58]Aiko Takeuchi-Demirci, *Contraceptive Diplomacy: Reproductive Politics and Imperial Ambitions in the United States and Japan* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), 150.

[59]Carole McCann, *Figuring the Population Bomb: Gender and Demography in the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), chap. 3.

[60]McCann, *Figuring the Population Bomb*, 143; and Merchant, *Building the Population Bomb*, 114.

[61]Sanger to Rama Rau, May 19, 1952, Margaret Sanger Papers, series III, subseries 1—Correspondence, Margaret Sanger Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Libraries, Northampton MA.

[62]Watumull to Rama Rau, January 10, 1952, WF Records.

[63]Dhanvanthi Rama Rau, *An Inheritance: The Memoirs of Dhanvanthi Rama Rau* (London: Heinemann, 1997), 260–261.

[64]Watumull to Rama Rau, July 9, 1952, WF Records.

[65]This network existed in parallel to the emerging network of demographers and the Population Council, who similarly used small funds at the outset, but insisted on their separation from "birth controllers." McCann, *Figuring the Population Bomb*, chap. 3–5.

[66]Watumull to Rama Rau, January 25, 1951, WF Records.

[67]Watumull to Rama Rau, January 10, 1952, WF Records.

[68]Sanger to Rama Rau, September 5, 1952, Margaret Sanger Papers, series III, subseries 1, correspondence, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Libraries, Northampton MA.

[69]Rama Rau to Sanger, September 4, 1952, Margaret Sanger Papers, series III, subseries 1, correspondence, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Libraries, Northampton, MA; and Sanger to Rama Rau, September 5, 1952, Margaret Sanger Papers, series III, subseries 1, correspondence, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College Libraries, Northampton, MA.

[70]Rama Rau to Watumull, May 10, 1952, WF Records; Hannah Peters to Watumull, May 29, 1952, WF Records; and Watumull to Rama Rau, August 29, 1952, WF Records.

[71]Rama Rau to Watumull, January 24, 1952, WF Records.

[72]Watumull to Rama Rau, July 6, 1951, WF Records.

[73]Watumull to Rama Rau, October 25, 1951, WF Records.

[74]Rama Rau, Introduction to *The Third International Conference on Planned Parenthood: Report of the Proceedings* (Bombay: Family Planning Association of India, 1952), iii.

[75]For example, Connelly, *Fatal Misconception*; and Takeuchi-Demirci, *Contraceptive Diplomacy*, chap. 4.

[76]"India's Birth Control," *Newsweek*, September 28, 1953.

[77]Rama Rau, *An Inheritance*, 272.

[78]"India's Birth Control Leader to Speak Here," *Los Angeles Times*, October 29, 1953, A1.

[79]"India's Birth Control," *Newsweek*, September 28, 1953.

[80]Watumull to John Ford, October 1953, WF Records.

[81]Rama Rau, *An Inheritance*, 273.

[82]Antoinette Burton, *The Postcolonial Careers of Santha Rama Rau* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 9.

[83]Rama Rau, *An Inheritance*, 273; and "Women's Place in India Told in P.C. Talk," *Pomona Progress Bulletin*, October 30, 1953, 17.

[84]Rama Rau, *An Inheritance*, 273.

[85]Watumull to John Ford, October 1953, WF Records.

[86]Rama Rau, *An Inheritance*, 274.

[87]Watumull to Edna Giesen, November 25, 1953, WF Records; and Giesen to Watumull, October 20, 1953, WF Records.

[88]Watumull to Jeanette Gause, October 12, 1953, WF Records.

[89]Watumull to Giesen, September 18, 1953, WF Records.

[90]Contract by Columbia Lecture Bureau between Dhanvanthi Rama Rau and the Watumull Foundation, September 26, 1953, WF Records.

[91]Watumull to Rama Rau, September 4, 1953, WF Records.

[92]Rama Rau, *An Inheritance*, 273–274.

[93]"India's Birth Control Leader to Speak Here."

[94]Judith Cass, "Recorded at Random," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 28, 1953, 17.

[95]"India's Parenthood Exec Speaks at Standard Club," *Chicago Defender*, November 14, 1953, 16.

[96]"Mrs. Vogelor to be Friday Club Speaker," *Los Angeles Times*, August 17, 1953, 59.

[97]Burton, *The Postcolonial Careers*, 29.

[98]Rama Rau, *An Inheritance*, 275.

[99]*Watumull's 100 Years*; and David G. Watumull, interview with author.

[100]Gobind Sahney, interview with author; and Annual letter from Ellen and Goma Watumull, January 1958, SC Papers.

[101]"Degree Is Awarded to Mrs. Watumull," *Honolulu Advertiser*, October 18, 1966.

[102]Elizabeth Doyle, "Barber's Point Patter," *Honolulu Advertiser*, June 19, 1955, 42.

[103]Ellen Watumull, Biodata.

[104]Rama Rau to Watumull, August 24, 1954, WF Records; Rama Rau to Watumull April 30, 1954, WF Records; Watumull Foundation to Rama Rau, December 28,1954, WF Records; and "Population Control in Relation to Food in India," (Watumull Foundation, 1952), SAADA, https://www.saada.org/item/20141106-3872.

[105]Watumull Foundation letter, Aug 10, 1956. SC Papers.

[106]*Watumull Foundation Report*, 7; and Rama Rau, *An Inheritance*, 2.

[107]Sreenivas, *Reproductive Politics*, chap. 4.

[108]On Watumull's continued support of population control, see Ellen Watumull, "The Population: Will We Have Standing Room Only?" *Honolulu Beacon*, November 1964.