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## Opinions

# When will we stop killing humans with Down syndrome?

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By **Marc A. Thiessen** March 8

When Karen Gaffney’s mother found out she would be born with Down syndrome, the doctor said Karen probably would not be able to tie her own shoes. Instead, as Karen explained in a moving and eloquent [TEDx talk](#), she has become an accomplished [open-water swimmer](#) who has crossed the English Channel in a relay race and completed the swimming leg of the Escape from Alcatraz triathlon.

Now she fears the result of a new race — the one to “find newer, faster ways” to screen for Down syndrome so that more children with the disability can be killed in the womb.

Her fears are well-founded. CBS News recently reported that Iceland was on the verge of “[eliminating](#)” Down syndrome. Unfortunately, there was no great medical breakthrough to report. Iceland, it turns out, is not eliminating Down syndrome; it is eliminating people with Down syndrome. The country’s abortion rate for Down syndrome babies is close to 100 percent — the highest in the world. Denmark is close behind at 98 percent. In the United States, it is 67 percent — and Karen fears the rates here will soon reach European levels.

“Save our lives!” she pleads.

Sadly, there will always be those who see people with Down syndrome as nothing more than a burden on society. Princeton University professor Robert George recently tweeted out a shocking video in which a bureaucrat from the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment uses a blackboard to show a man with Down syndrome how “expensive” he is for society compared with “normal” people. “Do the

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Dutch, who suffered under — and in many cases heroically resisted — Hitler’s domination, forget that the ‘final solution’ began with the dehumanization and eugenic killing of the handicapped?” [George asked](#).

Today, more and more people with Down syndrome are speaking out and demanding recognition of their humanity. Recently, Frank Stephens [appeared](#) before a House appropriations panel, where he told members of Congress, “I am a man with Down syndrome, and my life is worth living.” Noting the abortion rates for Down syndrome babies in Europe, he declared, “I completely understand that the people pushing this particular ‘final solution’ are saying that people like me should not exist,” but pleaded, “Let’s be America, not Iceland or Denmark. . . . Let’s pursue inclusion, not termination.”

The message of inclusion is slowly getting through. Last month, baby-food maker Gerber named Lucas Warren — a boy with Down syndrome — its 2018 “[Gerber Spokesbaby](#),” selecting him out of 140,000 entries for his “glowing and giggly smile.” Good for Gerber. His glowing smile should be no surprise. [A 2011 study](#) by Harvard University researchers found that rather than leading lives of suffering, people with Down syndrome have unusually high rates of happiness. An amazing 99 percent said they are happy with their lives, 97 percent like who they are, and 96 percent like how they look. “Overall, the overwhelming majority of people with Down syndrome surveyed indicate they live happy and fulfilling lives,” the researchers found.

[Surveys](#) from Boston Children’s Hospital found that far from being a burden on their families, children with Down syndrome bring enormous joy to their loved ones. Ninety-four percent of siblings expressed feelings of pride about their brother or sister with Down syndrome, and 88 percent said that they were better people because of them. Only 4 percent would trade their sibling in for another, and only 4 percent of parents regretted having their Down syndrome child. It turns out, the hospital concluded, that “the experience of Down syndrome is a positive one for most parents, siblings and people with Down syndrome themselves.”

Lawmakers are taking notice. As [The Post reported](#) this week, more states are passing laws prohibiting doctors from performing abortions because of a fetal Down syndrome diagnosis. Indiana, North Dakota, Louisiana and Ohio have passed such laws, with Ohio’s Down Syndrome Non-Discrimination Act scheduled to take effect later this month. Utah is debating a similar law. The bill’s sponsor, state Rep. Karianne Lisonbee (R), [says](#) it is “Utah’s message to the world is that we will not tolerate discrimination.” Naturally, pro-abortion absolutists are suing to block these laws (successfully in the case of Indiana).

It is simply intolerable that so many joyous lives are being snuffed out. “All lives are a gift from God,” Karen Gaffney [says](#). “To me, that means that all lives matter, even if you will be born with an extra chromosome.”

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