

SURROGACY TESTIMONY:

My pertinent experience in this matter is as a woman who lost her firstborn, a son, to (closed) adoption. I was twenty-one at the time; I am seventy-three now. Between surrender in the face of overwhelming obstacles to keeping my son and the present, I have sought therapy of all sorts to mitigate the pain of adoption loss. I went through a period of seeking to heal through social activism (outreach for a reunion registry; marching for adoption reform in Washington, D.C. (keep vulnerable young families together wherever possible); and writing Letters to the Editor on the topic). I have attended adoption triad meetings (mostly attended by the “losers” in adoption: the mothers who have lost children to adoption and the adoptees seeking their mothers) for information and support in the search process and for healing from adoption loss. NOTE: I refuse to use the term “birthmother” which is industry speak to deny the reality of adoption loss. I found my thirty year old son after six years of active seeking. He was steeped in the belief that I abandoned him and ruined his life. Healing did not come from any of these activities. In the last year it has become apparent to me that the closest I will come to healing is my surrender to the hard reality that some things do not heal. The loss of a child is irretrievable. This is why I never saw anyone else in my situation heal either. I do not mean by this that I never experienced any moments of happiness, but adoption loss did not heal.

I have had one other child, a daughter, when I was twenty-seven, so I was one of the lucky ones in the sense that I did, finally, get to parent a child of my body after being a mother with empty arms for six years. One child never replaces another, but I did get to parent. Not all who suffer adoption loss get to do this, since secondary infertility is not uncommon. Similarly, as the 2010 documentary *Eggsploitation* shows, young egg-donors can end up infertile after experiencing the harvesting of their eggs for money. As in adoption, the desperate and often ruthless infertile exchange their infertility for a fertile woman's child – and now in a plot twist we didn't see until recent times, her eggs, the source of her own fertility, which she will need in the future for her own children.

“Sacred Bond: The Legacy of Baby M” by Phyllis Chesler was written in 1988 and raises all of the right questions about surrogacy. Looking at the developments around me, it does not appear that anyone listened to this well researched book.

Recently I read a novel by Kazuo Ishiguro, one of our finest living writers, entitled “Never Let Me Go.” The setting is a parallel England at an elitist boarding school with dark hints about the fate of the special children in attendance, who turn out to be clones raised solely for the purpose of organ “donation.” The past head mistress of the school explains to two inquiring thirty year old donors (euphemistically called students) how society arrived at this point.: (pages 262-263) “.. you must try and see it historically. After the war, in the early fifties, when the great breakthroughs in science followed one after the other so rapidly, there wasn't time to take stock, to ask the sensible questions. Suddenly there were all these new possibilities laid before us, all these ways to cure so many previously incurable conditions. This was what the world noticed the most, wanted the most. And for a long time, people preferred to believe these organs appeared from nowhere, or at most that they grew in a kind of vacuum. Yes, there *were* arguments. But by the time people became concerned about...about *students*, by the time they came to consider just how you were reared, whether you should have been brought into existence at all, well by then it was too late. There was no way to reverse the process. How can you ask a world that has come to regard cancer as curable, how can you ask such a world to put away that cure, to go back to the dark days? There was no going back. However uncomfortable people were about your existence, their overwhelming concern was that their own children, their spouses, their parents, their friends, did not die from cancer, motor neuron disease, heart disease. So for a long time you were kept in the shadows, and people did their best not to think about you. And if they did, they tried to convince themselves you weren't really like us. That you were less than human, so it didn't matter. And that was how things stood until our little movement came along. But do you see what we were up against? We were virtually attempting to square the circle. Here was

the world, requiring students to donate. While that remained the case, there would always be a barrier against seeing you as properly human.”

Of course, although the above passage speaks of “cures” there are no cures *per se*. What is really happening is that if a vital organ is too diseased to function, the afflicted receives a donor lung or heart although the latter means another's death. Likewise infertility is not cured; a woman who IS fertile supplies the eggs, the womb, or the infant. As in the novel about organ donation, the fertile donors must also not be seen as human. Not to those who profit by receiving product and its outcome or a cash flow from it.

Make no mistake, the infertility industry rakes in multiple billions per year. Like all industries ambition and greed propel policies, not concern for the well being of children (the product) or those who provide them (mothers stripped of children or women whose eggs have been harvested or wombs or whatever they come up with next). As Phyllis Chesler writes, “We are stripmining the wombs of the poor.” We are privileged citizens and feel entitled. Life is not a commodity. Money should not buy everything. Every step taken in that direction only increases the demand for the next step and the next and the nex.

I urge you NOT to take the surrogacy step.

Thank you.