

**Lesbians against “surrogate motherhood”: No regulation over women's bodies**

Surrogacy, also called "gestation for others" means that a woman surrenders her body in order to generate children under the provisions of a contract. Surrogacy is practiced only in a few countries around the world.

Embryos are usually implanted in the womb of “surrogate” mothers: the embryos come from oocytes harvested from other women, so as to sever the genetic link between the pregnant women and the children she is carrying. The organizers of this activity thereby also hope to sever the emotional bond between the “surrogate mother” and the newborn, as if the relationship depended on the genetic code and not on the nine months of pregnancy and on childbirth. This “gestational surrogacy” is invasive and dangerous for maternal health, but these issues are glossed over, as is the fact that breastfeeding is generally banned to prevent the reciprocal attachment of mother and newborn.

Far from being a generous act, this social practice is found only in the few countries that have introduced the validity of the surrogacy contract. Such a contract is offered by companies that deal with human reproduction in an organized system involving clinics, doctors, lawyers, agencies – all of them motivated by their financial interest. In surrogacy there are neither gifts nor donors, only lucrative business fostered mostly by people in the first world who desire to become parents and seek “cheap wombs” in poor countries.

This system needs women as the means of production, so that pregnancy and childbirth become a trade (even though not formally recognized as such) and women the producers of infants who are turned into a mere exchange value. The invasion of the market in all areas of life, such as health, education and services which were once called “public”, with globalization is also likely to seep into the area of human reproduction. We say “no” to a job that invades our bodies and commodifies a new human being, who becomes the “product” of pregnancy.

Some women agree to abide by a contract which endangers their health and alienates their life by handing the power to decide about possible abortions over to the doctors, who are accountable to their clients.

They are under multiple pressures from their family relationships which are often based on sexist

domination, economic and geopolitical relationships, and the evergreen myth of motherhood. However this time it is for others, with the glorification of female self-sacrifice aimed at making the clients happy.

These clients are more often than not heterosexual, with only a few who are gay). “Surrogate mothers” often value and favour their relationship with the clients over the one with their foetus or newborn, as they are deprived of any right as far as contact with the children they have handed over to others and information about their future.

It is not acceptable to be a mother for others by obligation, be it through a contract or through regulations that normalize this practice, which creates a subclass of breeders, who are not allowed to claim as their own those babies that their bodies nourished for nine months.

Infants born under contract are programmed to be separated from their mothers at birth, not by accident as when the mother passes away or decides not to recognize them putting them up for adoption, but in a predetermined manner, taking away their best source of nourishment and interrupting their privileged relationship with the woman who created them, and who is their main source of reassurance.

International conventions such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Stockholm 1989) and the Convention on Intercountry Adoption (The Hague 1993) guarantee the continuity of family life, which is the right of the infant to be with the woman who gave birth to him/her (ie the mother), which may be overlooked only in adoptions.

The Council of Europe Convention on Biomedicine (Oviedo, 1997) also makes it illegal to make profit out of parts of the human body, such as oocytes.

Consequently, in the name of the self-determination of women and of the rights of the newborns:

- we reject the commodification commercialization of the reproductive capacity of women;

- we reject the commodification commercialization of children;

- we ask all countries to maintain the rule (of elementary common sense) that the legal mother is the

woman who gives birth and not the signatory of a contract or the oocyte supplier;

- we call on all countries to abide by the international conventions they signed for the protection of human

rights and of family life, and firmly oppose all forms of legalization of surrogacy at the national and

international level, repealing the (few) laws that have introduced it.

Herewith undersigned by...

*Signatures follow (see www.danieladanna.it)*

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