

Testimony of Alana S. Newman
Opposition to AB460 on
To the California Assembly Committee on Health
April, 30 2013

I'm writing to oppose AB460 and am writing on behalf of myself and thousands of donor conceived children urging you to vote no on AB460. I am a California resident temporarily living in New York and am unable to personally testify, but I humbly request that you accept my personal testimony writing.



I am the founder of AnonymousUs.org- an online story-collective for donor-conceived people, sperm and egg donors, and surrogates, parents and anyone else affected by third party reproduction. Our tagline is "anonymity in donor-conception hides the truth, but anonymity in story-telling helps reveal it"

I was conceived using an anonymous sperm donor. Despite all best intentions, and being deeply wanted by my mother, I strongly disagree with the practice, and cannot sit back and neglect to describe the consequences of third party reproduction to a world that is increasingly creating new life this way.

First, can I say that it is extremely difficult to speak up against these issues. I was raised in San Francisco where the mantra is to support family diversity. But the very good intentioned goal of showing respect for different kinds of families is sometimes in direct conflict with children's rights; the right to have a relationship with and be raised by your own biological parents, to not be sold or trafficked or given away unnecessarily. Every pregnancy that is commissioned by a single person or same-sex couple, is by definition being denied a relationship with at least one of their biological parents, and therefore it is a human rights violation.

Donor-conceived people are finally growing up and starting to organize and take action for our rights. We have successfully banned anonymity and payment for donors in a number of countries such as the UK, Canada, Sweden and Australia. I urge you to do right by children by not extending insurance coverage to pay for this new form of human trafficking.

The facts of my conception are that my father was paid to abandon me. There is no dignity in that. I suffered from debilitating identity issues, mistrust of the opposite sex, hatred and condemnation of the opposite sex, feelings of objectification- like I only exist as a play-toy for others, and feeling like a science experiment.

If people can take away something so precious as a mother or father and make us feel like we should be grateful for the loss, what else can people take away from us? How do you expect the next generation to fight for things like freedom, democracy, clean air, clean water, when something as precious and basic as your mother or father is stolen from you? Removed by the state... Removed by a fertility industry that forces you into existence and then doesn't return your calls when you grow up and start banging on their doors asking for records... Removed by a commissioning parent, often your other biological parent who vowed to protect and provide for you, but only on the contingency that you show gratitude for your life and don't ask questions about the other missing parent...

In response to being told I should be grateful for my circumstances, I ask people- would you ask someone conceived through rape or incest why they might criticize the details of their conception? Shouldn't they too

be grateful for life? To me, donor-conception is a euphemism for buying and selling children. Writing the checks and signing the contracts before the child looks human and is out of the womb, is how we cognitively justify the loophole.

In the last 8 years I have submitted DNA tests and connected with a personal investigator to try and find out who this man is; my father. Other donor-conceived people I know have spent decades and hundreds if not thousands of dollars trying to find their genetic parents and half-siblings. We know from history that it is a natural human need to want to know and be known by our genetic family. The open adoption movement is one example. Very recently the Australian government offered an apology to those affected by forced adoption.

One of the United State's most famous civil rights leaders was Malcolm X. The "X" he used to replace his last name was a direct criticism of slave-owners removing slaves from their spouses, parents and children, and being disconnected from their ancestry and heritage. "Who do you think you are" is a popular TV show where celebrities have their genealogy investigated. Rosie O'Donnell herself expressed a craving to "discover her family as fully fleshed out people and learn about their journeys". The sheer existence of a term and concept like genealogy demonstrates that it is unfair to minimize and marginalize donor-conceived people's curiosities about our genetic kin, and dismiss our desire for connection.

Commodification of Life.

I was initially inspired to start participating more in the public debate over donor-conception when I noticed some moms-via-sperm donation asking how they could get refunds for their donor-conceived children who were born with genetic diseases. Yes, refunds. I read testimonials from parents who seemed to be experiencing buyer's remorse. It appears spending cash on conception corrupts the parent-child relationship.

Last week there was a story that broke of an American surrogate who was offered \$10,000 to abort the baby she was carrying for a couple (via husband's sperm + egg donor) because at the 5 month ultra-sound it was discovered the child had a cosmetically unfortunate cleft palette.

For a documentary I did recently, I carried on a conversation with a gay man who with his partner, had hired a surrogate who is now pregnant with twins. When I asked what they would do if the babies were discovered to have down syndrome, they told me point blank that they would abort. At the time of the interview the surrogate was 4 months pregnant. It reminded me of my pregnancy, and how at 4 months gestation, my mother-in-law put her hand on my abdomen and could clearly feel her granddaughter kicking.

Theresa Erickson is a famous former surrogacy attorney in the United States and was a serial egg donor and now, a convicted felon. Theresa conspired to hire anonymous egg donors, and create embryos with anonymous sperm donors, and implant them into a hired surrogate's womb, and then once the baby made it to the 2nd trimester, would then sell parental rights to the highest bidder. She created and sold 13 babies this way, for up to \$180,000 each.

Having a bloated industry where medical and legal professionals profit from separating children from their biological parents is problematic.

I urge you to reject insurance expansion for singles and same-sex couples that *by definition* will alienate a child from their mother.