

An Open Letter of Warning from State and National African American Leaders on Amendment 2

October 29, 2006

We write today on a matter of solemn urgency. There is a hidden danger in the proposed Amendment 2 to the Missouri Constitution. And the danger is aimed right at our African American community, specifically at our daughters.

Amendment 2 says that it bans the buying and selling of eggs for human cloning. In reality, Amendment 2 creates a market for millions of eggs for cloning and medical experimentation. In fact, Amendment 2 creates a safe haven for human egg traffickers in the State of Missouri.

The fact is there are not enough human embryos in fertility clinics to do the massive experimentations envisioned by big biotech firms. Nationally, it is estimated there are only 400,000 human embryos stored in IVF clinics, and most of those are beyond the reach of medical and scientific experimentation. Scientists and bioethicists warn us that millions of eggs will be needed to do the kind of human experimentation that big biotech firms want to do.

The biotech special interests behind Amendment 2 understand this, which is why they have hidden human cloning and egg trafficking in the fine print of Amendment 2.

Here is the danger to our daughters. With millions of eggs needed for their experiments, where do you suppose they will go to get them? They will go to the poor and to the disadvantaged. They will take advantage of women who are in need. They will take advantage of our daughters and our sisters for their human cloning experimentation.

There are approximately 128,000 African American women between the ages of 20-34 (the preferred age-range for egg donors) living in Missouri according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Let's not give biotech companies the opportunity to target our daughters and risk their lives and well-being – the very health of our daughters – in the name of unethical and dangerous practices such as cloning.

An article from the *Contra Costa Times*, posted on the website of the Women's Cancer Network, states "The women who donate eggs to California's \$3 billion stem cell research program ... could face psychological and health risks that have not been fully explored by scientists..." (<http://www.wcn.org/interior.cfm?featureid=7&id=1564>)

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration currently has on file more than 6,000 complaints regarding such hormonal stimulation, including 25 reported deaths. One study reports that up to 14 percent of patients undergoing hyperstimulation experience some degree of ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome (OHSS.) Severe OHSS includes a wide range of serious side effects including loss of fertility, dangerous blot clots, kidney or multiple organ failure, and death. The frequency of severe OHSS is estimated to be as high as 10 percent of women who undergo the procedure. There are indications that some OHSS risks may be higher for younger women.

The need for eggs in order to carry out this unethical research is astounding, as bioethicists Wesley Smith pointed out in 2003. This is why cloning is in the fine print of Amendment 2; there aren't enough women to produce all the eggs needed to do the research that will supposedly produce cures for certain diseases:

Wesley Smith writes, “Do the math: One hundred million patients at 100 eggs each would mean that biotechnologists would need access to at least 10 billion eggs just to treat the Americans the NAS (National Academy of Sciences) has identified as having degenerative conditions that might respond positively to stem cell therapy. Even if we decided to strictly ration therapeutic cloning to, say, the sickest 100,000 patients, you would still need 10 million eggs!

Even this strict rationing would require one million women of childbearing age to submit to egg extraction. These numbers are mind-boggling.”

There is a sorry history in America of targeting poor African Americans for medical experimentation. We must not let it happen again. We must protect our daughters from the predators who want their eggs. We ask all people of good will to band with us to protect our daughters and say no human cloning, say no to human egg trafficking, vote “NO” on Amendment 2.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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