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# Breeders: How Gay Men Destroyed the Left

By [Robert Oscar Lopez](#)

Recently I watched the documentary [Breeders](#), which I recommend to everyone – gay and straight, liberal and conservative. The documentary, produced by Jennifer Lahl at the Center for Bioethics and Culture, exposes the ethical dangers posed by the practice known as “surrogacy.” Surrogacy is the use of a contract, by which a woman agrees to carry a gestating child in her womb for another party (usually an infertile heterosexual couple or a gay male couple), and also agrees to abandon the child to the couple who has engaged her services.

Compensated surrogacy means that the carrier is paid to rent out her womb.

Uncompensated surrogacy means the carrier turns over the child without receiving anything for the lost tie between her and the baby – she receives no remuneration and will be subject to the other party’s orders, in terms of when she gets to see the child, if at all. In many cases, there is an expectation that the carrier will simply be erased, and the child will never know who she is.

Between compensated and uncompensated surrogacy, we have a choice between baby-selling and baby-theft.

In jurisdictions that allow for surrogacy agreements, the carrier will be “bound” by what she agreed to and cannot change her mind.

This practice was banned in New York State in 1992, by legislators who stated clearly that there was no distinction between surrogacy and baby-selling. Details of the Baby M case that prompted the New York law can be found in this *New York Times* [article](#), though you have to scroll down a bit to get to the particulars (and ignore the author’s propagandizing in favor of repealing the law).

## Shouldn’t we oppose surrogacy in general, not just when gay men do it?

Many of my allies who are opposed to surrogacy do not want to cast this as a gay male issue. They are right, since heterosexuals began the practice to alleviate the suffering of wealthy, infertile heterosexual women. Planned Parenthood does not seem eager to oppose surrogacy as exploitation of women, largely because it is career-oriented “liberated” women who often need to turn to surrogacy contracts, having aborted too many times in their twenties and then postponed childbearing to focus on their professional ascendancy. Once the glass ceilings are shattered, feminists will be quite hesitant to bad-mouth the trail-blazing pro-choice success stories who now decide they want to be moms at age forty-five and keep their equally privileged husbands happy.

My allies are also right not to make this a gay issue, insofar as heterosexuals like [Sarah Jessica Parker](#), [Nicole Kidman](#), Jimmy Fallon, [Tagg Romney](#), and [Melissa Harris-Perry](#) have been among the most visible practitioners of surrogacy contracts.

Harris-Perry is the most troubling. In light of her past statements as a black feminist who teaches African-American studies, her hypocrisy is stunning. When she found herself mired in controversy a year ago over her “Lean Forward” spot implying that children do not belong to their parents, she blogged a defense of her collectivist position that included this [striking line](#) on April 9, 2013:

I have no designs on taking your children. [...] But I understand the fear. **We do live in a nation where slaveholders took the infants from the arms of my foremothers and sold them for their own profit.** We do live in a nation where the government snatched American Indian children from their families and “re-educated” them by forbidding them to speak their language and practice their traditions.

Regardless of Melissa Harris-Perry’s assertion that her surrogacy contract was humane, the problem is that even the most whitewashed surrogacy involves someone “taking the infant from the arms of a mother and selling” that child “for profit.” There are lawyers and brokers involved. The government is expected to register the purchaser as the new guardian of the child with the resulting mandate to enforce ownership, through violent force if necessary. (In other words, if the carrier mother changes her mind and runs away, Melissa Harris-Perry will have to be guaranteed the prerogative to involve police to seize the child and return her to Harris-Perry’s power.)

And regardless of whether the mother consents to losing her child, the child cannot consent. The child is chattel.

No defender of third-world people can seriously turn a blind eye to surrogacy, now that baby brokers are turning to cheaper venues like [Thailand](#), Mexico, India, Ghana, and Nigeria to farm babies. Often the aspiring couple brings eggs donated by a white woman and then has the child gestate inside a brown woman's uterus. The conditions of some of these baby factories are, needless to say, atrocious, and little more than barracks patrolled by thugs.

And yet...someone also needs to hold gay men accountable in this moral mess. Gay organizations have been waging a *Kulturkampf* on the fronts of media, religion, education, and international diplomacy, to gain acceptance of (i.e., "silent acquiescence" to) "alternative families," so that the business expands unchecked.

Since many people are too scared to call out the gay lobby, I will.

### **How did progressives allow this Trojan Horse into their camp?**

Surrogacy is wrong, whether it's traditional or gestational. The former involves a woman turning over a child that is genetically hers, while the latter involves a "carrier" woman turning over a child conceived with another woman's egg and a man's sperm through in vitro fertilization.

"Gestational surrogacy" is favored because no legal mother exists, insofar as one woman provided the egg and another woman provided her womb. By pitting these two women against each other (usually they do not even know each other), the agents make it virtually impossible for either of them to sue for custody of the resulting child.

It is almost inconceivable that the movement to legitimize surrogacy could have set up shop on the American left, where the three most sacred cows are race, class, and gender – all of which are areas of inequality aggravated and abused by the surrogacy industry's pattern of using poor women of color, especially overseas, to breed human beings who are then placed under the ownership of wealthy men in the United States, the lion's share of whom are white.

Here the left's snake eats its head. The more that ostensibly progressive groups such as Planned Parenthood and the Human Rights Campaign sink into the quicksand of surrogacy and all it represents, the more the left ceases to be any kind of recognizable left at all. What's even more agonizing is the fact that all this happened because of one colossally bad decision made in the 1970s: to include "gay men" in the pantheon of groups that were ostensibly fighting against oppression.

### **The problem with including gay men**

While I am a dyed-in-the-wool conservative, I credit the left for envisioning social justice movements based on alliances and interlacing projects of political resistance. In 1964, when Martin Luther King Jr. returned from Norway, after receiving his Nobel Prize, he wrote:

On another level, I now had to give a great deal of attention to the three problems which I considered the largest of those that confront mankind: racial injustice around the world, poverty, and war. Though each appeared to be separate and isolated, all were interwoven into a single garment of man's destiny.<sup>1</sup>

For King, pacifism was inseparable from anti-poverty and anti-racism. Soon enough, black feminists like Michele Wallace and Angela Davis would brave the forces of reaction and challenge the black men who were leading this movement to address the struggles of women. Eventually, gender joined race and class to form the triumvirate of the left's social critiques. All three of these categories reflected the needs of large groups of people who had clear grievances, people who had suffered widespread institutionalized violence, confinement, and deprivation that were irrefutable in the annals of history. Had this triangle of causes remained sacrosanct, there is no way surrogacy would have led the left back to human bondage.

But then came gay men. Somehow "sexual orientation" was jimmed into the triangle of race, class, and gender. Homosexuals were deemed an oppressed people despite the flimsiest of historical grievances (even the legendary gay Holocaust involved no more than 15,000 victims, out of the twelve million people placed in Nazi concentration camps).

Gay men were teased about their sexual tastes and had to face anti-sodomy laws, which made it hard for them to find erotic release. They had the option of lying to protect themselves. Living a lie is hard, but living a lie when you enjoy all the economic, racial, and patriarchal advantages of *having to worry only about your sex life* is hardly on the scale of Jim Crow, women not having the right to vote, or poor people starving during times of famine or unemployment. There is an enormous difference between systematic, large-scale persecution and simply facing barriers to sexual pleasure.

By casting gay men as powerless, the left sealed their doom. A new crop of "allies" possessing financial and social capital far in excess of people of color, women, or the working class was bound to rise quickly to power and take over the whole movement, mowing down everything in their path, including the sacred goals the movement began with.

Gay men are *men* – to wit, men who define themselves as men-loving men who refuse to be involved with women. It's reasonable not to hate people for existing in such a male-centered way, but on the other hand, it's unreasonable to endorse without any caveats any aim or demand that such a group might articulate. Gestational surrogacy is a dream come true for woman-hating chauvinists who are bound to congregate under such an umbrella: men enjoy all the "phallic" privilege that the bourgeois patriarchy can provide, and women are put in their place. Not even in the kitchen, no – in a barracks somewhere, patrolled by goons who will snatch away their babies whenever the men demand it.

Consider some of the lines from *Breeders*:

[On a woman who ended up in a custody battle after not wanting to surrender the child:] She was a surrogate for her brother and the lawyer that was representing her brother in the custody battle for the children said something to the effect of like – "We just need to change the law, and the law needs to recognize that some **women will be just used as breeders.**"

(snip)

[On a woman who was lured into a surrogacy fiasco with her gay brother:] My brother and his partner and I were down in Mexico. And we were on the beach eating, and a same-sex couple came by and had two little children. They started discussing their situation – that their sister had given birth to them with each of their sperm.

(snip)

[On the complicity of the military:] When you look at the market in surrogacy, in the United States, you know **a large percentage of women who decide to become surrogates are military wives.**

(snip)

[On a surrogate's conflict with her gay brother:] And it blew up. And I was leaving. And, actually, I was leaving the state. As I got in the car he asked, "What about the babies?" And I said that we were gonna be lucky if – you know, because of the stress that was going on. And he turned around to me and said, "**Well, I'll get some other stupid female to have my children.**"

(snip)

[On how a gay couple tricked a woman into losing her baby:] I finally signed this document and the one word that it had in there was a phrase that said something like I hadn't been paid anything for my services. I looked at that and I thought that was weird. It wasn't services. **And that's what ended up giving them a foothold on claiming that I'm not the mother.** They used that document later after the children were born to claim that it was a surrogacy agreement.

(snip)

[On how gay men have used the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment to strip women of their rights to their own children:] Their argument, as I understand it, is that an unmarried woman has to adjudicate her parentage just like an unmarried man. It's kind of novel. **They argue it's an equal protection violation under the constitution that a woman gets the unilateral ability to become a parent simply by giving birth. A man doesn't get to do that. There's a bias in the law and it's an equal protection violation.**

In both Ohio and the United Kingdom, there has been a push, mostly by gay men, to issue birth certificates that indicate neither the egg donor nor the surrogate mother's name. This would transform a birth certificate from a document recording where a child came from into a bill of sale and contract for ownership of human chattel.

We've seen this before – not only in the United States, but going all the way back to Rome. For some time I have pointed out that the [13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Amendments are separated by only three years](#), and therefore the gay marriage proponents ought not to be able to cite the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment without addressing the fact that champions of dad-only families seem to clash openly with what's stated in the 13<sup>th</sup> against slavery. (The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, it should be noted, is far more sweeping in its dictum – *neither slavery nor involuntary servitude shall exist* – and its second clause empowers Congress to pass laws to prevent its resurgence.)

Yes, I know the word "slavery" is incendiary. But we have to take surrogacy seriously, because this could escalate into what we saw between the 1400s and 1800s. Human beings have blind spots. Systems that begin on a small scale have a habit of growing rapidly, turning far more monstrous than people would have predicted, and then becoming world-historical atrocities solvable only by traumas like the American Civil War. Consider that the esteemed historian Philip Curtin pegged the total number of Africans trafficked to the New World over 400 years at about 9.5 million, excluding those who died in the Middle Passage. [Curtin died only a few years ago](#). In 2012, in the United States, [1.5% of all live births](#) were the result of in vitro fertilization. The *Guardian* reported in 2012 that over a period of 35 years, [5 million children](#) were born through in vitro technology. Hence, we are outpacing the African slave trade in terms of how many children are being brought into the world under the oppressive aegis of a contract – bought and sold.

Two years ago, I lunched with an upper-middle-class, heterosexual white man who received his Ph.D. in African-American studies from a top institution, and is now a tenured leftist at a renowned university. He is a staunch defender of LGBT rights and told me, "I see no problem with women selling their children to gay men if they want. That's progress." Like many others, he says that this isn't slavery because we don't see the whippings, the forced labor, or the racial laws; moreover, the adults have all consented to it, the child will be loved, and gay men are an oppressed class of people who wouldn't be inclined to abuse others.

I reminded him of the black authors we both studied so closely in our careers as scholars:

The greatest evil of slavery was the fact that children were taken from their parents and sold to other people, because the wound could never be healed. Even once they were freed, the descendants were denied their own origins and had to live with the scars of having been torn from their own kin, as well as the memory of having been someone's property. As a descendant of slaves, I know this. I can sit in an office with my PhD and sip designer latte, gaze out at LA through my high-rise office window, and feel equal, but no matter what I do, I can never rewrite the fact that my great-great-grandmother was a Puerto Rican slave raped by a white man. It was this intergenerational wound that finally became intolerable to the Christians of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Only with the rise of a bourgeois nuclear family ideal in the industrialized world could people compute that a system designed to buy children and separate them from their kin can only be wrong. If you learn nothing else from reading the vast library of slave narratives, you must learn that. Or else, write to your graduate program and tell them you are going to return your PhD.

<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther King Jr., "The Nobel Peace Prize," in *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed. Clayborne Carson (New York: Warner Books, 1998), 262.

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