Surrogacy:
A process where a woman, known as a surrogate,
agrees to carry and give birth to a child
on behalf of another person or persons.

My mother would rather have had an abortion if she could have obtained it legally. But her doctor had another patient who wanted a baby, and he saw an opportunity. My mother could give away her baby to a woman who was unable to give birth to live offspring. That could help her make sense of giving birth to a baby she could not keep. She could make an altruistic gift. So much giving, and no money exchanging hands. In the early days when vultures were not ravenous.

I would like to write an academic submission and answer predetermined questions like others, but my history makes me emotionally involved. I was a medical student once, and there was distain for anyone who became emotionally involved in their work. I think this remains in academic circles, but I hope this committee can accept that *creating children is the most emotional thing many of us will ever be involved in,* and accept my submission that I would like to be made public. All the people involved in my creation and exchange are dead so there is no one to be hurt by the truth of my origins – except of course me. And I am more hurt by the secrets that are maintained about the truth of the emotional lives of children taken from their mothers at birth.

I sit watching 'Long Lost Family' with tears in my eyes. So many people looking for people they are related to, but were separated from, often since birth. I wonder if my grandchildren will sit watching adults who were born through 'surrogacy arrangements' describing the hole that has always been in their souls, like those of us who lost our mothers at birth. They will know that, in spite of thousands of anecdotal stories dating back to the 1940s, nothing has been learned from experience, and no long term research has ever been conducted on humans separated at birth. But they will know there is data even now, on how damaging it is to most animals to be separated too early. In most states of Australia you can find memorials to mothers and children who were lost to each other, for what at the time looked like a good solution to give babies to infertile couples.

Mothers wondering what happened to their children, and adults who were born and separated, still wanting the connection with their mother that was denied to them at birth. How do we know what difference there might be if the egg and sperm come from people other than the birthing mother? But one thing for sure is that the baby is growth out of the body and chemistry of the pregnant woman, and will experience her emotional life and her microbiome in preparation for meeting her at birth.

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Will science have progressed to untangle the science of quantum entanglement that could explain how the cells of the mother that grew the child, and the cells of the child that remain in the mother cry out for each other forever after separation? *Will those who are privileged to be kept by their birthing families, and who have never felt this experience ever listen to the voices of those of us who were taken from the labour ward. Can we disturb the sacred bond of motherhood by pretending it doesn't exist?*

Tabla Rasa

A baby is not a 'blank slate' as the myths would have us believe, and the theory of 'tabla rasa' was long ago discredited and has never been shown to exist by scientific research. Conversely, we now know how intimately the mother-baby connection forms the foetus. This is the critical issue for consideration when contemplating the removal of a baby from its mother at birth

Surrogacy is a word used to cover up the practices that, for the most part infringe the rights of a newly created child to know the mother who grew the child ; the mother to whom it is bonding in utero. Surrogacy can also be used to deny the child the right to know its history and its ancestors in most cases. The evidence is clear that the brain architecture develops in relation to the chemical environment and senses of the mother. At birth, or very shortly afterwards, the baby is able to recognise its mother and the presence of the mother helps the baby to regulate its own relaxation response. Being handled by strangers initiates a stress response and the level of cortisol in babies taken from their mothers has been recorded as high, setting up a lifetime of higher than average stress response, even when returned to the mother some time later. If an ongoing relationship is later established, the baby re-establishes a sense of security (measured by the relaxation response), but the wound of separation remains in the babies cellular memory. All this is known from adults who lost their mothers at birth. The foundational growth/learning as the brain develops in the womb, is greater than will ever occur again in life after birth – from a single cell to a fully formed baby human with senses developed symbiotically with the mother.

Bonding occurs for the foetus in utero, even if the mother does not want to keep the child. The baby is marinading in a chemical cocktail determined by the mental and physical health of the mother. The bonding of mother and child continues at birth, driven by the chemicals produced by the mother. Pregnancy has prepared the baby to respond to those chemicals (oxytocin and others), and the mother's milk continues the sensations of taste and smell that developed while the baby was in utero. The baby also receives a microbiome that is perfect for the diet the mother has consumed while pregnant, and which has been produced in turn by the mother's ancestors. At birth, the

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baby has only one mother – and some scientific papers say the mother and baby remain as a single unit, not ready to be separated until the baby sees itself as separate from the mother, observed at approximately 9 months.

The mother who births the baby is forever the birth mother regardless of any 'surrogacy arrangements' of alternative nomenclature. If someone wants to hire her womb for their own purposes, she deserves to be paid for her services and insured for any on-going problems that are caused by any interventions for the pregnancy and any on-going problems caused by the pregnancy. Intending parents need to set up the insurance fund for this purpose. She should be paid more than anyone else involved in the contracts, and if not paid, nor should anyone else be allowed to profit. Make it altruistic for everyone involved. Baby making should not become an industry for those who can afford to buy a baby in the way they buy houses and cars. In spite of any contractual agreements, the mother must retain total body autonomy and not be subjected to anything she later disagrees with.

I'm finding it too difficult to give this submission the time it deserves and ask for the opportunity to speak to the committee about a lifetime of longing to know the mother who gave birth to me and who carried my DNA to the grave. I spent many years searching for my genetic relations, and have found my father's family and am accepted by them. It is good to know people I am like, and who share an ancestry, but it did not take away the longing for my mother. Inside a fully functioning adult, there is a baby who still wants the mother who she grew to know in utero. That bond does not break at birth; it produces a wound that opens with various triggers, and the most common are the death of any of the social parents (intended parents in surrogacy vernacular), and the birth of our own children, and for me, knowing my origins become more important the older I get.

Surely, before surrogacy goes any further, *long term research needs to be done on the life-long effects of separating mother and child at birth*. Using a new language to describe an unnatural phenomenon does not change the circumstances for a baby who loses what it developed in utero to expect from its mother. No one else, except maybe a close relation who has lived with the mother while she was pregnant, and continues the closeness after birth, can provide the comfort of familiarity.

To ask a mother, like mine was, to spend 9 months emotionally detached from her growing baby, means she is marinading her baby in a chemical environment that does not support emotional closeness. My mother and I were both set up for separation

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rather than being born wanted. Her rejection of me lives on even though my intending parents wanted very much to be loving parents to me.

I am part of a world-wide network of adults who lost their mothers at birth, and I read stories of mothers who had complications of pregnancy during and after giving birth, and there is no amount of money in the world that can compensate them for their loss of health. So I know my experience is not a lone one. Children of surrogacy contracts are beginning to speak out, and they should be heard. But to do so risks a loss of the continuing relationships with their social parents/ contractors, and possibly loss of access to the large amounts of money that have been available in that family. As in my own case, there was a debt of gratitude to the people who housed, fed and enabled my education, that made me loyal to them as long as they were alive.

The most important thing I have been able to do to assert my own identity, is to have the name of my birth mother on my birth certificate, recording the truth of my genealogy correctly for all time - even though she did not want to keep me, and the rejection still hurts. Nobody can change that. But I would like to think someone is listening.

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