

In This Issue >>>

- What Celebrities *Aren't* Sharing about IVF
- Filling in the Gaps: A 3-Part Video Series
- 2020 IVF Clinic Outreach
- Something Puzzling in Utah
- On the Nightstand
- Words to Watch: "To Use"



Issue 5
Spring 2020

News and information about the youngest human beings
Brought to you by Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter

tiny sparks



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Sacred Heart of Jesus with Saint Ignatius of Loyola and Saint Louis Gonzaga. circa 1770. José de Páez, Mexico, 1727-1790.

Sacred Heart Guardians and Shelter (SHG) is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization incorporated in Minnesota. Our mission is to provide corporal and spiritual care for the youngest, smallest members of our human family. Our activities include embryo remains burial, advocacy, and prayer. All activities are carried out in faithfulness to the teachings of the Magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church.

From the Director IVF begs many questions.

Up until just over a month ago, right before the American Society of Reproductive Medicine (ASRM) recommended suspending new IVF treatments in light of COVID-19, the IVF industry celebrated several victories.

First, New York, Colorado, and Utah joined the ranks of a dozen other states that mandate certain health plans cover IVF. Utah's application of IVF is frighteningly unique and deserves special attention (see *Something Puzzling About Utah*, page 3).

Second, New York overturned its ban on commercial surrogacy, a practice which more often than not presupposes the use of IVF.

Watching as the bills moved effortlessly through the legislatures, one thing became overwhelmingly clear: **IVF is just not well understood.** And, is it possible that some of the ignorance is intentional? Several pro-life groups attempted to highlight the grave dangers that IVF imposes on young human lives,

but their efforts seemed to fall on deaf ears. Does society so desperately want IVF to be a legitimate solution to infertility that it willfully ignores the truth about how it works?

Which is why asking questions about what is *and isn't* said is so important when discussing IVF (see *What*

Celebrities Aren't Sharing about IVF, page 2). One of the most important questions you can ask is, "what does that mean?"

You may have to ask it several times.

Too much about IVF is omitted, obfuscated, or simply danced around. The result is that people who would otherwise be appalled by IVF's death and destruction describe it as a "miracle."

Laura Elm

Founder, Executive Director

The most important question you can ask: "What does that mean?"

What Celebrities *Aren't* Sharing About IVF

They're talking a lot, but is what they're saying helpful?

Celebrities are scoring major public opinion points by opening up about infertility and IVF. Popular media applauds them for sharing their private struggles with the world. IVF advocates believe that their "star power will help demystify this medical process."¹ And since certain public figures carry tremendous social influence, revealing their IVF use may "prompt some women and men to reconsider whether [IVF] could be a solution for them."²

Unfortunately, celebrities are often just as uninformed as the rest of us when it comes to IVF (and early human development – see box below). A closer look at what they share reveals many omissions and inaccuracies about IVF. And what's left out is significant.

"Michelle Obama's IVF journey could help more women."³

"IVF is so hard to talk about. Thank you, Michelle Obama, for speaking out."⁴

In *Becoming*, former First Lady Michelle Obama writes about infertility, miscarriage, and how both of her daughters were conceived using IVF,⁵ a disclosure which experts say has "led to a 'Michelle Obama effect' on the number of black women exploring fertility treatment."⁶

I dug into the book to see what Mrs. Obama actually says, and found the account of her IVF experience to be underwhelmingly superficial.

In her book, Mrs. Obama writes about the injections, anxiety, and apparent frustration at the minor role that her husband had in generating their children ("his only actual duty was to show up at the doctor's office and provide some sperm").⁷

Is such minimal information really sufficient to inform someone's decision about whether or not to pursue IVF?

If Mrs. Obama's readers promote or pursue IVF based simply on the fact that she did it, they would be wise to reconsider in light of the many weighty issues that can accompany IVF, issues on which Mrs. Obama is silent:

- *What caused their infertility?*
- *Were other people's gametes (i.e., sperm, eggs) purchased? If they are not the biological parents, how and when will they tell their children?*
- *Did they pay for surrogacy?*
- *How many embryos were created?*
- *Were embryos tested and destroyed due to genetic traits, chromosomes or sex?*
- *Was there selective reduction?*
- *Are frozen embryos still in storage?*
- *Can they define "embryo"?*

Mrs. Obama shares a tiny sliver of what IVF entails but leaves readers with more questions than answers.



<<< Mrs. Obama, on miscarriage. >>>

"What I'd been through was no more than a normal biological hiccup, a fertilized egg that, for what was probably a very good reason, had needed to bail out."⁸

Her miscarriage occurred at approximately four weeks gestation, making her child substantially more developed than a "fertilized egg" (e.g., zygote, single-celled embryo). At the time of her miscarriage, the embryonic child was about 3 mm long, had limb buds, and possibly a beating heart.



"Amy Schumer shares 'grueling' IVF journey, says she's 'lucky' to get '1 normal embryo.'"

"I just wanted to share and send love and strength to all of the warrior women who go through this process."⁸

Comedian Amy Schumer shared a photo journey of her IVF experience. While her bruised abdomen and pre-procedure wooziness garner sympathy and camaraderie, her words reveal how IVF dehumanizes young human beings:

"They retrieved 35 eggs from me. Not bad for the old gal right? Then 26 fertilized! Whoah right? For all those we got 1 normal embryo from that and 2 low level mosaic...So we feel lucky we got 1! But what a drop off right?"⁹

Could Ms. Schumer share what an embryo is? Did anyone share that with her? Someday she may have to share with her child that he or she wasn't "normal" as an embryo ("low level mosaic"), and therefore not selected for the first transfer. Or, she may destroy those embryonic children. This are what she *isn't* sharing,

And for someone who wants to have a child, the early death *in utero* of even one child can be heartbreaking. But with IVF, it's just a "drop off."

1. <https://www.cnn.com/2018/11/13/opinions/michelle-obama-book-ivf-fertility-beers/index.html>.

2. Ibid. 3. Ibid.

4. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/nov/10/ivf-hard-talk-michelle-obama-speaking-out>.

5. *Becoming*, Michelle Obama.. 2018. Crown Publishing Group

6. <https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/wellness/story/michelle-obama-effect-sees-black-women-seeking-fertility-67685029>. 7. *Becoming*.

8. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/celebrities/2020/02/17/amy-schumer-ivf-update-lucky-get-1-normal-embryo/4784936002/>. 9. Ibid.

Filling in the Gaps

>>> You need to know what they're not sharing.

Watch these 3 YouTube videos for a quick and clear summary of what isn't shared about IVF.



3 things celebrities aren't telling you about IVF

Part 1. EGG or EMBRYO. (4 1/2 min). <https://youtu.be/70MZ6yrbREA>.

Part 2. HOW MANY embryos were created? WHERE DID THEY GO? (6 3/4 min) <https://youtu.be/r7aYcpmm5Fw>.

Part 3. They have **EXTRA FROZEN EMBRYOS.** And no idea what to do. (3 1/4 min) <https://youtu.be/mCL9wv4e1r0>.

Why Burial?



<p>1</p> <p>Because a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fertilized Egg • Zygote • Morula • Blastocyst • Embryo <p>is a human being.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Because embryos arrest in the lab, before <i>and</i> after cryopreservation.</p> <p><small>"We retrieved 21 eggs, 17 fertilized, 8 made it to blast, 2 were transferred fresh and only 3 were good enough to freeze."</small></p> <p>How many arrested?</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Because an alternative to waste disposal exists.</p> <p>And, it's free.</p> <p style="font-size: small; text-align: right;">Answer: 12</p>
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SHG's 2020 IVF Clinic Outreach

1,450 doctors and embryologists in 48 states, DC, and Puerto Rico will receive this postcard twice this year.



Something Puzzling in Utah

On March 28, Utah Governor Gary Herbert signed HB214, "Insurance Coverage Modifications," into law, adding Utah to a growing list of states that mandate IVF insurance coverage. But Utah's mandate is dramatically different from what other states have done.

What's unique about Utah's IVF mandate?

- The beneficiaries are Medicaid and Public Employee Health Plan (PEHP) members.** The state of Utah is responsible, at least in part, for their medical expenses. What costs more: IVF or caring for people with chronic illness or disabilities?
- IVF is not for infertility. **Instead, IVF will be used to create human beings who will then be tested for certain genetic conditions** (see sidebar). HB214 mandates IVF coverage for people who are known carriers for certain qualifying conditions and who plan to start having children.

Rep. Raymond Ward (R) explains the bill's purported value as "saving money for our Medicaid program and for improving some important health conditions."¹ "We can prevent those conditions entirely so the child can be born healthy."²

His subtle words have significant meaning. IVF and PGD (Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis) will be used to create many human beings and kill the ones who test positive for a qualifying condition. Health conditions are not being "improved;" sick human beings are being weeded out. Disease is not being "prevented" for any particular child; IVF takes away the sick child's right to life. If this practice were carried out *in utero* rather than *in vitro*, it would be called abortion. And these abortions would be justified by the state's modeling of its medical costs.

Qualifying Conditions

- Cystic fibrosis
- Spinal muscular atrophy
- Morquio Syndrome
- Myotonic dystrophy
- Sickle cell anemia

The enacted bill begs further questions. On what basis and on whose authority could other conditions can be added? Does this bill devalue the lives of people currently living with the disease, or whose parents will choose not to test and discard their unborn children?

In some very important ways, Utah has gained meaningful ground in defending the right to life for unborn children,³ which makes the unanimous passage of this bill all the more puzzling. Does a human being's right to life stop when the buck does? Or are we widely, horribly, and perhaps even intentionally, blind to how IVF really works?

1. Rep R. Ward. House Floor, Day 19 (2/14/2020). 2. Rep R. Ward. Senate Business & Labor Standing Committee (2/21/2020). 3. SB67 (Disposition of Fetal Remains) and SB174 (Abortion Prohibition Amendments)

See SHG's letter to Utah's governor and legislators:
<https://sacredheartguardians.org/services/advocacy/utah>

On the Nightstand

- Human Embryos, Human Beings. Samuel B. Condic, Maureen L. Condic. 2018.
- The Mother Machine. Gena Corea. 1985.
- Brave New World. Aldous Huxley. 1932.

On the Screen

- Eggsploitation. The Center for Bioethics and Culture. 2010.

On the Pod

- "Laura Elm on IVF and Protecting Life at Even the Earliest Stages." MN Catholic Conference. <https://soundcloud.com/mncatholic/invitrofertization>. 2020.



Words to Watch

Some words that appear in discussions about early human life and IVF should give you pause. Always ask, “*What does that mean?*”

TO USE: To put into action or service. To utilize or consume.

Example. “*The treatment yielded 6 embryos; we used 2, and we held on to the rest in case we wanted another child.*”

IVF relegates embryonic human beings to biological agents, something needed to produce an effect (i.e., pregnancy). But pregnancy exists to support the human being, not the other way around. An embryo has infinite value simply because of what it already is. Can a human being, at any age, be used? And while the couple in the example above says they may want more children, the truth is that their children *already* exist.

Will you help?

Every year, **hundreds of thousands** of embryonic human beings die in IVF labs and are disposed of as medical waste. They, along with their cryopreserved brothers and sisters, need our prayers and our voices.

- ♥ **Donate to SHG.** Your support makes our IVF clinic outreach and embryonic remains burial possible. We can’t do this without your help.
- ♥ **Have SHG speak** at your parish, respect life, or interest group. IVF has been a mystery for too many for too long. It’s time to pull back the curtain.
- ♥ **Pray with us. Pray for us.** Email us at info@sacredheartguardians.org and ask for one (or several!) SHG prayer intention cards.



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