



UPDATE

Fall 2023



FREE TO BE
FAITHFUL

CHILDREN AND FAMILY EDITION

UNMASKING THE HORRORS OF RENT-A-WOMB INC.

A REVIEW OF **'#BIG FERTILITY: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MONEY'**

by Brandon Showalter, *The Christian Post*, November 1, 2018

If you know of any woman considering becoming a surrogate mom, I implore you, please move heaven and earth to convince her not to proceed.

Really, I mean it, pull out all the stops and tell her in no uncertain terms to steer completely clear of surrogacy, especially if she is being enticed by the sums of money offered in fertility agency ads. Might I also suggest that you send her a copy of ["Big Fertility: It's All About the Money,"](#) a recently released documentary by the Center for Bioethics and Culture, which I just watched over the weekend.

Before I go any further, I must say that I am a huge fan of the work of the filmmakers, the CBC's Jennifer Lahl and Matthew Eppinette, as I have engaged them both a few times in the past couple of years while reporting on bioethics issues here at The Christian Post. I can always count on them for insightful comments on the most morally complex and sensitive of topics that far too few Christians consider. And last year [I interviewed](#) Jennifer about this very film just before she traveled to South Dakota to shoot it. (*Full disclosure: I am also a contributor to this project via their Kickstarter campaign.*)

We Are Free to be Faithful In response to increasing intrusions by the government into the realm of the church, the LCMS launched the *Free to be Faithful*® campaign in September 2012 to educate and move people to take informed action to protect religious freedom and all the cultural issues that pertain to it: the confession of faith in the public square, holy marriage, the sanctity of human life and related issues. In 2016, the Synod in convention adopted Resolution 14-01 to encourage education and leadership in matters of religious freedom. For LCMS *Free to be Faithful* resources and news, visit lcms.org/socialissues/freetobeforthful.



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Regrettably, like so many other large industries, "Big Fertility" effectively explains what the fertility industry is ultimately concerned about no matter how many lives it wrecks: money.

And that wreckage is plentiful and gut-wrenching. Yet all too often, the harms inherent in this industry go unseen because commercial surrogacy is almost always portrayed in U.S. media as a sweet, wonderful thing. Key to this portrayal is the cunning way in which it is marketed, appealing to women who want to "help" someone who for whatever reason cannot have a child on her own, without disclosing any of the [serious health risks](#).

The film recounts in riveting detail the journey of three-time surrogate Kelly Martinez and her husband Jay, a couple originally from Iowa who thought that third party reproduction could be a good option for them. They were economically disadvantaged and wanted to get ahead financially. Kelly had always had relatively easy pregnancies with her own children and because of that did not believe it would be a particularly burdensome venture. But as Lahl often points out, you'll never hear of a Hollywood celebrity offering to be a surrogate for her low-income housekeeper. It's the rich who can buy; it is poor women who are the ones selling their eggs and renting out their wombs.

Kelly would soon find out there is [much more to it](#) than what the fertility agencies say in their glossy brochures and sophisticated presentations.

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Detransitioners from Independent Women's Forum "Identity Crisis" Documentary Series Sue Healthcare Professionals for Medical Malpractice

by Press Team, [Independent Women's Forum](#), August 4, 2023

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Two detransitioners who shared their stories through the Independent Women's Forum (IWF) multi-part "[Identity Crisis](#)" documentary last week filed separate lawsuits against healthcare professionals for medical malpractice. The lawsuits, filed in two states by Prisha Mosley in North Carolina and by Soren Aldaco in Texas, represent a growing momentum of individuals who now recognize the danger and permanent damage posed by transgender ideology.

Prisha Mosley, who at seventeen years old started testosterone injections and eventually underwent a double mastectomy, is also suing for fraud and negligence. The lawsuit is brought in Gaston County, North Carolina against eight defendants, including a plastic surgeon, two licensed counselors, and a physician who set Prisha on a path of medicalized gender transition.

Prisha's lawsuit states, in part:

"These individuals whom Prisha trusted to care for her lied to and misled her into these treatments and procedures for the purpose of making money off of her and bolstering their credentials in the emerging field of so-called 'gender-affirming care.'"

"Looking back, it is unacceptable that the healthcare professionals I trusted to take care of me instead deprived me, a teenage girl with a history of trauma and well-documented mental illnesses, of my healthy body and turned me into a lifelong medical patient," said Prisha Mosley.

In a Daily Mail [exclusive](#), Prisha said, "I decided to file a lawsuit because more needs to be done. Just talking isn't enough. People who do harm need to be held accountable. I want justice, and I want to stop this preventable tragedy from happening to anyone else."

"I also want troubled teenagers, who are looking for belonging and acceptance like I was, to know that you can be accepted for who you are. Trying to change your body won't fix you. It'll break you. And you don't have to change your body to please anyone,

certainly not health care providers who stand to benefit financially from setting you on a path of lifelong medical care," Prisha wrote in an [op-ed](#) for Fox News.

Soren Aldaco is taking a similar stand in her lawsuit against nine defendants made up of medical professionals, which states that at "only 17 years old" Aldaco was prescribed cross-sex hormones without "any written parental consent from Soren's parents." The lawsuit brought by Aldaco is filed in Tarrant County, Texas, and seeks over \$1,000,000 in monetary relief.

Soren's lawsuit states, in part:

"Ultimately, what Soren realized is that over the rocky course of her adolescence, what she needed was an unbiased doctor, not an ideologue. And upon these realizations, she immediately felt and understood the wrongs she had suffered at the hands of the Defendants. With this lawsuit, Soren now seeks redress for those wrongs."

Just after undergoing a double mastectomy at age nineteen, Aldaco visited the emergency room, where doctors aggressively knocked out blood clots and sewed surgical drains into her chest where gender transition surgeons had operated two weeks earlier. In an [exclusive interview](#), Aldaco told Fox News host Laura Ingraham, "After I was persistent and very insistent that I wanted some sort of recourse [from the clinic], the CEO reached out to me and offered to reimburse me for the E.R. visit with the stipulation that I sign a nondisparagement agreement. When I asked what they had done to ensure this did not happen to any other person, they ghosted me."

"I look back on my medical transition with regret," said Soren Aldaco. "Traumatic complications opened my eyes to the ills of so-called 'gender-affirming care,' which enabled me to believe hormones and surgery could provide me with the sense of self I craved growing up. These were all vicious lies from professionals who stood to benefit financially from my low self-esteem."

Both lawsuits in Texas and North Caroli-

na reflect a growing movement of individuals across the country who want to prevent other young people from suffering the consequences of pervasive gender ideology.

As more individuals come to experience the harms of the gender ideology movement first-hand, the stories of detransitioners, parents, and experts are impossible to ignore. While much of the media continues to block them out, Independent Women's Forum is giving them a voice. Watch, learn, and share at iwf.org/identity-crisis/.

Editor's Note: At the time of this printing, nine people worldwide have filed lawsuits alleging unethical medical practices. [Kiera Bell](#) filed the first suit of this kind in 2020 and won. Her case changed the practice of medicine in Britain's National Health Service. Two years later, [Richie Herron](#), also British, became the first male to sue. In 2022, [Jay Langadinos](#) filed suit in Australia and [Michelle Zacchigna](#) in Canada. That's when American [Chloe Cole](#) filed the first American lawsuit. She was later joined by [Kayla Lovedahl](#) in California, [Luka Hein](#) in Minnesota, and Prisha Mosely and Soren Aldaco, whose stories are told above. Learn their stories. Help tempted youth avoid falling into the hands of unscrupulous practitioners. Pray that courts throughout the world would help prevent similar medical harms to countless other men and women.



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Religious Discrimination Hurts Kids Waiting to Be Adopted

Some states are denying people of faith from adopting and fostering children because of their beliefs about gender and sexuality.

by Johannes Widmalm-Delphonse, [Legal Counsel for Alliance Defending Freedom](#), August 29, 2023



PHOTO: THE REV. KENNETH MARS AND FAMILY, ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, KIMBALL, NEB.

In the United States, approximately 391,000 children are in foster care. Of those, [over 113,000 children](#) are waiting to be adopted. With such a great need, you would think that all 50 states would be eager to place children with loving and qualified parents. But this isn't so.

The problem? Some state officials are imposing an ideological litmus test to determine who is “qualified” to parent a child. In some states, if you don't agree to adopt the government's views on gender and sexuality, your application to adopt a child will be denied.

This is exactly what happened to Jessica Bates.

Jessica's story

Jessica is a mother of five who lives in rural Oregon. Tragically, she lost her husband in a car crash in 2017. Leaning on her faith, family, and friends, she and her family persevered through the life-changing event.

Then, one day, Jessica was listening to a Christian broadcast about a man who had adopted a child from foster care. After listening to that radio program, she [recalls](#), “I couldn't shake what I heard. Even though I'm raising five children of my own, I knew my family could help children find a forever home.” So she decided to pursue adoption.

Jessica initially sailed through Oregon's adoption application process. But during the training course, the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) explained that people seeking to adopt must “[respect, accept, and support](#)” the sexual orientation and/or gender identity of any child whom ODHS could place in their home. This required applicants to agree to use a hypothetical child's [preferred pro-](#)

[nouns](#), take a child to “LGBTQ community events” like Pride parades, and facilitate a child's access to dangerous and potentially sterilizing pharmaceutical interventions like puberty blockers and cross-sex hormone shots.

Though Jessica would happily love and accept any child — regardless of how they identify — she could not agree to say or do anything that violates her faith.

When Jessica politely explained her concerns to her certifier, state officials presented her with a choice: abandon your religious convictions or forgo the possibility of ever adopting a child. When Jessica stood her ground, the state denied her application — categorically excluding her from child welfare programs.

Jessica should not have to choose between violating her religious beliefs or forgoing the opportunity to adopt, which is why Alliance Defending Freedom is representing her in a lawsuit against ODHS officials.

More government discrimination in adoption against people of faith

Unfortunately, Jessica's case isn't an isolated incident.

In an ongoing lawsuit against New Jersey state officials, Michael and Jennifer Lasche allege that the state removed the couple's foster child and revoked their foster care license because it did not like their religious beliefs about family, marriage, and sexuality. In 2022, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 3rd Circuit [ruled in favor](#) of the Lasches, recognizing that the Constitution protects the right of foster parents to share their religious beliefs, and allowing the couple to continue their case in the district court.

In a different lawsuit against Washington state, another couple expressed interest in fostering and potentially adopting their infant great-granddaughter, and the state similarly [denied](#) their application because of their religious beliefs. The couple, who are Seventh-Day Adventists, stated they would love their great-granddaughter unconditionally. But state officials still posed a series of hypothetical questions to test their beliefs on sexual and gender identities, even though their great-granddaughter was less than a year old. When the couple explained that their faith did not allow them to use preferred pronouns or take a child for hormone treatments, Washington state officials labeled them unfit to adopt.

Thankfully, a federal judge [ruled](#) for the couple, writing that “a foster care applicant's answers to LGBTQ+ hypotheticals cannot serve as the *sole* determining factor

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when an applicant expresses sincerely held religious beliefs” and the state “must not discriminate against a foster care applicant based on their creed.”

In addition to discriminating against people of faith, government officials have also targeted faith-based adoption agencies. ADF has represented one such provider, [New Hope Family Services](#), in two lawsuits against separate New York state agencies. The state had targeted New Hope because of its practice of only placing children in homes with a married mother and father. ADF [won both lawsuits](#), protecting New Hope’s ability to place infants in permanent homes without government harassment.

Excluding people of faith from adoption hurts children

Imposing [radical gender ideology](#) as a prerequisite for adoption only hurts children. Policies like Oregon’s and Washington’s categorically exclude people of faith (including many Christians, Orthodox Jews, Muslims, and others) who disagree with the government’s view of sex and gender based on their religious beliefs.

Yet people of faith disproportionately seek to adopt and care for children in need. That has long been the case. The Bible commands Christians to care for the orphan

(JAMES 1:27), and Christian and other faith groups started some of this country’s first orphanages. Even today, according to one survey, [practicing U.S. Christians](#) are more than twice as likely to adopt than the general population.

Even beyond faith groups, many Americans have beliefs similar to or sympathetic to Jessica’s when it comes to [the human body](#). Excluding those who believe in biblical marriage or biological sex only takes resources away from children who need it the most — children who are [being housed](#) in hotels, child welfare offices, emergency rooms, and homeless shelters (including in [Oregon](#)) for lack of loving homes or other facilities.

Beyond the effect on children, these policies also violate the First Amendment rights of would-be adoptive parents. They categorically [exclude entire religious communities](#) from the adoption and foster-care process based on their religious beliefs on gender and sexuality, violating constitutional protections for religious freedom and expression. These policies also violate the right to free speech by compelling parents to affirm the state’s ideology in word and deed.

These policies need to end. No one should be forced to adopt a state’s radical gender ideology to give children a loving home.

A COLLECT FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE CHURCH

Almighty and everlasting God,
who wills that not one of these little ones should perish and has sent Your only Son to seek and to save that which was lost and through Him hast said, “Let the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the Kingdom of God.” Most heartily we implore You to bless and govern the children of Your Church by Your Holy Spirit, that they may grow in grace and in the knowledge of Your Word. Protect and defend them against every danger and harm, from false doctrine and from bodily threats, giving Your Holy angels charge over them; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. **Amen.**



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

Victory for freedom to confess

As the summer “Free to Be Faithful” newsletter was going to press (June 30, 2023), the Supreme Court published an important ruling on [303 Creative v. Elenis](#). Five years ago, the Court vindicated Masterpiece Cakeshop, decisively ruling in favor of the free exercise of religion. However, that opinion failed to address the question of free speech. 303 Creative changed that.

Now the highest court in the land has decisively ruled that compelling a person “either to speak as the State demands or face sanctions for expressing [his or] her own beliefs” is an “impermissible abridgment of the First Amendment’s right to speak freely.” Jack Phillips and Lorie Smith have secured for all Christians explicit constitutional protection to live and speak truly. Their victories relieve countless Christians from overt threats to their freedom to be faithful in the marketplace. Thanks be to God for their brave steadfastness!

In a compelling 45 minutes, Kelly bravely shares her vulnerabilities and hesitations she had as she faced hurdles she didn't see coming when she signed up to be a surrogate. From firsthand experience she authoritatively exposes the bullying and other abusive dynamics that were set in motion when artificial reproductive operators and their clients became the overseers of her life in such intimate fashion. Because of all the costs and fees associated with these arrangements as the desired baby is essentially being bought, the intended parents — the “buyers,” if you will — get to stipulate their many demands and preferences in the surrogacy contracts. And often their requirements are appallingly slavish. The surrogate mothers have no choice but to obey them if they want to be compensated.

Kelly's first surrogate pregnancy was for two men — using a donor egg from an unnamed woman — from France who gave the impression they were legally married when they were not and who asked her to be deceptive in the mountains of legal paperwork in order for them to take the child back to Europe.

Although it was a difficult ordeal, Kelly opted to become a surrogate a second time, this time using the intended mother's egg and intended father's sperm. She thought it would be better than the first go round because the couple was from the same state and the paperwork and politics that come with transactions across international borders would not be an issue, and the additional money was a needed bonus. But while the second surrogate pregnancy was relatively normal, the intended mother fell gravely ill as a result of the egg extraction process and almost died, causing Kelly great psychological distress. That couple is now divorced, compounding the trauma.

But the third surrogacy was by far the most horrifying and the film spends considerable time explaining how it went in detail. A couple from Spain that liked Kelly's online profile hired her to be their surrogate and they paid the fertility agency for twins, a boy and a girl. Kelly was never informed of this and after the embryos were implanted, the female embryo split off and the male embryo

divided. She was pregnant with twin boys, and although it was not Kelly's fault the Spanish couple became furious with her.

Then they put her through pure hell. I really don't want to give too much away here, but the things they said and did were staggeringly awful.

Once the babies were born the couple took them home to Spain, and Kelly almost died as a result of the medical complications that happened with this pregnancy and ended up being saddled with thousands of dollars in medical debt. Creditors began harassing her for the money because although the fertility agency said they would pay for it all, they did not, and the charges were in her name. The agency only paid the bill when the Martinezes threatened to come to Spain along with Lahl, whom I'm sure they fear and loathe.

Lahl is to be commended for her tireless work on behalf of Kelly and others.

Interspersed between Kelly and Jay's accounts of the events, she supplies expert commentary explaining how these systems often work, drawing upon her background as a pediatric critical care nurse, hospital administrator and bioethicist. The bottom line is that the fertility industry profits handsomely off the bodies of women, and there is much money to be made with every procured pregnancy. Monetizing the womb, Lahl stresses in the movie, is not an ethical nor healthy approach to real fertility medicine.

And Kelly's story is not particularly unique, she explains. Aspects of her ordeal mirrors those of many women who have been similarly exploited. These women reach out to Lahl in desperation because they have nowhere else to turn.

“Big Fertility” concludes by forcefully asserting why surrogacy is not only unwise but is an injustice, a gross human rights violation.

I concur completely.

Surrogacy is indeed a form of child trafficking that enslaves women, treating them as though they are livestock to be bred for the desires of the wealthy. No matter how cutting edge the medical technology and carefully worded the legal contracts, there is simply no ethically right or noble way to do it. Additionally, it represents the very worst of predatory

capitalism, exploiting the economically disadvantaged who are often racial minorities. Human beings are not commodities to be rented, bought and sold. Every Christian should vigorously oppose it, and I must add here that it distresses me greatly to encounter so many sincere believers who have never thought through this issue and its implications.

Our society rightfully forbids a pregnant woman from selling her baby to would-be parents after the child is born, yet somehow has no objection if cash-seeking lawyers and businessmen book a woman's uterus for a baby pre-pregnancy. This is scandalous.

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THE CENTER FOR BIOETHICS AND CULTURE

(CBC-NETWORK.ORG)

Jennifer Lahl is a member of St. Philip Lutheran Church in Dublin, Calif. In 2000, she founded the Center for Bioethics and Culture Network (cbc-network.org). Her expertise has taken her around the globe to speak at conferences, before legislative bodies, and to testify before courts of law regarding bioethics of various artificial reproductive technologies (ARTs) and the sexual exploitation of women by a medical industry unmoored from God's Word.

Lahl produces original documentaries that weave her considerable knowledge into the compelling personal stories of people who have been exploited: “[Lines that Divide](#)” (Fall 2011), “[Anonymous Father's Day](#)” (Fall 2011), “[Eggsploitation](#)” (Fall 2013), “[Breeders: A Subclass of Women?](#)” (Winter 2014), “[#BigFertility: It's All About the Money](#)” (Fall 2018), “[Trans Mission: What's the Rush to Reassign Gender?](#)” (Summer 2021), “[Compassion and Choice DENIED](#)” (Spring 2022), and “[The Detransition Diaries](#)” (Fall 2022).



PHOTO COURTESY OF JENNIFER LAHL



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When testifying earlier this year in [Washington state](#) against a bill legalizing commercial surrogacy (which passed and was signed into law, unfortunately), Lahl recounted her interactions with the many women she knows who have been gravely damaged in these arrangements.

She inquired of legislators, urging them to reconsider the legislation: “How many? How many children must be harmed? How many women must be harmed?”

We should all be asking ourselves such questions.

KEEP UP TO DATE on what’s happening with the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty (LCRL) at LCRLFreedom.org or on the “Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty” Facebook page.

THE LCRL’S MISSION is to ignite and fuel a uniquely Lutheran response to increasing intrusions, limitations and challenges by the government in the life of the church, while educating, encouraging and equipping LCMS members and organizations to take informed action in support of marriage, life and religious freedom.

Contacting the President and other elected officials:

usa.gov/elected-officials | senate.gov/senators/contact/
house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative



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FOR MORE INFORMATION about the LCRL, including ways to support it, visit lcms.org/lutheran-center-for-religious-liberty.

