



# CASABLANCA DECLARATION

For the universal **abolition of surrogacy**

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First of all, I'd like to thank all those who have invited me here to tell my side of the story as a child born of surrogacy and now fighting against surrogacy. I'm grateful and honored to be able to tell my story, which I'll share with you in all humility and sincerity. This is the first time I speak in front of a room full of very bright people, so I have to admit I am a little nervous!

My words are important today, because all too often we forget the people that are the most affected by surrogacy, but who never give their consent: the children born from surrogacy. These children, that are ripped from their mothers at birth, to be sold to strangers, like cars ordered from a factory with options you may or may not like, are considered like vulgar products.

I am a product of surrogacy, created, sold and bought, and I'd like to tell you my story so that you can understand how it has affected me, and why today we must not simply regulate surrogacy, but abolish it purely and simply for the good of the child, for the right of children. A child should never be the subject of a contract, and above all should never be the subject of a transaction.

As I said, we're now going to travel back over 40 years when my story all started.

My intended parents met, my intended mother had already had a son with another man. My parents had a successful business because yes, they are two extremely intelligent people. My mother was 11 years older than my father. The money was flowing, they were at the peak of their careers, and their desire to start a family was beginning to emerge in their heads.



At this stage, my mother was 48, my father 37, and my mother had already had problems with infertility. According to my father, with whom I had a recent discussion, he wanted a child of his own genes, and did not wish to adopt, so surrogacy was really the only solution open to them, rather than giving up on having a child. They decided to look to the United States, and more specifically Louisville, Kentucky, to find an agency that could help them find a surrogate mother.

My parents first gave the agency a list of criteria concerning the woman and what she should look like, because I was born through traditional surrogacy, not gestational, meaning that my surrogate mother would be biologically related to me, even though it makes no difference since we know that the mother by definition is the one who carries the child.

About a year goes by, and my parents have to be rematched with another surrogate mother, since the first one couldn't hold the embryos. That's when the agency hired my biological mother and, miraculously, she became pregnant just a few months after signing the contract.

It's often said that the agencies look at women's psychology through very thorough tests, that they make sure they don't have any debts to pay, but this is simply not true. 14 billion dollars was the surrogacy market in 2022, and do you honestly think they're going to look too closely at women who might even lie during their interviews? Well, of course not.

My case is a perfect example: my biological mother was not mentally stable because she had a history of depression, but on top of that she had lost her last son, aged 2 and a half, in an absolutely tragic domestic accident. She was completely devastated after that. She was in debt, but putting on a brave face for her children and husband. This agency only saw what it wanted to see when it hired her: that is the money she could make them. They abused of the situation of a woman that needed money to feed her children and pay her bills.

I was born on December 10<sup>th</sup> 1991, a date chosen by my intended parents because it fell exactly between the birthdays of my intended mother, born on December 5, and my biological mother, born on December 15. I was to be a Christmas baby. But even that was decided for me, can you imagine? In surrogacy, births can be planned out and decided, how is that in the best interest of the child?

As soon as I was born, I wasn't placed in the arms of my biological mother, the mother who had carried me for almost 9 months, the one who fed me, the one who spoke to me, the one in whom I could feel every emotion that invaded her, the one who, in the end, was the only person I knew.



No, no, I had to take the great leap of an infant, out of my mother's womb, into the austere, cold world of hospital lights, to be sold and to finalize the transaction, into the arms of my adoptive parents, whom I didn't know. This was the first trauma that would write the rest of my life: the trauma of abandonment.

As a child, I was already showing signs of the trauma of abandonment. My parents couldn't leave me as I would be hysterical if they did, I had trouble making friends because I was afraid of rejection, in short, I wasn't the simplest child or teenager. I remember this one time when they tried leaving me at the ski resort to learn how to ski with a group of other children, and I cried so much and screamed so loud that they had to come back and get me. This was the case every time they tried leaving my somewhere because I were to be abandoned a second time.

I was going through an inner battle: how could I build myself without knowing where I came from?

During my young adult life, I sank into alcohol, addictions and was raped because I was constantly putting myself on the edge. I made several suicide attempts. I was never able to have normal friendships, as I would suffocate people that tried to be my friend, afraid that they would abandon me, thus pushing them to eventually reject me, and these situations would of course push me into depression. I was alone, unstable. I also was never be able to find a good job or even finish my studies because of the severe depression phases I had to go through.

Then, thank God, I met my husband, who gradually helped me to rebuild my life with a lot of patience and with a lot of love. He let me lash out with my emotions and understood why I reacted the way I would.

Together, we have three beautiful children, who in turn suffer my traumas. My daughter, Eleanor, suffers from the trauma of abandonment, and my son, Theodore suffers from the trauma of rejection. They in turn suffer from my trauma because all these traumas are transgenerational. So surrogacy didn't just affect me, it also affected my children.

I had proof of the fact that I was born from a surrogate mother by DNA test when I turned thirty. I was even able to find my biological mother and the brother and three sisters she kept. But I'd like to make it clear that I've always known inside me that I was born from surrogacy. We children aren't stupid. We know.

Not so long ago, I was diagnosed with bipolar disease. Does that choc any of you? It shouldn't. My biological mother battles herself with mental issues and thus I do thoroughly believe I inherited this from her. But how could I know? I never had access to my medical records on her side, as everything was hidden from me.



In fact, when I got pregnant from my first child, I was scared to death as I didn't know what I would be passing on to my baby: cancer? A genetic disease? It is mind boggling to me that people find this in the best interest of the child to hide all of this information from them all of their lives.

And that is a brief summary of my life.

There are always consequences. Look at me, two people ago, my intended parents, 31 years ago, made a small decision, then a bigger one, then a trivial one, and one decision after another I came into the world. And on that day I was the consequence of a mundane choice made by two people at a time when I didn't even exist. And it was this choice that defined my entire existence. I am a consequence, and I hope that soon it will be me who will bring about consequences to abolish the atrocity of surrogacy.

Be careful, in my words you'll never see me blaming my parents for having used a process that was an option offered to them on a silver platter and that they didn't have the strength to resist. Today, I don't feel any hatred and I don't blame them. I blame the system that slowly but surely allowed surrogacy to be legalized.

First, we approve the use of surrogacy for medical reasons such as infertility, after we accept it for social reasons, and then we accept it for anything and everything. For reasons of human trafficking, the sale of children, the unavailability of the human body, for ethical and bioethical reasons, surrogacy HAS to be abolished. But, in my humble opinion, the greatest reason to abolish this monstrosity is for the sake of the child, for his or her rights, for a psychic balance that he or she, like me, may never regain.

If just one child, like me, has encountered so many problems in his or her life as a result of surrogacy, that should be enough to convince you that there's nothing good about this process, and nothing will make it ethical, despite all your attempts to persuade yourself otherwise.

Thank you for your time.

