

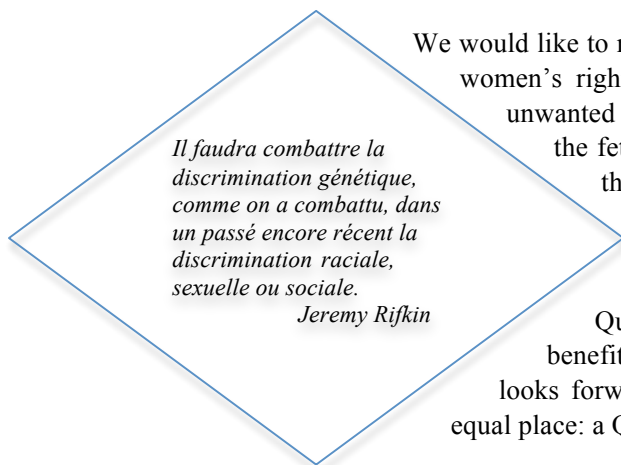
The Coalition against the implementation of a public program of prenatal screening for Down syndrome is opposed to this planned project of the *Health and Social Services Ministry*. Several issues lead us to oppose the implementation of such a program, which would be systematically offered to every pregnant woman in Quebec.

- **A government regulation that selects which children can be born based on genetic characteristics is eugenic in nature and risks having same effect as a policy of eugenics;**
- **The implementation of such a program is discriminatory against those currently living with Down syndrome.**
- The value of each human life being's is equal. The implementation of such a public program could be interpreted to mean that the life of a person living with a Down syndrome is worth less.
- Human diversity benefits society as a whole.
- Given our current system, do not believe that parents can give informed consent nor are they given adequate, objective information, not only because of the lack of support and appropriate services, but also because of the prejudice and misinformation that exists.
- We fear the scientific "slippery slope." Today it is Down syndrome, but tomorrow what characteristics will we be screening for? Where will it end?
- Women or couples should not have to bear the undue pressure that would be created by such a program.
- We fear public services would be decreased to families and people living with Down syndrome.

This issue raises ethical questions at both the individual and the collective levels. At the individual level, the reasons for a couple to undergo prenatal screening for Down syndrome are understandable. The desire to have a perfect baby, to control one's personal life and one's future as a parent can be justified. However, to collectively accept a public program of prenatal screening means to accept discrimination that is ideologically and financially supported by the Government towards people living with Down syndrome. How can we not fear eugenics?

Regardless of any action taken to inform parents adequately, to make the characteristics and potential of a person with Down syndrome known so as to allow couples to make an informed choice, a public prenatal screening program will always be intrinsically discriminatory since it infringes on human dignity. People with Down syndrome contribute to society and would feel rejected by these policies that affect them directly. They need to feel that they are a part of this world and not an "endangered species" as one of them said in response to the *Rapport de consultation du Commissaire à la santé et au bien-être*.

« Nier la dignité d'un fœtus porteur d'un déficit génétique ne peut que finir par créer, sur le plan social, de l'intolérance à l'égard de toutes les personnes atteintes de problèmes ayant une composante génétique. Et fonder le droit de l'enfant à naître normal revient à forcer les mères à choisir l'avortement thérapeutique... »
(Le Québec transgénique, Gilles Bibeau)



Il faudra combattre la discrimination génétique, comme on a combattu, dans un passé encore récent la discrimination raciale, sexuelle ou sociale.

Jeremy Rifkin

We would like to make it clear that we do not oppose the legal status of the fetus nor a women's right to choose abortion. The latter allows for the termination of an unwanted pregnancy without knowing the genetic or physical characteristics of the fetus. Prenatal screening, when done for reasons other than improving the condition of the unborn child, allows for the termination of a pregnancy based on certain genetic characteristics. We therefore oppose human selection and the underlying eugenic rationale.

Quebec, which advocates integration in many of its social policies, will benefit by the creation of an inclusive society. Therefore, the Coalition looks forward to a Quebec where every person with Down syndrome has an equal place: a Quebec without discrimination or favouritism.