

GENETIC BILL OF RIGHTS

The purpose of the Genetic Bill of Rights is to introduce a global dialogue on the fundamental values that have been put at risk by new applications of genetics. A basic set of common principles is essential for creating a framework for understanding the ethical, legal, social and environmental implications of biotechnology.

New genetic technologies pose unprecedented challenges to human integrity, individual liberty and the health of the biosphere. Since the questions that these technologies raise affect all of us, there is a pressing need to ensure the public is brought into the process of regulation and governance.

But this will require a broadening of the spectrum of education and debate. CRG uses the Bill of Rights pamphlet as a vehicle for public dialogue.

THE GENETIC BILL OF RIGHTS

by the Board of the Council for Responsible Genetics

PREAMBLE

Our life and health depend on an intricate web of relationships within the biological and social worlds. Protection of these relationships must inform all public policy.

Commercial, governmental, scientific and medical institutions promote manipulation of genes despite profound ignorance of how such changes may affect the web of life. Once they enter the environment, organisms with modified genes cannot be recalled and pose novel risks to humanity and the entire biosphere.

Manipulation of human genes creates new threats to the health of individuals and their offspring, and endangers human rights, privacy and dignity.

Genes, other constituents of life, and genetically modified organisms themselves are rapidly being patented and turned into objects of commerce. This commercialization of life is veiled behind promises to cure disease and feed the hungry.

People everywhere have the right to participate in evaluating the social and biological implications of the genetic revolution and in democratically guiding its applications.

To protect our human rights and integrity and the biological integrity of the earth, we, therefore, propose this Genetic Bill of Rights.



1. All people have the right to preservation of the earth's biological and genetic diversity.



2. All people have the right to a world in which living organisms cannot be patented, including human beings, animals, plants, microorganisms and all their parts.



3. All people have the right to a food supply that has not been genetically engineered.



4. All indigenous peoples have the right to manage their own biological resources, to preserve their traditional knowledge, and to protect these from expropriation and biopiracy by scientific, corporate or government interests.



5. All people have the right to protection from toxins, other contaminants, or actions that can harm their genetic makeup and that of their offspring.



6. All people have the right to protection against eugenic measures such as forced sterilization or mandatory screening aimed at aborting or manipulating selected embryos or fetuses.



7. All people have the right to genetic privacy including the right to prevent the taking or storing of bodily samples for genetic information without their voluntary informed consent.



8. All people have the right to be free from genetic discrimination.



9. All people have the right to DNA tests to defend themselves in criminal proceedings.



10. All people have the right to have been conceived, gestated, and born without genetic manipulation.