Native Women Given Cancer Causing Drug

Although the Food and Drug Administration has not approved the drug Depo-Provera as a contraceptive, it has been given to as many as 200 Native American women in recent years, many of whom are mentally disabled. The FDA rejected that use of Depo-Provera in 1978 when it was shown to cause cancer. However, the Indian Health Service admits that it currently administers the drug for contraceptive purposes to 25 or 30 Indian women.

IHS claims that Depo-Provera is prescribed safely and only in unique cases in which other oral medication methods have not worked. Dr. Everett R. Rhoades, director of IHS, points to the small percentage of the 225,000 Indian women of child-bearing age receiving the drug as evidence of IHS physicians' "sensitivity and caution."

Charon Asetoyer, Executive Director of the Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center in South Dakota, strongly disagrees. Asetoyer, contends that a lot more than 35 Indian women are receiving Depo-Provera injections and that the drug appears on hospital pharmacy shelves on many reservations.

She emphasizes that the women are not aware of the long-term side effects, which include high rates of uterine cancer, high blood pressure, blood clotting, irritation, and in a few instances, permanent sterilization. Some women have gotten pregnant while on the drug while others have had problems conceiving once off the drug or have had children with birth defects. Women who receive Depo-Provera, or their guardians if they are mentally disabled, must sign consent forms, but the Justice Department has repeatedly warned IHS that the forms it uses do not adequately advise patients of the risks or of other birth control options.

Depo-Provera, which is taken by injection every three months, is used for contraceptive purposes by as many as 1.5 million women worldwide and is approved for this use by The World Health Organization. In the United States, the drug is only approved for use in some cases of advanced and inoperable cancer. There is a loophole, though, which IHS employs. If a drug has FDA approval for one purpose, doctors may legally prescribe it even for other unapproved purposes.

The FDA reversed its initial approval of Depo-Provera as a contraceptive because of evidence that it causes cancer. The FDA's Center for Drugs and Biologics stated the risks this strongly: "Never has a drug whose target population is entirely healthy people been shown to be so pervasively carcinogenic in animals as Depo-Provera."

Human Guinea Pigs

"Native American women have always been used as guinea pigs," Asetoyer charges. She points out that the Copper 7 intrauterine device, which was taken off the market in the 1970s due to high infection rates, is also currently used on Indian reservations. Consistent with its poor record, the IUD is causing a high rate of infection and scarring in Native American women, which in some instances has produced sterilization. Asetoyer also reports cases of supposedly voluntary sterilization in which IHS physicians told Indian women "if you don't have your tubes tied, you'll get cancer."

Congressman Sam Gejdenson (D-Conn.) chairs the House Interior investigations subcommittee which held a hearing on IHS use of Depo-Provera last summer. "What makes me nervous," he told the hearing, "is the history of this country and how we've treated Indians. We once gave them blankets infected with smallpox."

Claudia G. Nenno

Sources:

"Disputed drug still given to Indians as contraceptive," *San Francisco Examiner*, Aug. 7, 1987

"Indian Women Given Unapproved Drug," *Washington Post*, Aug. 7, 1987.

IMMIGRATION

Amnesty Applicants Face New Hurdles

A last minute surge before the May 4 deadline boosted the total number of immigrants applying for "amnesty" to just over 1.7 million, still far short of the two million predicted by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and nearly a million short of reliable estimates of the number eligible. A bid to extend the "amnesty" deadline was killed in the U.S. Senate where opponents claimed it would be too costly even though the program had been self-supporting from application fees. Under a separate program for agricultural workers which continues until November, another 622,000 persons also have applied for legal residency.

Those who managed to gather the necessary documents and fees to apply still have a long way to go before they gain permanent legal status. Phase two of the legalization process may prove even more difficult and confusing than the first. Right now, many, if not most, amnesty applicants don't even know there is a phase two. They don't know what is required of them or what to avoid, explains Manuel Contreras, Legalization Coordinator for the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO).

INS, which has yet to finalize regulations governing phase two, promises to mail information to all applicants, but Charles Kamasaki, Director of Policy Analysis for the National Council of La Raza, points out that mailings are not a very effective way to reach this constituency. Even if the information is printed in Spanish and other languages, many of the amnesty applicants are illiterate and won't be able to read it. Also, they are a transient group and many may never receive the mailings.

New Rules "Smack of Racism"

Though some of the details remain uncertain, it is known that amnesty applicants will have to demonstrate "civic literacy" before they become permanent residents. In the past, only candidates for citizenship had to meet such requirements. Civic literacy includes an understanding of English and of U.S. history and government, demonstrated either by passing an INS exam or by enrollment in 30 hours of classes with a certified instructor.

"AMNESTY" — Who Applied?

Top 10 States		Top 11 Nationalities	
CA	54.1%	Mexico	73.7%
TX	15.6%	El Savador	6.5%
FL	5.6%	Haiti	2.3%
IL	5.5%	Guatemala	2.2%
NY	5.2%	Philippines	1.0%
AZ	2.4%	Columbia	1.0%
NJ	1.2%	Nicaragua	0.8%
NM	1.2%	India	0.7%
WA	1.1%	Poland	0.7%
OR	0.8%	Jamaica	0.7%
		Dominican Rep.	0.7%

(Source: INS)

To Antonia Hernandez, president of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the new requirements "smack of racism." She said "It is not unreasonable to expect immigrants to meet specific requirements. But it is unconscionable to ask individuals to meet undefined qualifications and then fail to provide the means for doing so."

Kamasaki estimates that a million of those who applied for amnesty will need English classes. To meet that demand would require doubling the capacity that now exists through adult education, community colleges, job training, and all other sources combined.

Some federal funding is available to the states to provide educational programs and social services to the amnesty applicants but immigrant rights advocates worry it will be used to ease state budgets for existing programs rather than meeting the new demands. California, for example, has earmarked only 20 percent of its share of the funds for education, which critics say is not enough to even meet the pre-amnesty need for English literacy classes.

Without a major expansion of educational programs, many immigrants will be unable to meet the civic literacy requirements within the 30 months allotted from the time they were granted temporary legal residency. Those who miss the deadline revert to illegal status and could face deportation. In the Yakima Valley of Washington State, two summer interns from CTWO's Minority Activist Apprenticeship Program are working with the People's Legal Defense and Bail Committee on an accountability campaign targeting INS, the Board of Education, and local politicians to ensure that adequate classes are available.

Misinformation and Malnutrition

Amnesty applicants can also jeopardize their opportunity to gain permanent residency by violating restrictions on travel outside the country or by accepting certain forms of public assistance. Earlier proposals barring almost any type of federal aid were abandoned in favor of more reasonable rules but most of the newly documented don't know what they are. Some will make the mistake of going on public assistance but more will forfeit help they need rather than take a chance. NALEO has received reports from around the country that child malnutrition is rising in certain areas among native born children of amnesty applicants who are afraid to apply for food stamps. (The rule of thumb is that cash assistance programs like AFDC or general relief should be avoided but non-cash programs will not disqualify an amnesty applicant.)

Another major problem Kamasaki said is the reduction in counseling and assistance. Though only about 25 percent of applicants actually filed through community groups, many more utilized them for advice and information. There is no provision for funding similar community-based help during phase two.

Sources:

"After Amnesty, New Hurdles," *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 1988.

"'Civic Literacy' a Big Hurdle for Immigrants Aspiring to U.S. Citizenship," *Washington Post*, April 29, 1988.

"Immigrant Legalization Programs May Be Hurt By Bickering Over Which State Units Get Funds," *Wall Street Journal*, March 28, 1988.

POLITICS

Blacks, Latinos Vie for Pivotal Role in '88 Vote

"The sleeping giant is awakening," Latino leaders claim. "The Black vote's not locked up," Black leaders warn. "Take us seriously but don't take us for granted," both groups are telling the candidates as the 1988 elections heat up. But how decisive is the Black or Latino vote likely to be?

Congressman Mervyn Dymally, chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, asserts that a "unified Black vote will make the difference between whether the Democrat or the Republican wins in the District of Columbia, Texas, Florida, Louisiana, Georgia, Alabama, and North Carolina. A five percent increase in Black voter registration and turnout would be decisive in Arkansas, Massachusetts, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee." Dymally adds Kentucky, New York, and Virginia, where similar increase would make the Black vote a "major factor," to come up with a total electoral vote in those states of 170—about 60 percent of the 270 electoral college votes needed to win the Presidency.

Baby-Boomers More Independent

Recent improvements in the Black voter turnout rate give Dymally's optimistic arithmetic some credence. According to the Census Bureau, the voter turnout rate among young Blacks surpassed the rate among their white counterparts for the first time in the 1986 elections. And the gap between overall turnout of Black and white voters narrowed to an all-time low of 3.8 percent. In 1980, it was 10 percent. The boost in Black registration and turnout can be attributed to Jesse Jackson's 1984 Presidential campaign, but from all indications similar gains are not likely to be repeated this time around.

Though Democrats have long been able to count on the Black vote, a Joint Center for Political Studies report cautions that young Black voters are less Party loyal than older Blacks. The Black baby-boomers, according to a 1986 JCPS/Gallup Survey, were "slightly more likely than older Blacks to say they would vote for the Republican nominee in 1988"—13 percent compared to five percent. "Baby-boomers were far less likely to say they were

CTWO News

Gary Delgado, General Director of CTWO, was named one of the first five recipients of a Charles Bannerman Memorial Fellowship. The program honors the work of minority activists and gives them the resources to take a three-month sabbatical.

Rinku Sen, CTWO's Development Director also won an award recently, the Joan Wallach Scott Prize for her honor's thesis in Women's Studies at Brown University. Rinku, who was a MAAP intern last summer in Portland, joined the staff in January and is developing a major donor program for the organization.

With this issue, **Madeleine Adamson** takes over as editor of *The Minority Trendsletter*. Madeleine was a staff member of the National Welfare Rights Organization, the Movement for Economic Justice, and ACORN; editor of *Just Economics* and *The Organizer*, and co-author of *This Mighty Dream*. She lives and works in Baltimore.

At the beginning of June, **Sonia Pena**, moved to Oakland to become the new Director of the Minority Activist Apprenticeship Program (MAAP). Sonia was a MAAP intern in 1986 in Brooklyn and a site coordinator last summer in Denver. She organized CTWO's toxics conference in Boulder this spring.

Among recent consultations, **Alfredo De Avila**, CTWO's Training Coordinator, has been working with the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners (SLUG), teaching members to use house meetings in their campaign to save the city's last farm from developers.

When the Filipino Senior Citizens Center in Oakland got an eviction notice, **Francis Calpotura**, Director of MAAP, helped organize a campaign which is pressuring the city to provide a building for a multi-cultural community center.