



## **Humanizing Genetic Technologies**

by Sujatha Jesudason

Welcome to Generations Ahead's first newsletter and new website! Our goal is to keep you up-to-date with some of the latest political and technological developments in the field of genetic technologies while keeping you informed on our activities and strategies. Let us know how we do.

Two-thousand and nine started off with a bang for the country and for us. Not only did we elect an amazing and historic president, issues related to genetic technologies hit mainstream media in the form of Nadya Suleman and her octuplets. Where Barack Obama inspired us, Nadya Suleman confused us. The (dirty) laundry of Suleman and the fertility industry's lack of regulation and oversight burst into full view on blogs, talk shows and print media. This coincided with a slew of state-level legislation to restrict abortion in the case of sex selection, limits on the number of human eggs that can be fertilized and implanted, regulation of fertility clinics and a revitalized fight to bestow full human rights on embryos. In addition, President Obama came out with his new policy on stem cell research and the new role of science, Representative Trent Franks of Arizona introduced federal legislation to limit abortion in the case of "race selection" and sex selection, and a fertility clinic in Los Angeles began advertising for embryo selection based on eye color, hair and complexion.

Whereas Generations Ahead was used to working behind the scenes with our allies to increase their awareness and understanding of the social and political implications of genetic technologies, now our allies started looking to us for leadership in this complex landscape of new uses for genetic technologies, embryo politics, women's reproductive decision-making, regulation and science policy.

We responded by hosting a series of meetings and conference calls to share information, clarify shared values and develop coordinated messages and response strategies. We brought multiple stakeholders together to resist sex and race selective abortion legislation. This collaboration between South Asian domestic violence organizations and reproductive rights and social justice organizations framed the debate as an issue of supporting race and gender equality, not just assuring access to abortion. We sent a memo to the Obama transition team laying out our vision for a transparent, inclusive public consultation process on genetic technologies. Additionally, we hosted a national convening of disability rights leaders to develop an action plan for ensuring the full valuing of people with disabilities as the use of genetic technologies expand.

While our agenda is not as ambitious or enormous as President Obama's, we are excited about what 2009 holds for us. We intend to be more active players in shaping policy and advocacy, expand our media and communications work, and continue to advance our community outreach efforts to bring more and more leaders and

organizations into the national debates on these issues. In the midst of the economy, war, healthcare reform and immigration, new developments in genetic technologies and their contested uses are inexorably moving up the ladder of public attention. We intend to be in the midst of these discussions and will ensure that our myriad allies are right there with us.

Our goal is to move a social justice values-driven, solution-oriented and hopeful debate on genetic technologies. Please join us for this exciting ride.