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"Reproductive Liberty and Overpopulation: A Response"

Warner, Stanley

Warner, Stanley. "Reproductive Liberty and Overpopulation: A Response." *Environmental Values* 13, no. 3 (2004): 393–99. doi:10.3197/096327104323312743 .

This appraisal of Carol A. Kates' "Reproductive Liberty and Overpopulation" challenges her call for world-wide population control measures—using compulsory methods if necessary—to save the world's environment. The most successful part of Kates' paper is her argument that reproductive rights are not indefeasible and nonnegotiable, but that like many rights, they are conditional and open to a balancing of individual freedom against collective community interests. But her advocacy of mandatory state population controls is flawed in several respects. First, she underestimates the force of the emerging consensus for voluntary population reductions through policies that empower women. Second, she walks on difficult ethical grounds. Are compulsory controls on reproduction ethically justified simply because humans are loathe to take the alternative route of curtailing their "individualistic" "materialistic" appetites for more economic growth and consumption? Third, Kates fails to recognise that her search for measures that immediately and directly reverse population growth would necessitate coercing an entire generation of women toward zero reproduction in order for death rates to have their effect. Lastly, problems with the feasibility of her plan and the absence of international support make it unlikely it will ever come to pass. Alternatives to Kates' policies are discussed at the close.
— Text from The White Horse Press website

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