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## **Prop. 2 ads push fear -- not facts**

*By: ROCHELLE RILEY*

Nothing is more hateful or hurtful than the contention, historically perpetuated by racists, that black people are just plain stupid.

Why else would opponents of a Michigan ballot proposal to expand the use of human embryos for stem-cell research run an offensive TV ad in predominantly black Detroit comparing such research to the Tuskegee syphilis experiments?

The syphilis study wasn't to find treatment or a cure. What actually happened was that, for 40 years, a bunch of so-called scientists working for the U.S. Public Health Service infected 399 black, illiterate sharecroppers from one of Alabama's poorest counties and watched them die. What does that study have to do with studying stem cells to find potential cures for cancer?

Absolutely nothing.

But why let that stop a coalition of ignorance from trying to scare black people to death?

### **Laws can be changed**

The only positive thing to come from the Tuskegee study, ironically, was federal laws prohibiting unethical or harmful human research. That covers current, federally funded stem-cell research. Michigan, which just changed its high school standards to require more than civics two years ago, may be one of at least four states that prohibit the creation of new embryonic stem-cell lines for research.

David Doyle, a spokesman for the coalition opposing Proposal 2, would keep it that way. He said that the law could open the door to rampant, unregulated research that could never be checked. But here's the truth: Laws can always be changed, and have been: to give women the right to vote, to allow black Americans to read, to ensure that all Americans can vote.

Stem-cell research can lead to advances in medicine. While researchers use all stem cells, they prefer to use embryos created because those cells can grow faster and are able to make every cell type in the body in unlimited quantities, said Sean Morrison, a University of Michigan stem-cell scientist.

There are alternatives: adult stem cells, which are limited in what tissue they can become and how long they can survive; somatic cells that can be reverted to an embryonic state but can become cancerous, and stem cells in the fluid surrounding fetuses, which also cannot grow into every cell in the body.

But when you're searching for a cure for cancer, why set limits? And if those limits eventually go too far, it is disingenuous to tell people that nothing can be done about it.

### **Everyone must choose**

Morrison said the only reason a rational person would oppose the research is strong religious beliefs that it is immoral to use a human embryo for any research.

OK.

But that has nothing do with racist experiments against black people. So here are two questions every voter should consider before voting YES for Proposal 2 next Tuesday:

Why would anyone who believes in a right to life deny scientists permission to take embryos that would become garbage and use them for good? What better way to honor the Tuskegee victims than to support research that can save lives?