

# HEARTS OF THE CITY

Exploring  
attitudes and  
issues behind  
the news.

## The Beat

Today's centerpiece focuses on the **Southern California Double Dutch League**, a group that provides an organized after-school outlet for youngsters in a centuries-old street sport. For information on the league, including its May 3 competition in Inglewood, call (310) 412-5508.

Write, fax or E-mail  
Hearts of the City.  
Los Angeles Times  
Times Mirror Square  
Los Angeles 90053  
E-mail:  
Hearts@latimes.com  
Fax: (213) 237-4712



## Navigating the Real World

A rotating panel of experts from the worlds of ethics, psychology and religion offer their perspective on the dilemmas that come with living in Southern California.

**Today's Question:** Whether it is a woman in her 50s or 60s who wants to give birth with eggs donated by another woman or a man in his senior years wanting a child by his younger wife, do you find it ethically questionable for couples to try for children they may not be able to care for when their offspring reach adolescence?

Compiled by JOHN DART, Times staff writer

### Laura Schlessinger

Nationally syndicated radio talk show host; author, "How Could You Do That?"

It is becoming increasingly alarming and disheartening to see new examples of how far our society has gone from consideration of the rights and needs of others when they appear in conflict with our whims and wants. More and more, we talk of *our* rights and needs. When the consequences of our actions impact uncomfortably or disastrously on others, we rationalize that reality away. That medical science can prop up a uterus for nine months in a woman in her 60s who decides she wants the experience of pregnancy and a cooing baby does not make it right or in the best interests of that child. Children should not be bred for such pet-like purposes. To voluntarily condemn a teenager or young adult to parents more likely to be in hospitals, old-age homes or the grave instead of at PTA meetings or weekend soccer games is beyond self-centeredness—it is cruel.

### Karen Baker-Fletcher

Associate professor of theology and culture, Claremont School of Theology

There are always ethical questions to consider when trying for children because children are not only a precious gift but a serious, long-term responsibility entrusted to us by God. Trying for children must always be undertaken with careful consideration about parents' ability to be long-term providers and caretakers. In cases where one parent is older than the other (50 and above), it is important for the younger parent to be prepared to be a single provider of the child financially and emotionally. In cases where both parents are older, strong financial planning and a healthy, committed extended family are necessary if parents are unable to care for their offspring when they reach adolescence.

### Orli Peter

Associate professor of psychology and director of psychology graduate programs, Mt. St. Mary's College

It is not unethical for older adults to bear a child. Because we cannot predict when anyone will die, it would be unethical and ageist to hold only older adults to this standard for childbearing. Of course, all parents have an obligation to plan for their child's well-being in the event of their deaths. Surprisingly, research has shown that children who suffer such a loss typically are not at greater risk for long-term psychological problems. Moreover, older parents have many advantages to offer children. Compared to younger parents, they are likely to be more knowledgeable, emotionally mature and financially secure.