

Pregnant? Free help!
AMY COHEN

If I could

I'd carry all of them

I'd take your nausea, 24-7

for the rest of time,

and try to quell the rising vomit by sucking on crystallized ginger,

I'd take your bloating, your swollen ankles, your swollen breasts, your skin stretched so

taut so distended your belly button presses outward toward the horizon,

always slightly tickling you,

I'd take your hemorrhoids, and your constipation where you felt so ill you called your

doctor to see if you should go to the emergency room

I'd take your aching sore nipples,

even that weird two weeks where you had untreatable unbearable unrelenting

vaginal itching

Just to feel your zygotes' mitosis exponential kicks inside me, a million more tiny

hiccups

Preeclampsia, I'll lie down for you, bedridden and (so now neglected, the living children

starve to death, no matter)

I'd take the tightening cramps, I'll scream as if I might never walk again

spewing bodily fluids from every orifice

I would take all the blood, the shit, the snot, the tears, the amniotic fluid, the placenta

with its grotesque tree of life imprint, the wiry slippery cord

I'd even sacrifice all the precursory ecstasy, you can keep that for yourself, I have no need, but for the other times, the times you fought and scratched, 30,000 times every year by some estimates when you were trapped, and manipulated beyond recognition,

I'd spare you. I'd put myself in your place.

Just to feel in between my legs open and tear, tearing out, push hard against the pain

If only I could save each tiny nameless imagined soul!

But, Oh matriarchy!

You just glance at me with disdain as you walk through that door.

Nonetheless I will stand here
for all my days,
my heart bursting with love and longing, my body shriveled and impotent,

With my sign
saying

Pregnant? Free help!

Note: This poem is inspired by my interactions with a sidewalk counselor that I befriended named Bill who was in his 70's. During one of our conversations, he had

shared that he had been abstinent his whole life. I would watch him call out to the women going into the clinic with such longing. My sense was that his motivation was less about oppressing and controlling women, and more about his own yearning for sexuality and fertility.