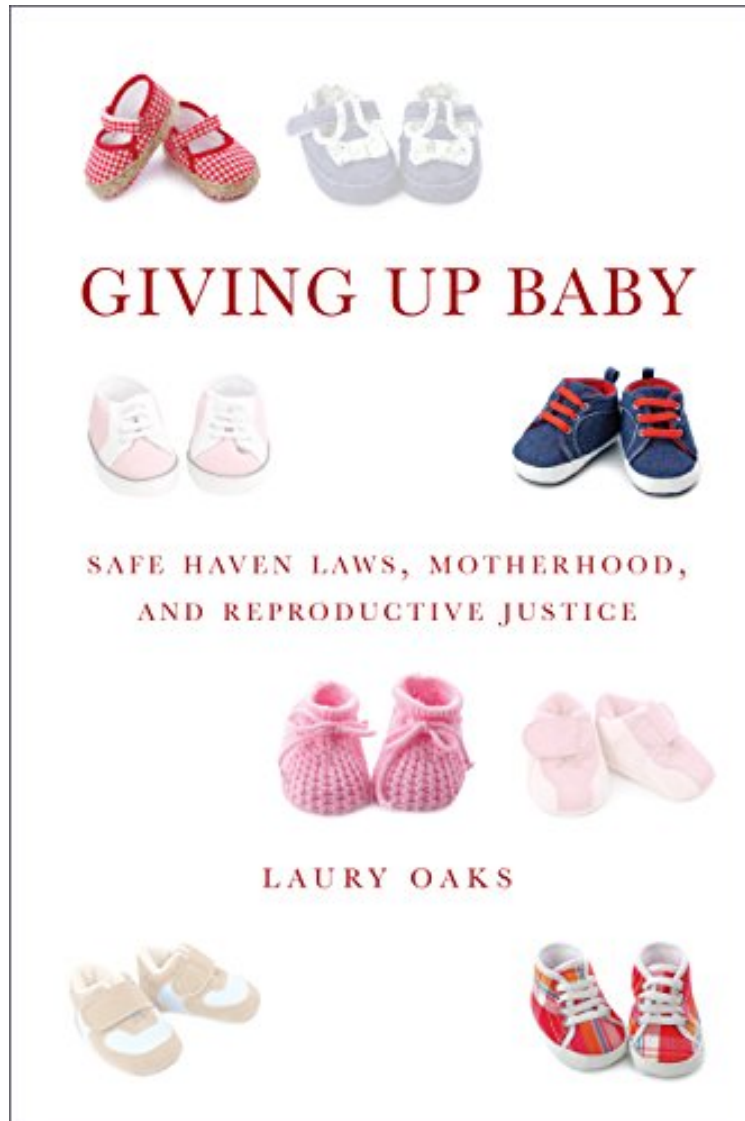


# Giving Up Baby: Safe Haven Laws, Motherhood, and Reproductive Justice

Laury Oaks

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**Laury Oaks : Giving Up Baby: Safe Haven Laws, Motherhood, and Reproductive Justice** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Giving Up Baby: Safe Haven Laws, Motherhood, and Reproductive Justice:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Although Oaks comes to her work as a reproductive justice issue,

while mine has been focused on adoptee equality and rights (SH) By Marley Greiner I wish I could actually write book reviews. This deserves one that I can't seem to get going. I have been a leading critic of safe haven laws since they came on the scene more than 15 years ago. I've written dozens of blogs about them, op ed pieces, testified and submitted opposition testimony on SH bills in several states, and for years published a weekly newsletter on newborn discard and neonaticide. With the exception of my work, as well as that of Baby Love Child, Maryanne Cohen, Carol Sanger, and Erik L. Smith, most commentary, studies, etc have just not gotten it. Laury Oaks does. Although Oaks comes to her work as a reproductive justice issue, while mine has been focused on adoptee equality and rights (SH babies are highly adoptable) she covers the same ground I have. and we share similar observations and conclusions. I was thrilled to see some of my work referenced in the book--and the arguments I and Bastard Nation and a handful of others have argued over the years are all over the place, suggesting that adoptee equality and reproductive justice are linked. Oaks covers everything from "the culture of life" roots and aesthetics of SH, motherhood constructions, worthiness, adoptee rights, father's rights, media representation and manipulation. I have two quibbles. First the self serving quibble that I wish she'd talked to me while writing the book. Ok, I've got the insider dirt which I think would improve this already excellent study. this would also clarify the beginning fo the movement. Second, I'm concerned with the last few pages where she seems to draw the line at abolishing the laws can referring to SH as an "option" albeit a crappy one. And, I know she is opposed to the coming onslaught of baby drop boxes from recent writings. Giving Up Baby is an important book that needs to be read by feminist scholars, as well as child welfare advocates. I'm working on my own book on the politics of newborn abandonment and it will be an important reference for my work. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. tons of great information on Safe Haven Laws. By Customer My daughter used this book to write a paper, tons of great information on Safe Haven Laws! 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Important book. By Jes Oaks covers an important topic that is relevant to reproductive justice. If we are going to have reproductive justice for all, then we need to look at this phenomenon from multiple perspectives and consider the experiences of everyone involved.

Baby safe haven laws, which allow a parent to relinquish a newborn baby legally and anonymously at a specified institutional locations such as a hospital or fire station were established in every state between 1999 and 2009. Promoted during a time of heated public debate over policies on abortion, sex education, teen pregnancy, adoption, welfare, immigrant reproduction, and child abuse, safe haven laws were passed by the majority of states with little contest. These laws were thought to offer a solution to the consequences of unwanted pregnancies: mothers would no longer be burdened with children they could not care for, and newborn babies would no longer be abandoned in dumpsters. Yet while these laws are well meaning, they ignore the real problem: some women lack key social and economic supports that mothers need to raise children. Safe haven laws do little to help disadvantaged women. Instead, advocates of safe haven laws target teenagers, women of color, and poor women with safe haven information and see relinquishing custody of their newborns as an act of maternal love. Disadvantaged women are preemptively judged as bad mothers whose babies would be better off without them. Laury Oaks argues that the labeling of certain kinds of women as potential bad mothers who should consider anonymously giving up their newborns for adoption into a loving home should best be understood as an issue of reproductive justice. Safe haven discourses promote narrow images of who deserves to be a mother and reflect restrictive views on how we should treat women experiencing unwanted pregnancy.

[Oaks] demonstrates quite clearly and powerfully that American safe haven policies represent a tangle of cultural, political, legal, and religious ideas and forces about class, age, gender, motherhood, and race. -Anthropology Quarterly Oaks skillfully navigates the complex web of issues, from class politics to notions of maternal love, that intersect with safe haven laws. -Pacific Standard The author skillfully portrays the contradictions and hypocrisies of the SHL movement. She documents supporters often-vehement opposition to abortion and sex education, their hostility to formal adoption, and their refusal to acknowledge the institutional and socioeconomic reasons why millions of US families live in poverty. -Choice Oaks analysis intersects with the larger story of adoption in the United States particularly its commodification, even as infants are understood as priceless. She shows evocatively that the supply-and-demand exigencies of adoption dovetail with imaginaries of good and bad mothers, as they do with constructions of maternal love. -American Anthropologist Giving Up Baby serves as a firm foundation for future inquiry into the politics, both formal and informal, of safe haven laws through the lens of reproductive justice. Oaks skillful consolidation of research into streamlined and easy-to-understand chapters effectively illustrates the complex and intertwined nature of politics, culture, race, class, and gender in these laws. -Feminist Collections [Oaks] Provides a feminist analysis of the social politics of legal infant abandonment in advocacy and media discourses surrounding safe haven laws. -Journal of Economic Literature Oaks shows us once again what a sharp feminist eye can reveal when trained on a decent-sounding but ill-considered social policy. Systematically and persuasively, she demonstrates how baby safe haven laws reinforce conservative anti-abortion and pro-adoption policies in our fetal-obsessed society. Her lucid, riveting account keeps the reproductive justice framework vividly at the center of analysis, illuminating how the laws unwittingly reinforce harmful stereotypes about who makes a good (or bad) mother. Boldly, bravely, and with a

keen eye for detail, Oaks keeps us focused on the reforms we need to make to allow all parents to raise children with dignity and equality. She offers a real role model of feminist scholarship."-Lynn Morgan,author of Icons of Life: A Cultural History of Human Embryos"A thoughtful and much-needed reproductive justice analysis of 'safe haven' laws and how they are used