



Emma Kim/Getty

TECH + HEALTH 09.20.14

THE DAILY  
BEASTStephanie  
Fairington

## Today's Sperm Donor Isn't a Broke 20-Something

Most people think of sperm donors as 20-somethings looking for a quick buck. But today's donors want to know about their offspring, and even be involved in their lives.

In 1986, Richard Hatch, infamous villain and victor of CBS's inaugural season of *Survivor*, was a cash-strapped undergraduate at George Mason University in Virginia.

He was looking for ways to fatten his slim income when he came across a local newspaper ad seeking sperm donations at \$40 a pop. "Before signing up, I thought through everything" he said in a recent interview from his home in Newport, Rhode Island. "I considered potential contact with my donor offspring at a later date or no contact at all; what I might feel if I met him or her; who might be looking for donations." His sexuality also played into his decision: "Growing up, I always knew I wanted to have a family and kids, but because I'm gay that wasn't going to happen with a woman, so I think in the back of my head, donating was a way to do that."

Today, Hatch is a married father of one adopted son, but he longs to connect with his progeny. He has repeatedly written to the Fairfax Cryobank, where he donated three times a week for two years, waiving his right to anonymity. "I requested that my name be given to anyone searching for me for any reason," he said.



on his doorstep, he didn't flinch. "Life for me is meaningful communication and engagement, so there's no freaking out about this at all. I'm excited about the possibility of making contact with as many of them as I can. I even feel a longing to meet them." To gauge his level of truthfulness, I asked, "So, you wouldn't mind if I included your donor identification number in the story?" To which he swiftly replied, "007." (Seriously, those are his digits.) Hatch admits that he may be "a little odd," but it turns out he's less odd than one might think.

Contrary to popular perceptions, sperm donors aren't always mindless 20-somethings, thoughtlessly squandering their seed for cash without a passing thought to the lives that might result from their donations. A 2012 study titled "Semen donors who are open to contact with their offspring: issues and implications for them and their families," found that of 164 sperm donors, the primary motivation for donating was to help families who wanted to have children (78 percent), followed by making money (61 percent), and passing on genes (41 percent). And, like Hatch, 97 percent of them think about their biological brood: they wonder about their health and happiness and how much of their genetics are reflected in their physical characteristics.

**97 percent of them think about their biological brood: they wonder about their health and happiness and how much of their genetics are reflected in their physical characteristics.**

Wendy Kramer is co-founder, with her donor-conceived son Ryan, of the Donor Sibling Registry (DSR). It has been helping connect paternal half-siblings with each other and their donors since 2000. Kramer told me that she often meets two types of men in her role as the de facto mother hen of the DSR: men who want to connect with their donees once they've had their own children, and men who've never had their own kids and consequently desire to find their genetic heirs.

Robert, an actor who donated for a decade in the late 60s and 70s, falls into the latter category. From his apartment in New York City, he said that right after a former girlfriend gave birth to his daughter, a stillborn and the only child he'd ever be able to call his own, he'd search the faces of females in crowds, trying to find a resemblance to his own. "I'm very happy not having gone through the war of raising children," he explained, "but on the other hand, you have to notice when people say, 'This is the greatest experience in the world.'"

While Robert stresses that he doesn't feel a gap in his life, he's taken significant steps to track down his genetic children. Eight years ago, he registered on the DSR and logged his DNA with an ancestry organization in the hope that it might lead to his descendants. "I've been expecting that I would be hearing



little disappointed that hasn't happened.”

“The biggest misconception about donors,” Kramer told me, “is that they all want to be anonymous. Wrong. Wrong!” In the 2012 survey, which Kramer co-authored, 94 percent of donors were open to contact with their offspring. Of the 86 percent would make themselves available for any questions their bio-children might have; 83 percent would share medical information; and 80 percent would be happy to carry on an email relationship and share photos.

Of the five donors I spoke with, all except one even expressed some form of moral obligation toward their donees. Matt, a divorced Minnesotan with a 15-year-old daughter, who, as far as he knows, has fathered 12 other kids, captured the sentiments of most of the men I interviewed. “Once I opened that door by joining the DSR, I

felt I should share pictures, a genetic history of me and my family, and I'll tell them anything else they want to know about me—but I don't feel an obligation beyond that. That said, I'm open and I'll take it on a case by case basis.”

Given that the population of people profiled in the 2012 study, as well as those I spoke with, were mostly drawn from the DSR (73 percent), the results are inherently skewed, and might not reflect the feelings of the vast majority of sperm donors. After all, these men are all on a quest to make contact with their donees, so it follows that they've thought about them with more depth and dimension than your average guy.

But if it's true that most men are like Jay, a married musician with two kids, who thinks that his participation—a decade of donating—was a mere business transaction and bears no sense of responsibility or strong feeling for his donor offspring, it's a symptom of a culture that fosters a disconnect between men and their reproductive material. In the interest of maintaining traditional ideals of masculinity and familial divisions of labor, it seems that reproduction is almost always cast as a “women's issue.”

In fact, I'd argue that the diminishment of men's contribution to the procreative process in the fertility industry and in the culture at large, as Yale Professor Rene Almeling exposed in her 2013 book *Sex Cells: The Medical Market for Eggs and Sperm*, helps reify the notion that fatherhood is secondary to motherhood. As Almeling put it in a recent phone interview, “We have organized reproduction and parenthood in particular ways that really emphasize the role that women have and undermine the part of men.”

Almeling's research highlights the ways in which the fertility industry values women's eggs and men's sperm by looking at the very gendered practices and policies of six sperm banks and egg agencies across the country. Even the ads



belittlement by framing sperm donation as a joke: "Get paid for what you're already doing!" reads one. Sperm banks also take a trivializing attitude toward donors. "They have jokes on t-shirts and pens. The staff were really proud of the double entendres they could come up with, like, 'One in the hand is worth two in the bush,'" she recalled of one particular bank. Similarly, I spoke to the owner of a bank in NYC who laughingly referred to his donors as the "crème de la crème." "Egg donors are seen as giving something sacred," Almeling said, "and sperm donors are seen as doing something dirty."

Not only are women paid substantially more—\$5,000 to \$10,000 per cycle, while men earn on average \$50 to \$100 per *accepted* specimen—Almeling found that women understood their compensation as a "gift," they often received presents and thank-you notes from their recipients, some of whom they met and were treated reverentially by staff. Men, in contrast, saw donating as a "job." "Men are treated much more like employees," Almeling said. "They're expected to clock in at least once or twice a week. They're only paid if their sample meets certain standards. Nobody's telling them how wonderful they are or thanking them for their donation."

Some men, she discovered, even found the process of donating objectifying and alienating. "A technician in a laboratory, said, 'Well, people just think that the egg donors are gold and the sperm donors are a dime a dozen'," Almeling recalled, summarizing the discrepancy in attitudes toward egg and sperm donors.

Granted, women harbor far fewer eggs than men do sperm. The procedure they undergo to extract eggs is intense and invasive and there are no sexual kicks involved. But disparaging men's reproductive contribution or writing them out of the equation altogether as Almeling believes we often do, doesn't just hurt men. By over-accentuating our different biological functions in creating life and giving women's reproduction greater value, we are, unwittingly perhaps, calcifying the notion that children are inherently women's work. We are ensuring that women continue to carry the heavier half of parental duties, which is inextricably linked to our social and professional disadvantage. As others have pointed out: How often do male CEOs get asked about their work-life balance? It may seem like a wild leap at first glance, but this question and the women it's almost exclusively addressed to directly correlates with our gendered perceptions of sperm and egg donors.

Fairfax Cryobank responded to Richard Hatch's letters relinquishing his right to anonymity. They said it went against their policy, even with his permission. But luckily, between 2009 and 2011, two of his donor children, Emily and Devin, found him via the DSR. Today, they are a big part of his life. They vacation together and spend Christmas Eves in Maine. Emily, in fact, will be staying with him on the weekends while she finishes her master's degree at a college in Rhode Island. "It's really amazing," he said, "they've changed my life."

4 COMMENTS ▼



STORIES WE LIKE

**Rolling Stone**

5 Things We Learned From the Season Premiere of 'Louie'

**Esquire**

George Will Gets Behind The Worst Idea In American Politics

FROM THE WEB

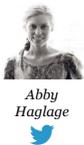
The President's Private Stock Market

*Sponsored Content by nRelate*



Cellou Binani/AFP/Getty

TECH + HEALTH 09.20.14



# The Fear That Killed Eight Ebola Workers

They were sent in to help educate villagers about how to ward off the lethal virus. Then fear took over and the machetes came out.

At the time of Wednesday's announcement out of Guinea that seven of nine

had abducted members of a group sent there to spread awareness about the disease. Two relief workers were missing; the rest, dead. Six suspects were in custody.



By Friday morning, we knew more. These details, the stuff of horror films. A



local government group of relief workers—a mix of doctors, religious leaders, and journalists—had arrived Monday to educate the remote southeastern



village of Womey about Ebola. Just 24 hours after their arrival, violence broke out, allegedly sparked by the false belief that a disinfectant being sprayed was actually the disease itself. An angry mob brandishing machetes, stones, and knives lashed out.

Some of the relief workers were lucky enough to escape to nearby villages. At least nine were not. Three had their throats slashed. By then, villagers themselves began to flee. Those still in Womey cut down trees and fashioned makeshift blockades so no one else could get inside the village. Two days later, when authorities did, they found eight bodies in the latrine system of the local school. Among the dead, three local radio journalists, two medical officers, and a preacher.

It's difficult to refrain from instantly demonizing the perpetrators, or focus on anything other than their crime. In a story so horrific, the grisliest details win the audience. The killers murdered, in cold blood, the very people that came to save them. It's easy to call such actions evil—but entirely irresponsible to declare, with absolute certainty, that they were driven by anything less than unimaginable fear.

In an environment of uncertainty, fixating on the accused is comforting. Men can be captured, arrested, imprisoned. They're a conquerable enemy. But that narrative, the one of senseless, blood-hungry murderers roaming the villages of West Africa serves no one. The truth is likely more nuanced and, as such, more terrifying.

The truth is that a horrific, incurable virus is ravaging Guinea—and at least three other countries in West Africa. That there is a rapidly shrinking number of doctors left to treat the thousands who are already sick and the millions that could be next. That the vast majority of those who enter hospitals, never come out. That, in the absence of an explanation as to why, paranoia takes over. That a few white and Western-trained doctors have intentionally used disease to harm Africans in the past. That this unfortunate truth makes the heroic ones fighting courageously there now, the object of a very real fear.

We know little about the identity of the six suspects, but a lot about the country in which they live. With an estimated population of 11 million, Guinea has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world. More than half of the population lives below the poverty line, and 20 percent in extreme poverty. UNICEF estimates that less than 50 percent have access to clean drinking water. In 2013, the International Monetary Fund measured Guinea's gross domestic product per capita at just \$564 (in the U.S. the same year it was \$53K). Since March, a country already struggling to meet the basic needs of its citizens has been




**With the rate of physicians per 1,000 citizens in Guinea at less than 1 percent, there aren't enough doctors in the entire country to convince citizens there that Ebola is real.**

seen. Without a cure for the virus, more than half of those infected die within days of contracting it. With the rate of physicians per 1,000 citizens at less than 1 percent, there aren't enough doctors in the whole country to explain why.

According to the World Health Organization's most recent report, there have already been over 950 confirmed cases of Ebola in Guinea—a set of numbers which the director of the organization called a "vast underestimate" of the reality. Over 600 of those cases have resulted in death. In all of Guinea, there are just two official

Ebola Treatment Centres, bringing the total capacity of beds to 130—which meets less than 13 percent of the demand. Out of the small number of health care workers in the nation, 60 have already been infected. Thirty-one have died.

By the time the Ebola workers arrived to Womey—on a vital mission that may have very well helped it—the village was likely overcome by fear and panic. Two months earlier in Kolo Bengou, a remote part of Guinea 400 miles from the capital, terrified villagers attacked ambulances and dismantled bridges to keep doctors out. In Guéckédou the same month, reported *The New York Times*, a local leader perpetuated the mistrust, telling his people: “There is no root, no leaf, no animal that can cure you. Don't be fooled.”

Uninvited strangers in hazmat suits could alarm even the stablest of communities. But in a village crippled by poverty, tyrannized by war, and now suddenly overcome with a strange new illness, it is likely scarier than the wildest of nightmares. The men who killed these courageous workers committed a heinous crime. Perhaps they were simply depraved. Perhaps, instead, they had reached a desperation we can't quite fathom. Perhaps they were merely trying to protect their families, their friends, their community and truly believed that this was the only way. Condemning them obscures the larger message to be taken from this atrocious crime. It is Ebola that is still winning. Ebola, not those who it has driven to commit evil acts, that is the true enemy.

Terry O'Sullivan spent three years treating hemorrhagic fever in neighboring Sierra Leone and saw the need for treating powerless, poor communities with sensitivity. “This tragic event highlights both the tremendous power of rumors and fear of the unknown,” he said, now as the director of the Center for Emergency Management and Homeland Security Policy Research. “That applies to both local politicians—who, in countries like Sierra Leone, often treat poor rural villagers callously—as well as outsiders coming in with assurances that what they know what's best.”

Americans found out during the early years of the HIV AIDS crisis, fear of a deadly unknown disease can cause people to react negatively—even violently—out of fear.”

Research contributed by Brandy Zadrozny.

SHARE TWEET POST EMAIL 77 COMMENTS



Emily Berl/The New York Times, via Redux

## SPONSORED CONTENT



Justin Jones

THE NEW ALPHAS 08.06.14

# How Pharrell Williams Finally Made It to the Top



He's now one of the planet's most recognizable talents. But what took so long? In a search for answers, we found just how much this prolific artist has created.

presented by **lenovo**

For the past year it has been impossible to escape the unshakeable beats and ageless looks of Pharrell Williams. Robin Thicke's "Blurred Lines" and Daft Punk's "Get Lucky"—both insatiable hits crafted by Williams—positioned him as one of last year's leading hitmakers (he became the 12th person in the history of *Billboard's* charts to simultaneously hold the top two spots). And how can we forget the most talked about moment at this year's Grammy Awards: Williams in his now-infamous Vivienne Westwood hat.

At 41—we can't believe it either—the hitmaker has amassed some of the best credentials in the business. Beginning with Blackstreet in 1994 (he helped produce "Tonight's the Night" on their self-titled album), Williams has written or produced for some of the biggest names in music: Britney Spears, Nelly, Jay Z, Kanye West, Shakira, Snoop Dog, Madonna, Miley Cyrus, Daft Punk, and Beyoncé, just to name a few.

Yet it wasn't until the past year that he really became one of the most recognizable talents in international pop culture. But why? In a search for answers, we discovered just how much the artist has contributed to music, art, and fashion in his prolific 22-year career.

Born in Virginia Beach, Virginia, to a schoolteacher and a handyman, Williams first dipped his toe in the pool when Grammy-winning producer Teddy Riley set up a recording studio adjacent to Williams' alma mater, Princess Anne High School, where the young drummer had entered his four-member R&B group, The Neptunes, into a talent show. Riley took notice and signed the group shortly after graduation.

Little happened for the group's success, but Williams began writing lyrics, including Riley's verse in Wreckx-N-Effect's 1992 hit "Rump Shaker." Eventually The Neptunes dwindled down to just Williams and his friend Chad Hugo, and the duo rebranded themselves as producers, scoring gigs for Blackstreet and N.O.R.E before cementing their talents by producing Kelis' debut album, *Kaleidoscope*.

[were] redefining modern soul/R&B production, blending live musicianship (they play everything themselves) with stripped-down, deceptively simple beats and a skewed use of playground melodies and orchestration.” This was, after all, a time when heavy bass and kick drums dominated the mainstream R&B airwaves.

So it's no surprise that the music industry's biggest names began to recruit the two to put a fresh spin on their tracks. Without Williams and Hugo, singles such as Britney Spears's "I'm a Slave 4 U," Nelly's "Hot in Herre," and Snoop Dog's "Drop It Like It's Hot" may have never amounted to the iconic successes that they were. At one point in 2003, the duo were responsible for one-third of the Billboard 100 and 43 percent of songs on the airwaves in the United States. Williams and Hugo were on top of their game, snagging awards for Producer of the Year at the Source Awards (2002), Billboard Awards (2002), and the Grammys (2004).

But, as *Billboard* put it, their golden age "faded with the rise of rawer hip-hop sub-genres like crunk and snap." The hits dried up. Williams focused on his debut solo album (*In My Mind*) while Hugo continued experimenting with N.E.R.D., an alt-rap group the two began in 2001. From 2006 to 2013, neither Williams nor The Neptunes had a single Top 40 hit.

However, their absence from the charts was a far cry from a trail of failed hits, remnants of creativity run dry. Instead, Williams began to broaden his reach. He kept collaborating with top-tier musicians, but also explored unfamiliar territory—composing the soundtrack for the blockbuster animated film *Despicable Me*, the intro for late-night comedy talk show *Chelsea Lately* and, along with Hans Zimmer, scores for the 84th Academy Awards.

His fashion labels Billionaire Boys Club and Ice Cream footwear continued to grow; a shop opened in New York City and an investment was made into Bionic Yarn textiles. He co-designed a series of jewelry and glasses for Louis Vuitton and Moncler as well as furniture for Emmanuel Perrotin and Domeau & Peres, while a sculpture he created with Japanese artist Takashi Murakami fetched \$2 million at Art Basel in 2009. In 2011, he became creative director of KarmaloopTV, a position he still holds. All are overseen by i am OTHER—a media and philanthropic company Williams founded to encompass all of his projects.

Then, just as Williams had accepted his place on the sidelines, the name and face that faded from our memory came rushing back.

“By 2013, I had accepted my role as the... camouflage,” Williams said in an interview with *W* magazine. “I was the guy next to the guy, rather than the guy himself. All my formative years, I spent standing next to Jay [Z] or Justin [Timberlake] or all those kings. I've always learned from the masters, whether it's in music or art or fashion. But in 2013, it was different: Suddenly, it was not about being the camo anymore.”

“Blurred Lines” and “Get Lucky” arrived almost simultaneously early that year,

**“Blurred Lines” and “Get Lucky” arrived almost simultaneously early that year, becoming the inescapable songs of the summer, propelling the singer-producer to the forefront of entertainment.**

summer, propelling the singer-producer to the forefront of entertainment.

While Williams's song “Happy” was one of many he wrote for the *Despicable Me 2* soundtrack released later that year, it had seen very little commercial success initially. So, in true Pharrell fashion, he created something new—the first 24-hour music video, cast with hundreds of individuals dancing to the song on repeat. The video, “24 Hours of Happy,” went viral, sparking thousands of fan-made renditions from around the world.



Weeks later, Williams, dressed in a red track jacket and a vintage Vivienne Westwood hat, appeared on stage to accept his first (of three) awards, looking as youthful as he did some 20 years prior. By the time he exited the stage, he had become another viral sensation—this time for his hat. “I was genuinely shocked by Grammy night,” Williams said. “I had been happy running this career marathon. I didn’t expect any medals. I was particularly amazed when I went backstage after winning the first Grammy and one of my managers told me that my hat now had its own Twitter account. During the show, a fan started tweeting as my hat.” Arby’s even joined in on the fun, too, asking for Williams to return their logo.

Everyone wanted a piece of Pharrell. He appeared on numerous magazine covers, signed endorsements with companies such as G-Star RAW, Uniqlo, and Adidas, and curated an A-list art show for the Galerie Perrotin in Paris.

The publicity couldn’t have been more perfect. *G I R L*, Williams’ second solo album, was released in March and featured the big names he has worked with for years: Justin Timberlake, Daft Punk, and Hans Zimmer. “*G I R L* is a simple, even slight record,” *Rolling Stone* magazine reviewed, “and that’s definitely meant as a compliment. Everyone in pop owes him a favor.” “Its all-ages, aisle-reaching attitude is ready for mass consumption,” according to Pitchfork. “And over the next year and maybe longer, you’ll probably be hearing these easy-to-please tunes anywhere.”

WANT MORE? SIGN UP FOR MORE  
#NEWALPHAS AND EXCLUSIVE  
@LENOVOUS OFFERS.



By clicking 'submit' you are agreeing to receive marketing communications from Lenovo and are providing express consent to receive these messages. You may unsubscribe at any time using the link included in each email message.



SHARE



TWEET



POST



EMAIL

28 COMMENTS v





TECH + HEALTH 09.20.14



# Could Eating Charcoal Help You Detox?

By Christine Yu for Life by DailyBurn

Meet Amber Williford. Because of her food allergies to soy and dairy, Williford frequently experiences bloating and gas, especially after eating in restaurants. In search of relief, the holistic health coach read numerous online accounts of the benefits of taking activated charcoal supplements—and decided to try it.

Most commonly used in emergency settings to treat people who have been poisoned, activated charcoal is a superfine black powder that promises to entrap toxins in the body and help you excrete them during bowel movements.

Now, the substance is gaining popularity outside the ER, appearing as an ingredient in cold pressed juices, in supplements sold in stores like GNC and for use in powder form. Claiming to help treat everything from diarrhea, bloating and gas to improving skin care and whitening teeth, charcoal is being touted as the new key to a cleaner, healthier you.

But is activated charcoal a cure-all or just full of smoke? Read on to find out.

## Activated Charcoal Benefits in Medicine

Declared an “essential medicine” by the World Health Organization, activated charcoal is commonly used in medical settings to treat accidental poisonings or drug overdoses. The substance is created when carbon is treated with an oxidizing agent, resulting in superfine dust with millions of pores and an immense surface area.

It is this surface area that makes activated charcoal special, reducing the body's absorption of toxic substances by an estimated 47 percent. How? Toxins are carried out of the body through a process called adsorption. Anything in your gut sticks to the surface of charcoal like a magnet and gets carried out through a bowel movement.

But the jury's still out concerning whether or not this ingredient is safe for everyday use.

According to Dr. Linda Fan, attending physician in the Department of Emergency Medicine at SUNY Downstate Medical Center, “It's not a very specific absorber of substances. It will absorb anything in your gut, good and bad.” That includes any medication that you may be taking. “I wouldn't use it without a medical professional's advice,” she says.

## Wellness Secret or Black Magic?



her system of an overgrowth of candida—yeast that lives in the digestive tract.

“It has helped with the bloating,” Williford says, which had gotten so bad she says she sometimes looked several months pregnant.

Some natural health practitioners also say activated charcoal can be useful to treat minor digestive issues. For patients who experience an extended bout of diarrhea, Judy Fulop, N.D., M.S., a Naturopathic Practitioner at the Osher Center for Integrative Medicine at Northwestern University, says “Instead of taking something like Imodium to stop it, which doesn’t get to the cause of the problem, you can take something to bind to the toxins and move them out of the body.”

However, since the “runs” are the body’s natural reaction to digestive distress, it’s important to give your body at least 12 hours to purge the bad stuff by itself before turning to treatments such as charcoal, Fulop says.

But not all health care providers agree that charcoal should be used outside of a medical setting. While Dr. Gina Sam, Director of the Mount Sinai Gastrointestinal Motility Center at The Mount Sinai Hospital, has heard similar stories from her patients who reported decreased gas and bloating after taking activated charcoal, she does not use it in her practice. “There needs to be more scientific evidence to support its use,” she says.

### The Black Line

This black, sandy substance may have a proven track record in urgent care settings, but that doesn’t mean it’s safe to self-administer. If you decide to use it anyway, “Take it under the guidance of a doctor so they can track your liver and enzyme levels,” says Dr. Sam, to ensure your body is not becoming depleted of essential nutrients.

It’s also important to note that the powder, which will turn your stools black when ingested, can mask upper GI bleeding that may be a side effect of serious digestive distress.

“The biggest thing to keep in mind is to figure out the cause of your digestive problem before running to take activated charcoal. There might be something else going on in your system that is causing your symptoms,” says Fulop. “If you continue to have diarrhea or explosive gas, you do need to see your practitioner.”

As for the claims that activated charcoal will help purify your body from toxins? “We don’t really need to take anything special to detox,” says Melissa Burton, RD, CDE. “Our liver and our spleen do a good job cleansing the body on their own. Instead, people should eat a balanced diet with adequate micronutrients, exercise and maintain other healthy habits in order to keep the liver functioning well and to have a healthy body.”

MORE FROM DAILYBURN:

- 5 Healthier Ways to Detox (That Aren't Juice Cleanses)

• Egg Whites or Whole Eggs: Which Are Healthier?



2 COMMENTS ▾



via Facebook

POLITICS 09.20.14



# How Long Can the Republicans Hide The Crazy?



NO TODD AKIN OR RICHARD MOURDOCKS SO FAR THIS YEAR. BUT THERE'S STILL time—and here are some candidates who might slip.



I have to give the Republicans credit for one thing in this election cycle. They've been able to keep their crazies quiet. But the big question is: Will some GOP crazy talk seep out between now November 4? In the words of Sarah Palin, I'd have to say, "You betcha."



We've recently seen some glimmers of Republican lunacy. Just last week the Arizona State Republican Party's vice-chair, Russell Pearce, offered this gem: "You put me in charge of Medicaid, the first thing I'd do is get Norplant, birth-control implants, or tubal ligations." Translation: forced sterilization of poor women to make sure they don't have more babies. Pearce resigned on Sunday.

That's an awful remark. But that wouldn't even get him to the GOP final four of crazy when you compare it with the crap we've heard come of the mouths of Republican candidates in recent years.

Who can forget in 2012 the double whammy of GOP Senate candidates comments about rape? First, there was Rep. Todd Akin who told us when there's a "legitimate rape" of a woman, her body somehow is able to magically block the unwanted pregnancy.

Then came Indiana's Senate nominee, Richard Mourdock, who told us that pregnancy from rape is in essence a good thing because it's "something God intended." Consequently he, like Akin, believed that women who were raped should be legally required to carry the rapist's child to term.

And in 2010, there was Sharron Angle, who lost a possibly winnable Senate race against Harry Reid in Nevada with comments like people might need to look toward "Second Amendment remedies" to turn this country around and "the first thing we need to do is take Harry Reid out." It's not often—in America at least— we see politicians suggest that maybe their political opponent should be shot.

Now some might ask: Maybe we aren't hearing those types of remarks because the Republican Party no longer has right-wing crazies? (I'll pause so you can finish laughing.) True, some "wacko birds," to quote John McCain, lost in the primaries this year, but still the GOP still is chock full o' nuts.

And I think we are well positioned to see some of these candidates take a journey on the crazy train in the closing weeks of this election cycle. Why? Three reasons. First, the debates are coming up, and as we saw in 2012 with Mourdock, the more these people talk in an unscripted forum, the more likely the guano will ooze out.

Second, in the tighter races, the candidates are feeling the heat. Consequently, they may make an unforced error or try to offer some red meat to the far right hoping it brings their base out in what's expected to be a low-turnout election.

Finally, there are some male Republican candidates for Senate, like Colorado's



dynamite. By that I mean they've decided to talk birth control thinking it can help them, but one slip up on this issue, and cue the "Republican war on women" headlines.

Any of these scenarios could be trouble for the GOP. And not just for the candidate who made the comment, but it could put Republicans on the defensive nationwide. So in the vein of March Madness, here are my picks for the Grand Four of the 2014 GOP championship of crazy.

1. Jody Hice—Choosing Hice is like picking Duke or UConn in the NCAA basketball tournament. Hice, the GOP nominee in Georgia's conservative 10th congressional district, has already given us a buffet of cuckoo. He has made horribly anti-gay and anti-Muslim comments, plus he thinks women should only run for political office if their husbands consent. And as Stephen Colbert noted two weeks ago, Hice recently confused a quote made by John Quincy Adams with one made by Dolly Parton.

2. Rep. Joni Ernst—The GOP Senate nominee in the battleground state of Iowa has the potential to serve up a prime cut of crazy. During the primary, she stated that U.S. laws "come from God," and judges must be aware of that when deciding cases. She has called Obama a "dictator," suggested impeaching him, and advocated that states be able to nullify federal laws they don't agree with. Plus she gave us a Palinesque commercial where she rode a Harley Davidson while shooting a gun, promising voters that "once she sets her sights on Obamacare, Joni's gonna unload."

3. Thom Tillis—Although the Republican Senate nominee in the Tar Heel State is a veteran politician, he still might just deliver up a whopper. In 2011, Tillis did give us a comment that conjures up the ghost of Mitt Romney's 47 percent remark when he told a crowd: "what we have to do is find a way to divide and conquer the people who are on assistance." And just a few months ago, Tillis offered us this beaut: Unlike blacks and Hispanics, the "traditional population" in our country isn't growing.

4. Sam Brownback—The Kansas Governor might be the sleeper in this race to crazy. He's in a tight reelection campaign and he's very right wing. In fact, during a TV interview in 2012, he told a female caller that if she didn't like the fact that her boss didn't want to cover her birth control because of his religious beliefs, she should "go work somewhere else."

Those are my top four. Sure, I could've picked others. There are perennial wingnut powerhouses like Iowa Rep. Steve King and Texas' resident wacko Rep. Louie Gohmert, but I'm feeling pretty good with my choices.

So now it's time sit back and let the games begin. I can almost guarantee you that in the final weeks of this campaign one of the above candidates will make headlines with some outrageous comment. For people like Hice, who is in a safe GOP district, it may not matter. But for those in tight races like Tillis and Ernst, one slip up could allow a Democratic candidate to be the Cinderella story of this year. And a few Akin-esque gaffes could actually help Democrats



governorships.



457 COMMENTS ▾



ABOUT US  
CONTACT US  
JOBS  
ADVERTISE  
HELP  
MOBILE SITE

Privacy  
Community Policy  
Terms & Conditions  
Copyright & Trademark

© 2014 The Daily Beast Company LLC