

= Brigitte Boisselier =

Brigitte Boisselier (born 1956) , also known as Brigitte Roehr , is a French chemist and Raëlian religious leader best known for her claim to have overseen the creation of the first human clone . A native of Champagne @-@ Ardenne , she studied chemistry in France and the United States , earning two PhDs . From 1984 to 1997 , she lived near Paris and worked as a research chemist and a sales manager for Air Liquide . She embraced Raëlism in 1992 ; the group was unpopular in France and her conversion led to tensions with those around her . Five years later , she joined Clonaid , a Raëlian organization that sought to clone a human . After her service as their scientific director was publicized , she lost her position with Air Liquide and focused on cloning full @-@ time .

In late 2000 , Clonaid announced that they had received a large donation to fund the cloning of a child , and that Boisselier supervised a team of scientists at a secret laboratory in the United States who would soon produce a human clone . For the next year , the project received media coverage ? and regulatory suspicion ? as Boisselier promised the imminent birth of a human clone . In late 2001 , she announced that one had been born and that public evidence would soon be offered . This declaration received significant press coverage in the United States , and Boisselier appeared on many television programs . After a court in Florida launched a child welfare investigation , she stated that the cloned child 's parents had withdrawn their offer to provide evidence of the cloning and would have no further public comment . No evidence of the cloning , or subsequent procedures reported by Clonaid , was ever offered , and the announcements were widely perceived to have been a hoax .

In 2003 , impressed with her management of Clonaid and public relations skill , Raël , the founder of Raëlism , announced that Boisselier would succeed him as the group 's leader upon his death . In subsequent years , she has devoted herself to lecturing about the group 's doctrines and serving as their spokesperson .

= = Early life and education = =

Brigitte Boisselier was born to a Catholic family in France in 1956 . She was reared on a farm in Champagne @-@ Ardenne and became interested in science while young . She attended the University of Dijon , earning a master 's degree in biochemistry and a PhD in chemistry . In the 1980s , she moved to Texas , where she received another PhD in chemistry from the University of Houston .

Boisselier returned to France in 1984 to work for Air Liquide , an industrial gas company , where she remained for 13 years . At that time , she lived in Les Loges @-@ en @-@ Josas and worked as a research chemist and a sales manager in Lyon . She married and had three children between the late 1970s and early 1990s .

= = Conversion and new career = =

In 1992 , Boisselier converted to Raëlism , a UFO religion founded by the French journalist Claude Vorilhon , usually known as Raël , in 1973 . After attending a meeting at which Raël spoke , she felt strongly that he was completely honest and joined his movement . She had left her husband , alleging violent behavior , shortly before her conversion ; afterwards , owing to her involvement with Raëlism , he gained sole custody of their youngest child . Boisselier believed that religious intolerance motivated a court to transfer the child 's custody . Although her faith led to tension with her parents , her eldest child converted . In the 1990s , Raëlism was seen as dangerous and viewed with disdain in France , resulting in loss of employment for prominent members . The hostility was fueled in part by public concerns about new religious movements after deaths caused by the Order of the Solar Temple in Europe during the mid @-@ 1990s .

Boisselier became the scientific director of Clonaid , an organization founded by Raël that sought to clone humans , in 1997 . That year , Boisselier was interviewed by Le Monde about her role in

Clonaid , and she lost her position with Air Liquide after the company learned of this . Air Liquide stated that her termination was due to her holding dual employment , and that she was strained by her Clonaid service . She filed a lawsuit against Air Liquide , arguing that she was the victim of religious discrimination . Her suit was successful : in 1999 , she won a judgment of about US \$ 30 @, @ 000 .

After losing her job , Boisselier moved with her middle child , a son , to Quebec , where her eldest daughter was a student . Boisselier began to travel to discuss Clonaid , eventually becoming a high @-@ profile speaker . Around that time , she reached the rank of Bishop within Raëlism . She was one of the 25 members closest to Raël and joined the group 's Order of Angels , which promoted free love and femininity . She moved to the United States and began teaching at State University of New York at Plattsburgh for a short time before moving to Hamilton College in 2000 to teach chemistry . Her association with Clonaid was publicized in the U.S. in February 2001 , and she resigned her academic position that May , although she had a three @-@ year contract . She was initially popular at Hamilton College , but she felt that she was disrespected after her association with Clonaid was publicized .

= = Cloning = =

= = = Clonaid origins = = =

Raël founded Clonaid in March 1997 , shortly after the Dolly the Sheep cloning , believing that the process was important because the human species had been created by an extraterrestrial cloning project . On a practical level , Raël promoted the practice as a way to develop more desirable genetics and eventually prolong memories in new bodies . Shortly after Clonaid 's launch , Boisselier began publicizing and managing its operations . In 1999 , she announced that she had set up cloning laboratories and had hired a team of six scientists . She said she had limited knowledge of cloning but was skilled in selecting experts .

In August 2000 , Mark Hunt , a politician from West Virginia , asked Boisselier to clone his late son , who had died as a child . Hunt paid Clonaid \$ 500 @, @ 000 and helped them rent a science laboratory from a school . Boisselier said that the laboratory would initially be used to clone cattle , before moving on to humans . She planned to use a number of Raëlian surrogates , who were willing to abort abnormal pregnancies , to bear clones ; the high number of women would compensate for the low odds of a healthy child for each implantation . In September 2000 , Raël and Boisselier held a press conference with several aspiring surrogate mothers of clones . At the event , Boisselier announced the construction of a cloning laboratory and vaguely described Hunt , who wished to remain anonymous . Boisselier received significant media attention as an advocate of cloning . Some commentators initially accepted her work as a legitimate attempt at cloning ; Margaret Talbot of the New York Times described her as a more credible spokesperson than Raël , projecting what she described as " an air of cool , academic professionalism " . Boisselier 's striking physical appearance drew particular attention , and she developed an avant @-@ garde , stylish reputation , contrary to popular images of scientists .

= = = Announcements and media coverage = = =

In early 2001 , Boisselier promised the cloning of a human child within a year , drawing further attention to her work . A prosecutor in New York began investigating her compliance with local medical laws . Boisselier said that the Food and Drug Administration also surreptitiously investigated her , and Raël claimed that U.S. President George W. Bush was concerned about Clonaid 's work . The caretaker of the laboratory that Hunt had rented grew suspicious about their work and contacted law enforcement . They spoke with the FDA , who searched the site and persuaded Boisselier to suspend her cloning work pending legal clarification . After Hunt was asked by the laboratory 's caretaker to shut down the cloning operation , he broke with Boisselier and criticized

her for seeking media attention . The caretaker also spoke publicly , saying that Boisselier was seldom at the laboratory . Boisselier then announced that she was moving her cloning operations overseas . Boisselier never faced any legal charges in connection with the laboratory .

In March 2001 , Boisselier was invited to speak at a U.S. Congress hearing on human cloning , and at her insistence Raël was permitted to speak as well . The event garnered public attention , in large part because of Raël 's unconventional appearance . On August 7 , 2001 , Boisselier attended a widely publicized human cloning symposium at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington , D.C. , Significant media attention was given to Boisselier , who , along with Severino Antinori and Panayiotis Zavos , was one of three participants actively engaged in efforts to produce a human clone . The rest of the attendees were renowned scientists and ethicists , one of whom , Arthur Caplan , dismissed Boisselier as part of the " loony cloning element " . By May 2002 , Boisselier said that she had facilitated 10 to 20 pregnancies but had been thwarted by miscarriages .

= = = Claims of success = = =

Boisselier confidently announced at a press conference in Florida in December 2002 that Clonaid had successfully produced a live @-@ born clone , named Eve , for an infertile couple . Canadian sociologist Susan J. Palmer notes that naming the cloned child " Eve " recalls Raël 's teachings that aliens created the first humans through cloning . After the announcement , Boisselier received abundant press , but the media , particularly late @-@ night comedy programs , criticized her glamorous appearance and mocked Raëlism . Around that time , Boisselier appeared on many U.S. network news broadcasts and on CNN . She did not provide details about the child or its family , although she was often asked to . She hired a science editor from ABC to supervise verification of the cloning . Many scientists doubted that the Raélians could overcome the difficulties that human cloning posed , or that they would be able to produce a healthy child . Boisselier said a DNA test was forthcoming and announced that five more clones would be born later that winter . As Raël and Boisselier continued to seek media exposure , journalistic animosity towards them grew .

Bernard Siegel , an attorney from Florida , learned of the case and felt that a hearing should be held about Eve 's welfare . In January 2003 , he initiated legal proceedings , seeking to bring the clone 's parents to court so its health could be verified . Raël and Boisselier attacked the filing as an attempt to take a child from loving parents and announced that , in protest , they would not provide DNA for testing . An arraignment occurred on January 24 and was televised live on CNN ; Boisselier and Clonaid 's vice president , Thomas Kaenzig , were subpoenaed in lieu of the child 's parents . In courtroom testimony , the vice president of Clonaid said he knew very little about the clone , and that Boisselier controlled all the information . She did not attend the hearing , and Kaenzig provided little information , angering the judge , who threatened contempt of court charges . Boisselier attended a second hearing on January 29 , telling the court that the child was in Israel . The judge then ruled that the court had no jurisdiction . In late January , the science editor announced that he suspected the cloning announcements were a hoax . Around that time , Boisselier held a press conference at which she announced that the cloned baby 's parents had cut off contact with her and would never speak to the press .

In the following years , Boisselier claimed to have facilitated the cloning of several children in a variety of countries . As of June 2004 , she reported that Clonaid has successfully cloned 13 children . She did not provide evidence to verify the claims . She stated that the a machine called the RMX 2010 was used in the cloning attempts , and exhibited it publicly .

After Boisselier announced that no evidence of the cloning would be provided , journalists became very skeptical of her story . While discussing Boisselier 's management of Clonaid , Palmer notes that it is impossible to know why she stated that a clone was produced but then refused to provide evidence . She argues that her refusal to provide evidence may have been because she organized a hoax , did not wish to publicize the birth of an unhealthy child , or was taken advantage of by a scientist she had hired . American science journalist Steven S. Hall criticized the media for their coverage of Clonaid , believe that they were inarticulately represented as a credible group . He speculates that the coverage of Boisselier and other cloning adherents galvanized sentiment against

cloning , leading to its banning in the U.S.

= = Later activism = =

In January 2003 , Raël held a ceremony at which he thanked Boisselier for her service and anointed her as his successor . He praised her for spreading the message of Raëlism internationally while publicizing the cloning . In the Raëlian hierarchy , she is one level below Raël and serves as a spokesperson for the movement . As a leader , she has attempted to rehabilitate the swastika , one of the group 's symbols . She maintains that it is valuable as an ancient symbol of peace , and that it has been unfairly associated with Nazi Germany .

In the mid @-@ 2000s , Boisselier often taught about the Raëlian perspective of the body and sexuality . She discussed these topics from a biological perspective , arguing that humans are essentially robots because they can be reprogrammed . Specifically , she maintained that hormones program the brain , and they provide humans the freedom to choose from many possibilities . Raëlians emphasize sexual stimulation as a way to positively change their members , and Boisselier has stated that she sees the pursuit of femininity as a method of spiritual growth . The group highly values feminine beauty , and Raël has applauded Boisselier for maintaining her appearance , casting her as a role model .

By 2007 , Boisselier had taken the name " Brigitte Roehr " and was living in Los Angeles . That year , she began leading a Raëlian project to fight female genital mutilation . She heads a Raëlian @-@ affiliated group known as Clitoraid , which raises funds to provide restorative surgery to women with damaged clitorises . The project , which has attracted criticism of its effectiveness , aims to build a hospital in Burkina Faso where women can received clitoral surgery .