

My name is Fran Gruss Levin. I am 72 years old and lived in Connecticut for most of my life. I am a birthmother.

In October of 1963, the fall of my senior year at Norwalk High School, my parents forced me to break up with my boyfriend of a year and a half. They said they I was too young to be so serious and worried because we were different religions that it would have a negative effect on my future.

Less than a month later, my doctor told me I was about five months pregnant. I was seventeen years old. When I told my parents, their reaction was horror, followed by shame and fear that their dreams for me would be shattered. They wanted me to go to college, and they were steadfast in regard to making that happen. They did not allow me to tell anyone about my pregnancy. I was in total shock—still mourning the loss of my relationship, and terrified to cross my parents.

Three days after my discovery, my mother withdrew me from school and, concealing the fact that I was pregnant, proceeded to tell everyone that I had threatened to run away with my boyfriend, and they would absolutely not allow that. My maternal grandparents were enlisted to take me away to a place where no one would know us, and so it was for the rest of my “confinement.” To further ensure the secrecy, my father insisted I use a pseudonym rather than reveal my true identity. No one ever questioned the alias I used.

We settled in Tucson, Arizona for the winter, and on March 7, 1964, I gave birth. I was not allowed to see or hold my baby and was not even told whether I had a boy or a girl. I was told over and over again that I would forget this and when I returned home I could resume my normal life. I remember signing the relinquishment papers with my false name, and we began our trek back to Norwalk. On my 18th birthday, I stood on a precipice of the Grand Canyon, feeling emptier and more desolate than that great gorge.

By the end of April we returned home, I took some secretarial courses, and in the fall resumed my senior year of high school.

But I didn't forget. I never forgot. And I always knew that someday I would have to set the record straight. My child deserved to know where he or she came from, and that I had loved that life growing inside me, as well as its father deeply. Every year between March and Mother's Day, I fell into a deep depression, punctuated by episodes of endless tears and an inability to engage in everyday activities. Even though I had married another man and had three

other children, I never forgot. My life did not go on as “normal.” I was emotionally stunted and besieged by guilt.

It took me 25 years to gain the strength to finally come out of the fog. I became angry at myself and my parents for withholding the truth. I contacted the adoption agency and told them I had to amend the information I had given them in 1964. They told me the child I had surrendered was a girl.

My daughter and other adoptees need to know the truth about their beginnings. They have the right to this information, just like any other person. Any good parent knows that their children’s needs should supersede their own. They had no choice about being brought into this world, and whatever the circumstances, deserve to have access to this information if they want it.

The world has moved on from the secrets and lies of the decades prior to 1970. Babies are not commodities that are interchangeable. Babies grow up into men and women. These men and women should have the right to know their birth stories and their medical histories.

I was lucky enough to find my daughter in 1990. Numerous times over the last twenty-nine years she has called me to get medical history information. I was more than happy to provide it. I was thrilled to know she had been adopted by a family who put their children’s needs in first place. They were smart enough to allow their children to develop into the people their genetic heritage had prescribed. Unfortunately, that is not always the case, and some adopted persons are left feeling like misfits in their adoptive families. How much it comforts them to know the truth of their beginnings.

When her parents learned I was searching, she was twenty-six years old and told her immediately. Without hesitation, she called me, and I answered every question she had with honesty and respect. My daughter was thrilled I searched for her. We have been reunited for nearly thirty years now, and have developed a warm and loving relationship. Her adoptive parents will always be her parents. They had the opportunity to love her and raise her and unselfishly encouraged our relationship. Had she searched for me first, I would have been ecstatic to receive her call. But if she requested her original birth certificate, she would not be able to get it.

THERE SHOULD BE NO MORE SECRETS, NO MORE LIES. I wholeheartedly support S.B. 972 and urge you to do the same. Restore the right of ALL adopted citizens in Connecticut to obtain copies of their original, true birth certificates.

If you wish to learn more about my situation, I can be reached at franlevinvad@gmail.com. I have also published a memoir about my experience, called *The Story of Molly and Me*. It is available at www.amazon.com.