

Please support and pass SB 113. I am an adoptee, adopted in 1975. My adoption was closed. The only connection I had to who I was and where I came from was a faded piece of paper that stated things like the age, height, ethnic background, hair and eye color of my biological parents. When I was young, I clung to those words and tried to visualize in my head who they were, what they looked like. Were they nice? Did they think of me? What happened to them?

Throughout my life, my interest in my biological identity varied in intensity. At some points in my life, I could push it aside. At other points of my life, it was foremost in my mind. The times in my life where it all mattered the most were very crucial milestones.

The few that stand out for me the most are as follows: The birth of my children, when, for the first time, I felt the love between a mother and a child. I was unprepared for the immense empathy that I felt for my biological mother. I could not imagine how hard it was for her to let go of the baby she had just delivered, and yet her face was nothing but a blank space in my mind.

My middle child has struggled with auto immune issues since he was 4. When this autoimmune disorder presented itself, my husband and I sat by our 4 year old's bedside in the Pediatric ICU where the staff could not tell us if he would make it through the night. In my fear and my fatigue, I thought of my biological family and wondered if their histories could help piece his condition together.

The most prominent moment in my life was a beautiful summer day in 2017 when I was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 41. Endless doctors, in their quest to treat me, asked about my family history. And I didn't have any answers. Not one.

Through Ancestry, the last few years have unfolded my biological family piece by piece like an heirloom quilt. It has taken me 45 years to know where my nose came from. 45 years to understand why I have cancer, and why my son is struggling with autoimmune disorders. 45 years to know I have half siblings, and people who have thought of me and loved me my whole life. As much as they were a question mark in my mind, I was a question mark in theirs too.

Closed adoptions are harmful to all involved. Human beings need to know where they came from, who their biological families are, and what happened that led to the adoption. It is a part of who we are. We have a right to know. Many adoptees struggle with attachment disorders, anxiety and depression. In my case, the identifying information on my adoption paperwork wasn't even entirely true. The agency changed some of the information to match my adoptive parents, to make me a good fit. Like I, a human being, was a couch, or curtains, or a special order sweater that fit their needs. This needs to be remedied. Adoptees such as myself need access to their records.

Adoption can be a wonderful, positive, thing. But it needs to start with honesty and transparency. Many adoptive parents adopt to fill a void in their lives. That is a huge responsibility for the infant or child that is handed to them with just a few signatures. The focus of adoption should be filling the void in the child's life, and that needs to start with open records for all adoptees.

Thank You,

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