

As a person who was adopted in Michigan in 1951, I am writing in support of Connecticut Senate Bill 113. For decades in our society, young women who became pregnant without being married or women who were deemed incapable of caring for yet another child were pressured to relinquish their babies by their parents, clergy and by social workers employed by churches and government agencies. In a very real sense, their babies were “stolen” from them by the social mores of the time and were given to married couples who had been deemed more worthy to raise the child. The children placed for adoption had no rights or choices about decisions that were made for them by those in power at the time.

Adult adoptees have repeatedly requested not only information about their biological heritage, but also a copy of their original birth certificate. These requests have been denied and adoption records have remained sealed by the court system. Often, the line of reasoning presented for this denial has been that the adoptee is not emotionally capable of handling a reunion with his/her biological parents.

My experience with reunion was positive. I was fortunate in that my adoptive mother saw paperwork at the time of my adoption that contained the name of my birth mother, information that was finally given to me at age 28. I met my birth mother and after another 23 year search, was able to meet my biological father. Recently, through DNA, I was matched with my half-sisters and was able to meet them. These searches cost me hundreds of dollars – just to discover my heritage and medical history. Non-adopted people do not have this financial burden. I had a problem securing a passport because of my amended birth certificate. I have had medical issues that could have been addressed earlier if I had known my biological family medical history. I have experienced these problems merely because of the circumstances of my birth and lack of access to my records that were sealed by the government.

Many of the adoptees whose adoptions were finalized during the closed adoption system are now, like myself, senior citizens. They have waited for over 70 years for their state to release their records and original birth certificate. Their biological parents and their adoptive parents have most likely passed away, as have mine. The closed adoption system sends the message that adult adoptees are incapable of handling the knowledge of the circumstances of their birth and are emotionally incapable of handling a biological family reunion. Grandparents and great-grandparents who were adopted and now have years of life experience are denied information about their heritage, their genetic health history and the joy of knowing their biological family.

When will lawmakers recognize the civil rights of adult adoptees caught in the closed adoption system and address the inequities that exist? When will adopted citizens who were born during specified years be given the same civil rights as those adopted before and after those dates? When will adopted senior citizens be given the same civil rights and respect as a non-adopted citizen?

Reverend Keith C. Griffith wrote: *“Adoption is the only trauma in the world where the victim is expected by the whole of society to be grateful.”*

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