

Please support and pass SB 113, every person should have the right to claim their full identity and navigate their own relationships with their families, both birth and adoptive.

I am an adoptee and a family therapist. I found my birthmother's family when I was 29 and my birthfather when I was 33. This is only because my birthmother named me after herself (first, middle and last name) on my adoption papers, which never happens. My adoptive mom was kind enough to share those papers with me when I became an adult. I still to this day, at almost 57 years old, do not have access to my original birth certificate and would not have fared so well had both of my mothers been less bold.

After many years of believing that there was something wrong with me because I felt a deep inexplicable sadness and desire to know my original family, I decided to break the social/legal boundary between my adoptive and birth worlds and complete a search. This was back in 1992, when searches were not common and birth history was associated with secrecy and shame. Sadly, my biological mother had already passed away from cancer at age 45, I had missed her by six years. In spite of this, I enjoyed a twenty seven year (and still counting) relationship with her family through her brother (my uncle) and his wife, as well as some members of her extended family. I also found my birth father using intuition and tiny clues, with unbelievable luck. I had a wonderful twenty year friendship with him and was at his bedside when he passed two years ago, just after his 75th birthday. I am still connected with his whole extended family including his wife, who refers to me as her stepdaughter, my sister/her family and several cousins.

I should add that I am a cancer survivor, and medical information was quite significant for me with both birth families, but this is not the real takeaway. The connection that I have with my original mother and father and their families has been absolutely essential and psychologically precious. I continue to love and cherish my mom, dad, grandparents and the family I was raised by as my own.

I was part of a group of adoptees, birthparents and adoptive families involved in searches for many years, and without exception, people (probably over 100 that I came into contact with) valued the opportunity to put aside the fear of the unknown and claim their own stories regardless of the content of those stories. All found some relationship that they valued over the course of the process. There was

always some positive aspect to add to their identity, if only evidence of their courage to integrate a lost truth.

Thank you for reading my story, I hope you will support the bill.

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