



CUB Communicator

MAY 2023 SPRING EDITION



*Honoring
all
mothers*

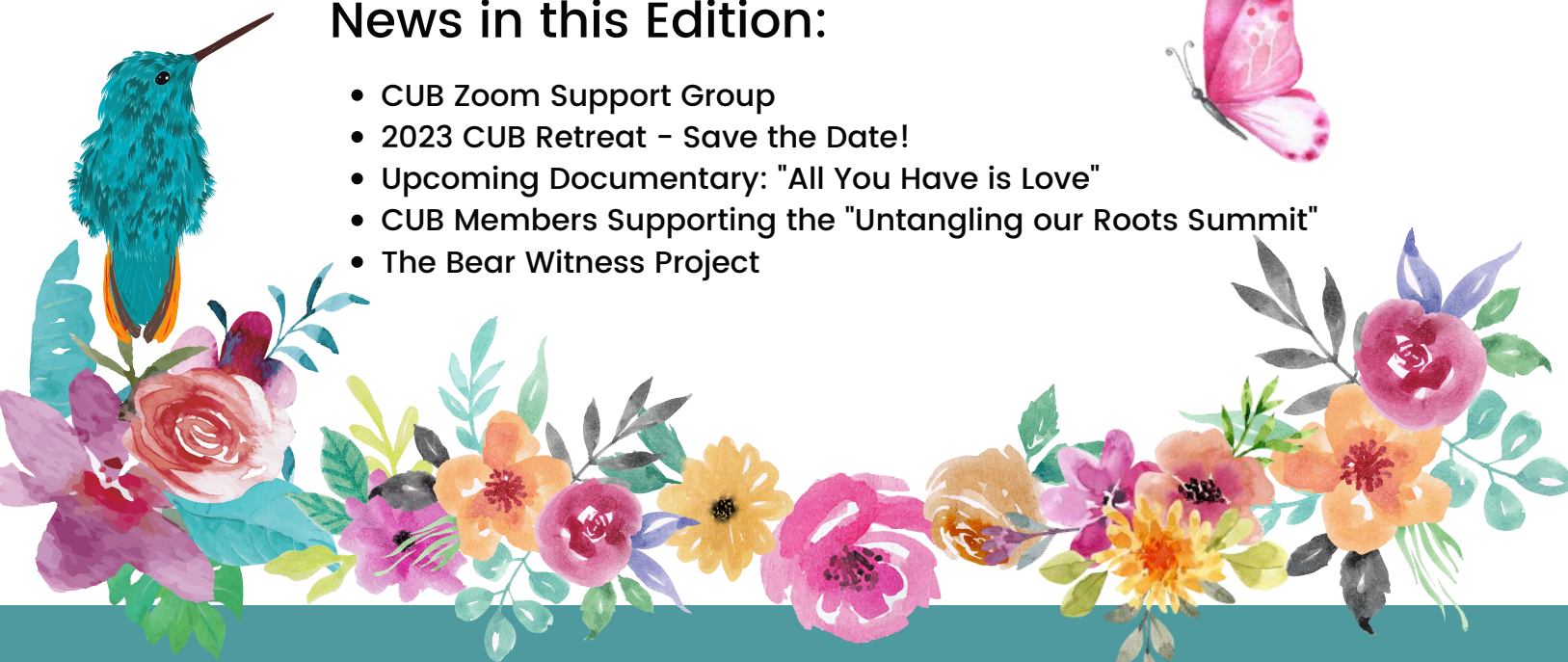


Articles & Poems in this Edition:

- "Mothers are a Gift" by Ashley Lane
- "Birth Mother: I Wish You Healing" by Marcella Moslow
- "What Does it Mean to be a Mother?" by Carol Schaefer
- "Please Fast Forward: We Grew Up" by Amy Barker D'Alessandro
- "What She Left When She Left Me" by Hannah Andrews
- Book Review: Hole in my Heart by Sarah Burns
- Book Review: The House of Tomorrow by Julia MacDonnell

News in this Edition:

- CUB Zoom Support Group
- 2023 CUB Retreat - Save the Date!
- Upcoming Documentary: "All You Have is Love"
- CUB Members Supporting the "Untangling our Roots Summit"
- The Bear Witness Project





Mothers Are A Gift

You are the light
You are beautiful
You are worthy in all of God's sight

Life is a blessing, which should never be taken for granted
The sky and the sun keep moving forward and so shall we
God gave us many seeds as so we should then have planted
There is light in our world and hearts that God gave us for the world to see

We all have differences and each struggle with something on our own
But together we can make a difference and make a change that will impact others
Lives are a blessing and a gift which will be shown
We are stronger together, all of us mothers

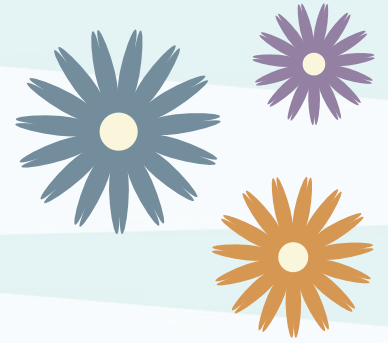
We are all stronger than we might think we are
Who we are today will matter in the future
Us mothers can all reach the stars, they aren't that far
Most likely all of us have had an abuser

But the only fear is fear itself
We must persevere through it all
There are many days we feel overwhelmed
There is always light and meaning behind those dark walls

Sincerely,
Ashley Lane,
Birth/First Mother of a one year old son

Birth Mother: I Wish You Healing

by Marcella Moslow, Adoptee



Birth/first/natural mothers; you have experienced a loss many cannot even fathom. You have had to carry fear, shame, anger, guilt and grief and have at many points had to walk that journey alone. You have been silenced, minimized, ignored, attacked, misunderstood or disregarded. You may have been taken advantage of or lied to. You have had to find a way to move through life knowing a piece of you will always be missing. For all of this, I am so sorry.

My wish for you is healing.

For you to be met with compassion and care from yourself and from others that you are worthy and deserving of

For you to be able to rest in the idea that you were doing the best you could at that time

For you to be able to face and acknowledge all of your feelings about your experience

For you to be able to share your story if you so choose

For you to be able to forgive yourself

For you to be able to acknowledge and honor your child(ren) and know that nothing will ever take away that you are their mother

For you to be able to trust

For your protective system to have a much needed break

For you to experience moments where you feel present and grounded internally and externally

For you to know that you are not alone

This applies to all members of birth/first family. Adoption impacts generations. All deserve healing.

@MARCELLAMOSLOW



What Does It Mean to Be a Mother?

by Carol Schaefer

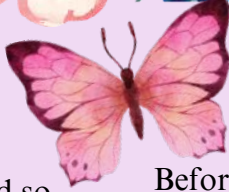

Author, *The Other Mother* and
Searching for Healing After Reunion

*NOTE: I was asked to speak at a conference in Desenzano, Italy, whose sole focus was "The Search of Origin in the Evolutive Construction of Identity." The topic was applied to adoptees, adoptive parents and surrendering mothers. I was grateful to be asked to respond to the probing questions below, because I had never thought of our situation from the point of view of how I identify myself as a mother.
(The photo above was taken from the balcony of my room.)*

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MOTHER?

At its essence, becoming a mother means to be linked with all of Creation. Of course, I only came to this realization much later in my mothering years. Naturally, our first ideas about what it means to be a mother come from how we were mothered, how our friends' mothers behaved, and how literature and other media portrayed mothers. In the fifties and sixties, when I was growing up, mothers were portrayed as self-sacrificing, devoted to supporting their husbands and the family – perfect women with no life of their own. As a teenager, I couldn't imagine living such a boring life, where the greatest concern would be what's for dinner and how to decorate the home. For the most part, it seemed that the mothers I knew played the role of mother, taking it on as their sole identity, without revealing much about their own individuality and vulnerability.

*"At its essence, becoming a mother means
to be linked with all of Creation."*



On top of that, I was raised Catholic and so was offered only two role models for what it meant to be a woman and a mother some day: the Virgin Mother, who became a mother without having sex, and Mary Magdalene, portrayed as a prostitute and childless. The Virgin Mary to me seemed fathomless, impenetrable. Mary Magdalene, on the other hand, was fascinating, alive. I was searching for some new way, but with no other options presented, had no idea what I was seeking.

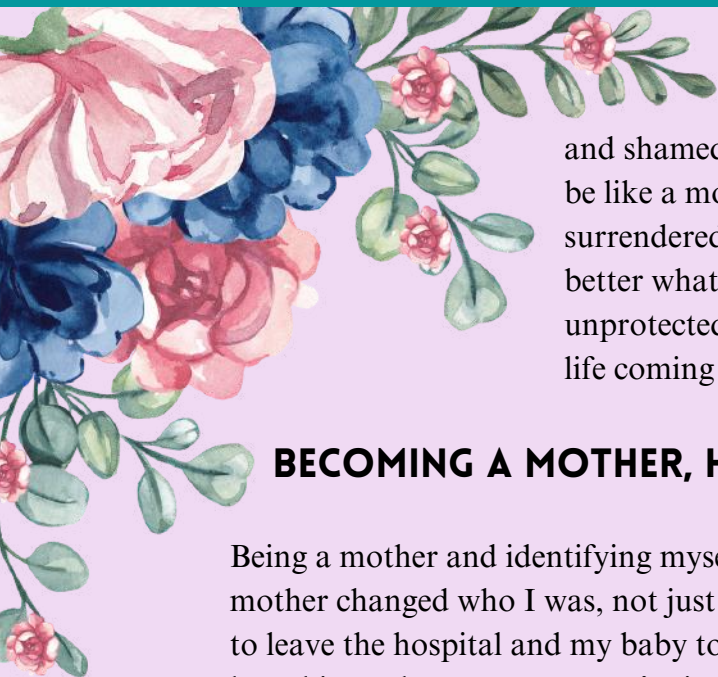
I became pregnant the end of my freshman year in college. The father of my child was my boyfriend of two years and we always planned to marry when we finished college. But he took his parents' advice, that to start a marriage under such circumstances - a baby on the way and no money - would spell disaster. So, to protect my family from the stigma of my unwed motherhood, I was sent away, now a pariah, to a home for unwed mothers a state away.

Before I became pregnant, it was already understood that to have a child out of wedlock was a disgrace. Such programming immediately wiped out the instinctive joy I first felt when I learned I was carrying a child - that I was to become a mother - and replaced the wonderment with panic and shame. It wasn't until I entered the home that I could allow myself to feel what it meant to be carrying a child.

Before then, my days were spent hiding the fact with girdles and lies and with a huge fear of my great transgression against society being discovered.

But that is also when a split happened within me between my inner reality of love for this coming child and the joy of motherhood and the reality imposed on me by the system. In the home, we were not considered mothers. We were sinners, there to atone for the mortal sin of sex before marriage. In fact, we were told that we would be selfish to even consider keeping our baby. A perfect couple was waiting for him and could give him so much more than I ever could. Besides, how could I bring such dishonor to my family who loved me so much. Worse yet, how could I impose on my child the lifelong stigma of illegitimacy. Their voices were so strong - the nuns, the priests, the nurses, I no longer could trust my own growing motherly instincts about what was right for my baby.

Once a woman brings life into this world, everything changes. Joseph Campbell spoke of giving birth as a rite of passage, an initiation. "Once a woman brings life into this world, she's never not a mother again," he said. Scientists have proven over and over how right Joseph Campbell was - how chemicals are released to facilitate the bonding process and both mother and child are from then on forever connected. The deepest part of me knew that, but I had been too brainwashed



and shamed to believe in my own truth anymore. To be a mother is to be like a mother bear, protecting and guiding her children, but I had surrendered my instincts to those who made me believe they knew better what was right for my child. I left him to an unknown fate, unprotected, violating the basic impulses of Creation – to nurture new life coming into this world.

BECOMING A MOTHER, HOW HAS IT INFLUENCED YOUR IDENTITY?

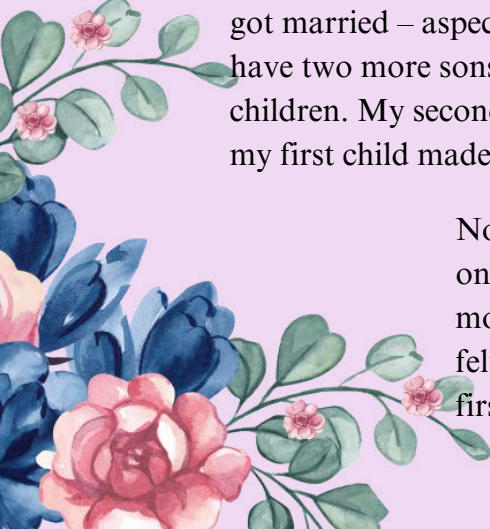
Being a mother and identifying myself as a mother are two different things to me. Becoming a mother changed who I was, not just how I described myself to myself or others. As I prepared to leave the hospital and my baby to an unknown fate, I still held out hope I could find a way to keep him – change my parents' minds or maybe my boyfriend would ride a white horse to the hospital, scoop us both up and marry me.

"Becoming a mother changed who I was, not just how I described myself to myself or others."



One of the daily litanies at the home was the promise that we would go on with our lives as if nothing had happened, get married and have children of our own someday. But, as I dressed in clothes I'd brought from my former life, I realized it was all a lie. I could no longer identify as a college coed, go back to dating and talking about superficial things. I didn't even want to. I'd been through too much and I was now a mother. No one had prepared me for these feelings, so I didn't know what to do with them, what to expect in the future. I walked out of the hospital split in two. Half of me, at least, remained with my baby.

Perhaps if I'd been able to keep my baby, I would think part of my identity was being a mother. But, with no social recognition of my motherhood, I was able to see clearly for myself that I had become a mother, not simply taken on a role. I graduated from college, worked in advertising, got married – aspects of my identity, not who I was, and people approved. I was fortunate to have two more sons – fortunate because 40 to 60% of birth mothers never did have other children. My second son wasn't planned, or I might well have been one of those. My loyalty to my first child made it impossible to imagine having any others.



Now I was a legitimate mother – a very different feeling from being a secret one. I suspect that losing my first son made me appreciate motherhood in a more profound way than I would have without such a loss. However, the love I felt for the sons I was raising only served to deepen my grief over losing my first. Sometimes what I was dealing with was beyond comprehension.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF LOSS?

One can only feel loss when an essential part of themselves is gone. Grieving the death of a child, the greatest tragedy of all, is not the same as losing a child to adoption and knowing that child is out there somewhere, hopefully alive, and well but not knowing for certain. There were no rituals to help with the grieving process, no one there to support us. The grief we bore alone and perhaps that is why it runs so deep and insidiously impacted so many areas of our lives.

"...for birth parents, much more than their child is lost."

And, for birth parents, much more than their child is lost. The effort it takes to suppress our deep pain naturally mutes all other feelings as well. For me and most others I've met over the years, to feel love, to feel anger or sorrow for other life events meant that we would tap into feelings from the original loss – a frightening proposition. So, our lives become half lived. Being so betrayed and vilified by parents and society also created a loss of self-worth, a lack of trust in oneself and others, a loss of innocence and hope in the goodness of the world, and the belief that one is loveable. From these losses, others are spawned, like the belief that one has the right to motherhood, confidence and courage is shaken, pride is gone. A whole life – one's education, job plans, ability to have a good marriage or relationships, even health often is derailed by the shattering experience of losing one's child.

And then, tragically, at the time of reunion the grief can intensify when it's realized all those lost years will never come back, that the relationship will never be what it should be or what would be hoped for, that maybe even grandchildren are lost if the adoptive parents are threatened, and the adult child is protective of them. No one should be put on such a terrible life journey.

HOW DID YOU TRANSFORM YOUR TRAUMA?

Essentially, we became utterly powerless to affect our lives. So, healing comes from reclaiming our power and the truth of our motherhood. I was fortunate to keep some of my power from the beginning by vowing to search for my son when he turned 18 – not just for myself but for him, feeling there were things he would need to know about himself, our story, his original family.



*"...healing comes from reclaiming our power
and the truth of our motherhood."*

Healing came from unexpected places: When I went to the first support group and found out I wasn't alone. When I questioned my right to search for my son and my therapist told me, "Of course you must, you're his mother." – the first time I was ever acknowledged as his mother. When the same therapist told me, when I grew impatient with the search, that I could send him love and he would receive it. (When I tried, I hoped he wasn't driving!)

Trauma wipes out memory to protect the soul. But an essential aspect of healing is reclaiming our stories – remembering. I did therapy, art therapy, went to healers, went to a shaman, facilitated support groups where hearing other women's stories helped me remember my own, and began writing *The Other Mother*. I learned the body holds onto emotional memory, sometimes to the point where our stories play like a tape over and over and we become stuck in the overwhelming emotions. Talk therapy isn't enough. To move on, the body needs to release the stuck memories. Massage, long baths and especially being in nature are essential to healing. Helping others and being with women who understood was essential, as was meeting my son and his adoptive mother's acceptance of me being in his life.

In the process of reclaiming my truth and my motherhood, I learned we are all connected, that I'd always been connected to my son, and that true power is really Love. We'd always lived near each other - from North Carolina, Virginia (where his father lived), New York and finally 40 minutes away from each other in California. I had tuned into times that were difficult for him, not understanding where the strange feelings were coming from. His adoptive mother had said the exact same words of a prayer that I used to pray. The bond had never been severed.

Who knows who I would have been had I not gone through all this trauma. I do know that healing trauma has the power to transform us, to view life from a much more profound perspective, to appreciate the deeper meaning of relationships. I'm not completely healed and probably never will be, but I've learned not to be afraid to confront the terrible feelings because there's light and wisdom to be discovered there.

What have I learned about identity? If we derive who we think we are from what society would like us to be, instead of from our own inner truth, we won't believe we should claim our right to know our children and reclaim our interrupted motherhood. We will remain imprisoned by the need to appear to be living a correct life.

Please Fast-Forward: We Grew Up


by Amy Barker D'Alessandro, LMHC

I was born and adopted in 1965 during the Baby Scoop Era to a young woman from Wisconsin who had stolen away to a “home for unwed mothers” in Texas while telling her family she had moved there for a job. I grew up in a very small town and didn’t know anyone else who was adopted, so I really bought into the “you’re special” and “we chose you” narrative. There weren’t any books or movies that I encountered that were about the experience of adoptees, except for Disney movies and all the other stories about orphans who were rescued and saved from a surely terrible fate. So I was constantly searching for ways to understand and communicate my complex lived experience as a child growing up in an adoptive home that was further complicated by divorce, abuse, foster siblings, step-siblings and biological siblings.

There were two stories I came across in the media that did resonate with my experience, but neither was really about adoption. The first was the switched-at-birth case of Kimberly Mays and Arlena Twigg. I was in my 20’s when the story broke in 1988 after Arlena, a sickly child, had died, and a blood test revealed that her raising parents weren’t her biological parents. I


followed this story closely as the other young girl, Kim, was torn between the family who raised her and the family to whom she genetically belonged. In 1993, when I was new in my reunion experience with my Birth Mother and four half-brothers, Kim Mays was again in the news as she was seeking to “divorce” her biological parents. I remember how the public came down on Kim so harshly, since she seemed to swing to extremes, moving in with her bio family at one point and seemingly enjoying all her siblings, and then at another point trying to cut them all off and professing her love and loyalty to her dad (her mom had since passed away). I totally understood those erratic and drastic changes in emotions that come when you are trying to sort through all the complicated, messy feelings of loyalty binds, identity crises, and genetic bewilderment (just to name a few!) all by yourself. It was similar to the ups and downs I was experiencing with the bio family I was only starting to get to know.

I also deeply related to Kim’s biological family who was saying, “We want to know our daughter.” It seemed like no one supported them because they had several other bio children, and the dad




who raised Kim, only had her. I watched the media reports incredulously. “Of course, she wants to stay with her dad. That’s all she knows! Those other people are strangers!” But then I’d shift to, “But of course she wants to get to know her siblings. Children aren’t replaceable. They can’t just trade them out like that!” Clearly, I was torn and confused too not unlike Kim Mays herself.

Then about 10 years later, I saw the fictional movie, “Deep End of the Ocean,” about a child who was abducted as a toddler and discovered several years later. The woman who had taken him had passed away and his stepfather who had raised him was unaware of the abduction. When the original family finds the boy, they welcome him back with a party and fanfare, but the movie showed the aftereffects of the years he had been separated from his bio family and how difficult it was for his siblings after he returned. When I watched it, I remember the overwhelming feelings of, “Yes, that’s exactly what it’s like! They want me to just slide right into their family photo as if I’ve never been gone, but I have my own family and my own memories and attachments.” The parents who are so happy to have their child back try to talk the boy into fully accepting them and to leave his other life behind, the only life he remembers, but he loves his raising dad and his extended family. He says, “I want my




own grandma’s pie for Thanksgiving.” (Of course, I’m paraphrasing, I haven’t seen the movies in years, but I remember this sentiment so clearly). I remember thinking, “No one gets that his biological family feels like absolute strangers to him. He did nothing wrong yet he’s being told he has to lose all the people he loves.”

In the absence of real rhetoric around adoption in my own life, no truth-telling of the complexities involved, and the confusion inherent in the experience, I found I most closely identified with the experiences I heard described by those who had been kidnapped, trafficked, or switched (or stolen)-at-birth. I’ve actually spent a lifetime collecting and following these stories. When I was growing up, it seemed crazy to tell anyone else how much their feelings resonated with my own. How could my seemingly happy adoption story be compared to those kinds of terrible scenarios? But now as a professional in the field and a middle-aged adoptee, it makes complete sense to me that all these misplaced (or displaced) children share so many feelings, experiences, and issues in common.



That is why when I heard that Leslie Pate McKinnon had tracked down Right to Know (RTK) to put them in touch with the National Association of Adoptees and Parents (NAAP) to bring these communities together, I was deeply moved and whole-heartedly supportive.




It's why I just had to be a part of the "Untangling Our Roots" Summit this past March/April and why I will continue to promote the intersection of all these communities.

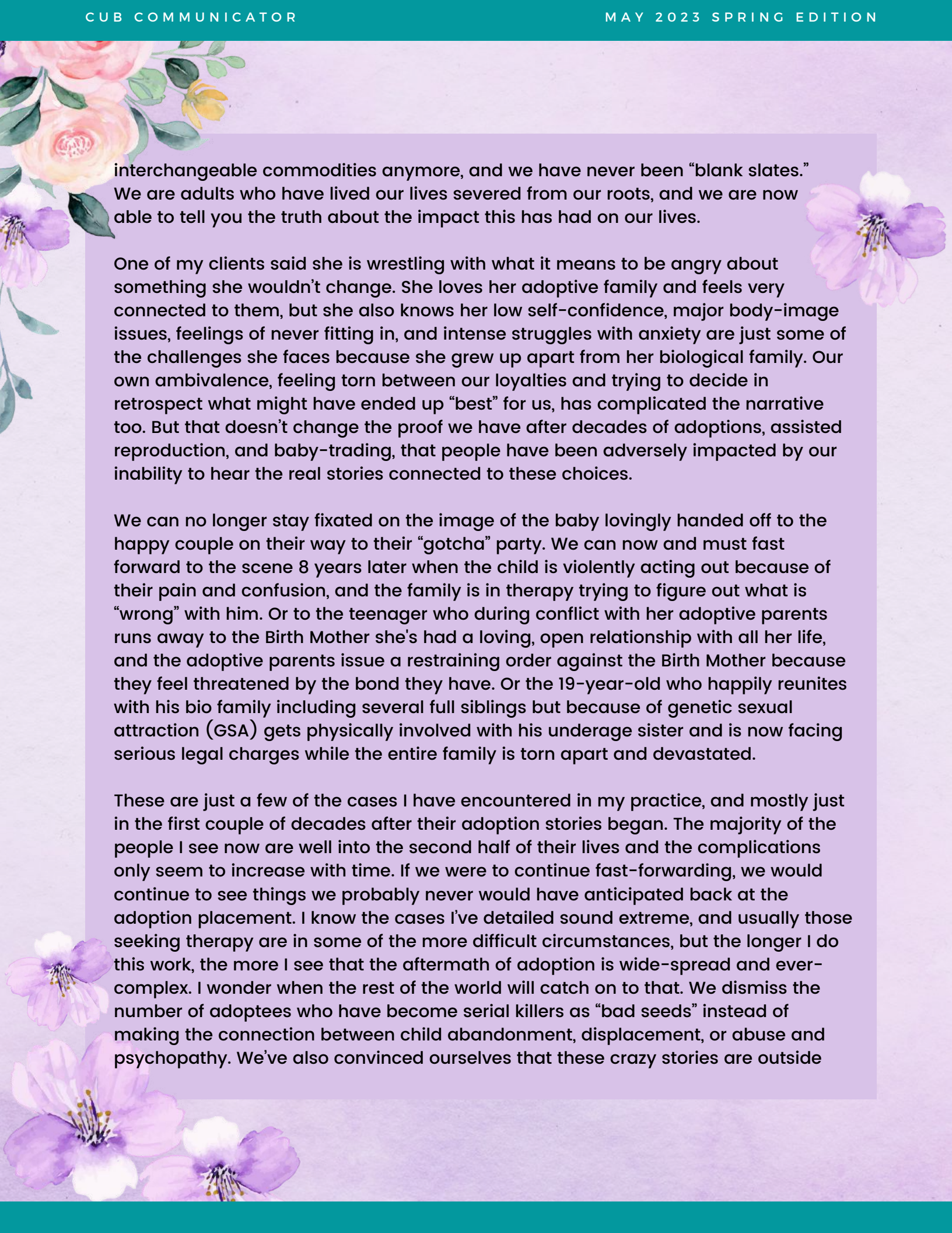
Adoptees, Donor Conceived Persons (and other persons conceived by 3rd party assisted reproduction) and those with an NPE or other DNA surprises all share a type of trauma in common. It may sound different to those outside our spaces, but internally, we have all had to grapple with the injustice of the severance from our own roots, the impact this has had on our identity development, sense of self, and relational formations, the societal belief that we should be grateful for our very existence, and the gas-lighting that has led to our marginalization and disenfranchisement. Beyond those things, the list goes on and on of the ways the denial and lack of biological privilege has adversely impacted us. Again, we can look at the over-representation of our communities in mental health services, drug and rehab facilities, and the prison system as well as the high number of suicide attempts and completions to know that clearly, we have been impacted by the culture's laissez-faire attitude towards our experiences.

A few years ago, I spoke to a group of grad students who were training to be mental health professionals. I began my presentation by asking them what came to mind when they heard the word "adoption." They called out answers like, "a second chance," "beautiful," and "rescued." Then I asked them to say what came to mind when I said the word "abduction." They said things like, "heinous," "traumatic," and "life-altering." When I told them that the experience for the developing brain of a newborn is exactly the same in either situation - that of shock, loss, and abandonment, they were perplexed. How could this be? One experience is for a child's good" and the other is for nefarious reasons. But being separated from one's mother prematurely, no matter the reason, has the same impact and imprint on the baby's brain.

Not all the people I've mentioned today were separated from their mothers, so they may not have the experience of "the primal wound," but those who are bereft of their paternal roots suffer many of the same distressing losses I've detailed. We need to shift our societal view of adoption to include the connotations of "traumatic" and "life-altering" so that the lived experience of adopted people is better understood, adoption becomes a last-resort option, and the secrecy surrounding adoption and reproduction is abolished.

We, the children of all these experiences, have grown up. We are not





interchangeable commodities anymore, and we have never been “blank slates.” We are adults who have lived our lives severed from our roots, and we are now able to tell you the truth about the impact this has had on our lives.

One of my clients said she is wrestling with what it means to be angry about something she wouldn't change. She loves her adoptive family and feels very connected to them, but she also knows her low self-confidence, major body-image issues, feelings of never fitting in, and intense struggles with anxiety are just some of the challenges she faces because she grew up apart from her biological family. Our own ambivalence, feeling torn between our loyalties and trying to decide in retrospect what might have ended up “best” for us, has complicated the narrative too. But that doesn't change the proof we have after decades of adoptions, assisted reproduction, and baby-trading, that people have been adversely impacted by our inability to hear the real stories connected to these choices.

We can no longer stay fixated on the image of the baby lovingly handed off to the happy couple on their way to their “gotcha” party. We can now and must fast forward to the scene 8 years later when the child is violently acting out because of their pain and confusion, and the family is in therapy trying to figure out what is “wrong” with him. Or to the teenager who during conflict with her adoptive parents runs away to the Birth Mother she's had a loving, open relationship with all her life, and the adoptive parents issue a restraining order against the Birth Mother because they feel threatened by the bond they have. Or the 19-year-old who happily reunites with his bio family including several full siblings but because of genetic sexual attraction (GSA) gets physically involved with his underage sister and is now facing serious legal charges while the entire family is torn apart and devastated.

These are just a few of the cases I have encountered in my practice, and mostly just in the first couple of decades after their adoption stories began. The majority of the people I see now are well into the second half of their lives and the complications only seem to increase with time. If we were to continue fast-forwarding, we would continue to see things we probably never would have anticipated back at the adoption placement. I know the cases I've detailed sound extreme, and usually those seeking therapy are in some of the more difficult circumstances, but the longer I do this work, the more I see that the aftermath of adoption is wide-spread and ever-complex. I wonder when the rest of the world will catch on to that. We dismiss the number of adoptees who have become serial killers as “bad seeds” instead of making the connection between child abandonment, displacement, or abuse and psychopathy. We've also convinced ourselves that these crazy stories are outside

the norm, flukes even, but if you truly start to listen to our stories and our lives, you will find that the ripple-effect of our disconnection to our roots and subsequently ourselves has a dramatic and lasting impact for a lifetime and even on generations.

I know you will want to tell me of the friend, neighbor, or church family you know who has a happy adoption story and who seemingly never had any issues with their adoption and was “saved” from a potentially horrible life. Please know that I am happy to know of those stories and have worked very hard with many families and individuals to lessen the impact adoption trauma has had on their lives, but I urge you to listen to the other real stories too.

We’ve got to fast-forward to the years after these decisions adults have made on behalf of children. We’ve got to listen to those who have lived in the crushing aftermath of these decisions. We all love a good orphan story where Annie gets rescued by a millionaire, but that is just a story. We need to listen to the reality of true-life experiences, and we need to change our perceptions based on this reality and leave the storybook connotations behind.

We can fast-forward in Kimberly Mays’ story because Barbara Walters followed up with her when she was 36 years old

to see how she had coped with the identity crisis she faced as a teenager after finding out she had been switched at birth. I was saddened to hear about the difficult life that she’d led, but I wasn’t surprised. At 14 she had experienced a landmine go off in her life, like so many with DNA surprises are facing every day. In addition to the trauma her body had already experienced upon separation from her parents at birth, the turmoil the DNA discovery created in her life was surely going to have a lasting impact.

We have the evidence now to prove that the unicorns, rainbows, and butterflies narrative of adoption is a fairy-tale, a myth perpetuated over generations. In the best of circumstances, it is a heart-breaking tale of loss and separation and a life-long journey of challenges all those involved must learn to navigate. No need to fast-forward anymore, we now know how the stories will end if we continue to go along with the status quo, and since that is unacceptable, we must use the information we now have to absolutely make different decisions and resolute change for our future and for the children of our future generations.

Please note clients mentioned in this article have not been identified in any way and have given express permission to share reference to their stories.



What She Left Me When She Left Me

by Hannah Andrews

It's been with me for over fifty years now. Through ups, downs, moves, and marriages, it remains my most treasured antique. It's just an old shoebox that she gussied up with wrapping paper and modge-podged cutouts of cartoon baby animals. A gorgeous one-of-a-kind adolescent art project. Inside it exists a treasure trove—a tiny blanket, some photos, and a letter. This is my inheritance, the entirety of all my birthmother left behind for me the day she left me behind.



The blanket is old now—threadbare and faded to the palest of yellows but is still whisper soft. It's handmade, in a basic crochet “single stitch.” She must've missed a stitch. It's off-kilter, almost trapezoidal, and I couldn't love it more. I hug it tight to my chest, picture her in that cold brick building that dared call itself a home. I watch that revolving cast of so-called wayward girls gather together in the evenings. They watch “Bonanza,” and “Laugh-In,” wrists perched atop their swollen bellies, as they craft blankets and booties for babies they will never hold.

A handful of photos came nestled in the blanket. They are color-drained from time and tears. One is a prim and proper high school photo—a peter-pan collar and a cascade of black curls. In another, she's big and beaming, fat with impending me. It's our only photo together. There's a summertime snapshot of the star-crossed couple. She printed “Me and Your Daddy—Lake Michigan, 1968.” on the back. And two final photos—middle-aged people dressed in their Sunday best—my grandparents apparently. It is a Kodachromed and condensed family history, a road map through the makers of me.

And then, my most prized possession—the letter. It's addressed to the name she gifted me sight unseen, the name I lost when I lost her. It's half-printed, half-cursive as if she were writing to both little kid me and grown-up me, confused yet aware of the eternity of me. My mother-to-never-be drew hearts above every "i" existing in that in-between—no longer a girl but not quite a woman.

Her words unfurl like ribbon candy, hard and sweet and timeless:

*My Shannon,
I wish you love, and light, and peace. You
deserve the best parents and a big house, and
everything I want to give you, but can't.
I will hold you in my heart forever.*

And then, scribbled in teeny tiny letters, repeated over and over, along the four sides of the letter, like a high school secret.

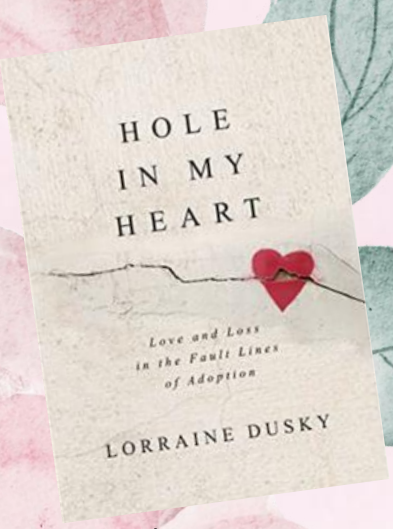
*One day I will find you.
One day I will find you.*

These words are engrained in my memory, but my memory is imaginary, filled with half-truths and wishful thinking. The box, its contents, none of it is real. None of it is real. It is metaphorical yet indestructible, fashioned from the salt of my tears and held together with longing and loss—always BUT only in my mind. It is a never written benediction from my teenage mother to me...

*And look out, (she doesn't write).
Look out your window,
As you grow
Forever know,
That moon, those stars, I'm looking at them too.
When you sleep dream of me, for I will always
dream of you
And when you look in the mirror,
Smile at what you see, for that's me
Forever looking back at you.*

Words that never were, yet somehow were
Invisibly inked inside me.
Phantom keepsakes
Intangible tethers tucked inside a box
That I'm destined to carry forever.
All that she left me when she left me.



The book cover for 'Hole in My Heart' by Lorraine Dusky is shown. It features a light beige background with a small red heart and a faint illustration of a landscape. The title 'HOLE IN MY HEART' is at the top, followed by the subtitle 'Love and Loss in the Fault Lines of Adoption' and the author's name 'LORRAINE DUSKY' at the bottom.

HOLE IN MY HEART

A HOLE IN MY HEART: LOVE AND LOSS IN THE FAULT LINES OF ADOPTION

by Lorraine Dusky
reviewed by Sarah Burns



There are many good reasons to read the new updated and revised edition of Lorraine Dusky's 2015 book, "Hole in My Heart: Love and Loss in the Fault Lines of Adoption." recently released by Grand Canyon Press. Here are half a dozen.

One: It is a truly enjoyable read. Dusky is an excellent and entertaining writer, with several decades of experience as a journalist. Her wonderful way with words draws you right inside her compelling story.

Dusky gives us a first-hand account of her loves, her losses, her personal victories and her defeats along the way as she searches for her daughter. Her personal journey is interwoven with her own story of adoption and reunion, and what it's like to be a birth/first mother.

Two: In this updated edition, she has written a complete and thorough analysis chronicling the adoption movement focusing in the height of adoption's so-called "Baby Scoop Era" in the 1960s up to today. Probably nowhere else is this information available in such an easy-to-read and entertaining memoir format. The book is a treatise on what's wrong with adoption--not only for the mother, but also for the adoptee, and for the adoptive parents.

Three: Dusky knows whereof she speaks. As a birthmother from the "Baby Scoop" era, she spent years living the life of a frustrated parent searching for her daughter. She knows all about and documents the struggle for open vs. sealed records; has personally experienced legislative victories and defeats; and has met and collaborated with some of the main players in the adoption reform movement along the way. She documents all of it in this 420-page book

Four: Dusky is a hero of the adoption reform movement, and she has been in the trenches fighting for reform all her adult life. It is fascinating to read about her personal life alongside the struggle for adoption reform and open records.

Five: Dusky first wrote this book in the hope that it would change the way our culture sees adoption. It is even more relevant and important today.

CUB readers might recall that Dusky first released "Hole in My Heart" in 2015, but much has changed since then. This revised and updated edition includes more research and places her story within the context of the wider world.

She has also added an invaluable bibliography and index to make it suitable for a wider academic audience and academic libraries. The book will help academics in their research about adoption, and could even help influence how adoption is taught at the university level. Dusky is always mindful of the fact that if you want to change the way the world thinks about adoption, you have to be able to reach researchers and those who influence public policy. This last audience is a key and important audience.

Six: Dusky hopes that all mothers will find comfort and understanding in these pages. Adoptive parents and people wanting to adopt will find information about the children they adopt and the issues they face. She carefully tries to address the concerns of adoptive parents, as well as the adoptee and birthparent. She also hopes that readers will come away with the understanding that adoption is much more complicated than society makes it appear.

In addition to her landmark writing, Dusky is still engaged in the adoption reform community and remains a passionate activist, lobbying and writing letters to

legislators in any state that has a movement to unseal the records. People in "closed" states where support is needed should contact her at forumfirstmother@gmail.com.

Another valuable resource is Dusky's blogsite firstmotherforum.com, a collaboration with former CUB Regional Director Jane Edwards. Dusky suggests that the most important steps that members of the adoption reform movement can take right now are to keep fighting until every single sealed records statute is done away with. She believes that "sealed records are the moral equivalent of state-sanctioned emotional slavery."

Dusky's final words of encouragement to CUB members: "Stay the course!" She inspires us to lend our shoulders to other birthparents who are in the same boat, while at the same time pulling together and becoming strong advocates of unsealing the original birth certificates of adoptees.

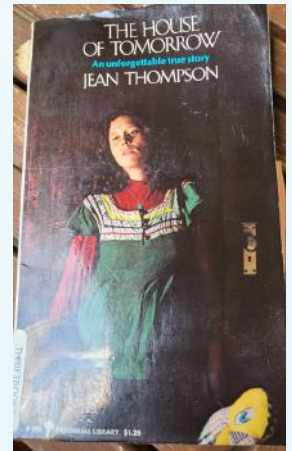
As always, Dusky encourages CUB members to speak up whenever possible. She is very supportive of CUB's major and critical goals: To help women keep their babies, and to encourage those who can't raise their babies to try to have them raised within the kinship family with no secrets. That's a very noble cause and this is a very valuable book, one that should be read by all who are interested in adoption and adoption reform.



THE HOUSE OF TOMORROW

by Jean Thompson

reviewed by Julia MacDonnell



In the summer of 1967, a year when almost 80,000 American girls (including me) gave up their newborns to closed adoption, Harper & Row (now Harper Collins) published a slender mass-market paperback titled *The House of Tomorrow*. At 4" by 7", the book was small enough to hide in a pocket or purse, and it seemed intended to be hidden. Even its author, Jean Thompson, was a pseudonym for a writer who has never revealed herself.

I stumbled upon *The House of Tomorrow* when I was researching the historical treatment of unmarried mothers. It was published when I was in deep deep mourning for the son I'd relinquished that January. I couldn't resist the publisher's declaration that it was "the only true personal account" by unmarried girl about her pregnancy, her stay in a maternity home, and her decision to 'do the right thing' by giving up her newborn. On its cover, Harper & Row declared that its heroine's choices reflected those of "thousands of women who each year face the same problems, the same anguish."

I bought a yellowing dog-eared copy online, curious to see what, if anything, it shared with my experience. I ripped open the envelope as soon as it arrived. A very young pregnant girl dominates the cover. She wears the type of maternity 'smock' popular back in the day and is surrounded by deep shadows. Her face and posture are twisted as if she has been pummeled by the blows of a scornful culture.

The true identity of diarist Jean cannot be revealed, it's understood, because of the shame attached to unmarried motherhood. She is the embodiment of that era's notion of smart edgy girls. She's a 20-year-old college student in Cambridge, Massachusetts – presumably at Radcliff, though the school is never named. She wears bell-bottoms and carries a guitar! She hangs out in bars! She is sexually active!

Book Review





Jean's 'diary' opens when she figures out she is pregnant – the result of an alcohol-lubricated one-night stand with a married father of four. She offers nary a word about her sexual encounter, not where and how it played out, or why she was attracted to him. But she assures us that this seed-spiller isn't just any old stressed out suburban dad. He's a rich and privileged one. He drives a late model Cadillac! He owns a big home in the 'burbs with an attached three-car garage! And, despite his habit of trolling the bars around Harvard for attractive students, quasi-hippie girls who might be willing to 'do it,' not even a whiff of condemnation attaches to him.

But soon the narrative and the publisher stumble: Because Jean's experience, as it plays out, does not reflect "the stories of thousands of women" who found themselves knocked up back then. And it certainly does not reflect the experiences of the scores of CUB mothers who participate in our monthly zoom support sessions. For starters, nearly half of us, including me, were teenagers and we were left with a profound life-long sense of loss. And the majority of us were also rejected by the fathers of our children and banished from our families. Not so Jean because she never reveals her pregnancy to the baby's father or to her parents!!

Jean, self-possessed and resourceful, is not shattered by her unplanned pregnancy and loss the way so many of us have been. Deception comes as easily to her as breathing. She is able to get away with her grand deceptions because her wealthy parents are heading to France for a year long stay. She tells them she needs a year off from college 'to find' herself. Her parents don't ask her a single question, but keep sending her checks. While they relax in Europe, Jean heads to California and, eventually, to a Salvation Army Booth home for unwed mothers.

While the vast majority of adoptions in the Baby Scoop Era were brokered through agencies in collaboration with religious organizations – they gave panicked young mothers little choice but to relinquish – Jean manages to finagle a private independent adoption on the West Coast. She keeps her secret even from the man she later marries and has children with. Her profound multi-generational deception is apparently not worthy of comment or reflection. It seems not to bother her at all.





This story, infuriatingly, shimmers with a peculiar glamour that we many thousands of hidden mothers never experienced. The brave young narrator, her parents completely out of reach, has the smarts and financial resources to move across country to fulfill her quest for secrecy. She jettisons all recognizable emotions in order to achieve it. She deceives her baby's biological kin with neither concern nor remorse.

Jean presents herself as a young woman of agency but she acquiesces as sweetly as melting Jell-o to the stigma heaped upon unmarried pregnant females. She refuses to hold any male accountable, and tacitly endorses closed newborn adoption as the only possible solution to unmarried pregnancy. Her 'diary endorses the fairy tale of closed adoption as a win/win for everyone involved.

Just as she leaves out her experience of sex, she leaves out her experience of childbirth, of labor and delivery. She writes nothing about the physically and emotionally excruciating experience of childbirth which most females experience as life-altering. Jean announces only, "My baby was born four hours ago!" That's it! "A beautiful, perfect, live little boy born through me." The profound physical and emotional experience of childbirth is erased. She sees herself serving only as the medium through which he is produced.

Jean doesn't complain when her son is taken away before she can touch him. She accepts the common wisdom, shared by others confined to the 'home,' that it would be best if she didn't touch her child. For a week, confined to the hospital, she walks down the hall to gaze at him in his bassinette through the nursery window. She observes that he sometimes "moves his tongue as if he is searching for the nipple." She is too young and foolish to understand- her editors and publishers apparently were too - that he, after his immediate separation from his mother, was indeed rooting for a nipple, one he'd never find.

If Jean feels anything at all in the aftermath of childbirth, she keeps it to herself. She seems so numbed by her lifelong immersion in patriarchal cultural norms that she recognizes no feelings other than the ones she's allowed to have: That the baby, after all, isn't really hers. She is unworthy to be its mother. She is nothing more than the medium through which he came into the world, a secret that must be kept from everyone. Her son is only a commodity for



Book Review

the adoption brokers, a thing to be cared for by others for which Jean claims no responsibility.

In the epilogue, Jean describes herself as a happily married mother of other children. Her lies and secrets remain intact and do not seem to trouble her. Marriage and motherhood are the ending that her carefully guarded secret allowed her to obtain. She fulfills the false promises of all those social workers who insisted that we'd forget about our lost children; that we'd go on with our lives as if our unmarried pregnancies had never happened.

The book's title, *The House of Tomorrow*, comes from Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*, first published in 1919:

"Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself... You may give them your love but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts. You may house their bodies but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow..."

This is an appalling misuse of Gibran's philosophical assertion, which was never intended as the justification for the literal separation of a newborn from its mother.

I don't believe for a hot second that *The House of Tomorrow* is truly a diary. The book itself is a fraud, most likely fiction, produced by an unknown writer working with a major publisher intent upon endorsing closed newborn adoption as a sacred fairy tale, the only possible answer to the burgeoning public health problem of unmarried pregnancy. *The House of Tomorrow* was reissued in 1973 – coincidentally the year that abortion was legalized. But its shameful fictions, feeding and supporting the win/win fairy tale, have never been acknowledged. Neither writer nor publisher have ever been called to account.



CUB Zoom Support Group

The CUB Zoom Support Group is a monthly volunteer-run peer-led experience that takes place on the third Saturday of the month.

Next meeting: May 20, 2023

11:00 AM PST / 2:00 PM EST

Length: 90 minutes

Go Here to Sign Up: [Support Group](#)

Please note that this is only for mothers and fathers who have lost children to adoption. (We plan to expand this program for other demographics in our community but for now we only serve parents of adoption loss. Thank you for your patience!)

For more information about what to expect when you attend a CUB Zoom Support Group please review our Guidelines for Attendees here: [Group Guidelines](#)

**OCTOBER 13 - 15, 2023**

Redondo Beach, CA

SAVE THE DATES**CUB Retreat 2023**

2023 CUB Retreat

Sonesta Redondo Beach & Marina

October 13 – 15, 2023

Our upcoming 2023 CUB Retreat is scheduled for October 13-15 at the Sonesta Redondo Beach & Marina, a beautiful location less than 10 miles south of Los Angeles Int'l Airport (LAX).

We know that flights, hotel, and registration fees can add up, so our retreat committee is working hard to keep the registration fee as affordable as possible.

Our goal is to make attendance accessible for everyone while still providing an amazing agenda that you will love. We hope to open early registration by the beginning summer.

Now is a great time to [join CUB](#) or [renew your membership](#) because members will receive extra discounted registration rates.

We have a discounted room block where you can stay in a room with a deluxe king or two queen beds for just \$200 a night. Book your room here: [CUB Room Block](#)

For those who would like to find someone to share a room with, you can sign up here: [Roommate Interest Form](#).

We can't wait to share this unforgettable experience with you!

UPDATE

All You Have Is Love: Demand, Deception and the Infant Adoption Industry, a documentary

film by Lisa Elaine Scott, coming Spring 2024

Presentation Notes by Lisa Elaine Scott, speaking at the Yard Café in Seattle, WA on April 28, 2023.



What we are not is anti-adoption. What we are is pro-family preservation. Any woman who wants to parent her newborn baby should be able to do so, and we, as a society, should offer her the resources she needs.

This is the position of the film. So just to be clear, sure, there will always be anecdotes. And I've heard a lot of them, so I don't need to hear any more. Sure, sometimes infant adoption is the answer, but as we know from examples here and in other countries, those occasions are rare. So, we don't believe that creating families through adoption is worth the immense damage done to mothers and their babies. I believe that it is unethical to destroy one family to create another.



Please consider this: Thousands and thousands of hopeful adopters are waiting, hoping, praying that a pregnant woman will fall on hard times. We live in a country where there is literally no such thing as too many adoptions. And that fact is the reason that I, along with those working with me, are making this film.



Some members of the Seattle Birth Mothers Group enjoying being together and supporting this film.



And we are on track. We did some fantastic work here in Seattle. We interviewed Rachel and her Mom, Sue, (pictured above and below) and they have a really powerful story to tell about their experiences with infant adoption.

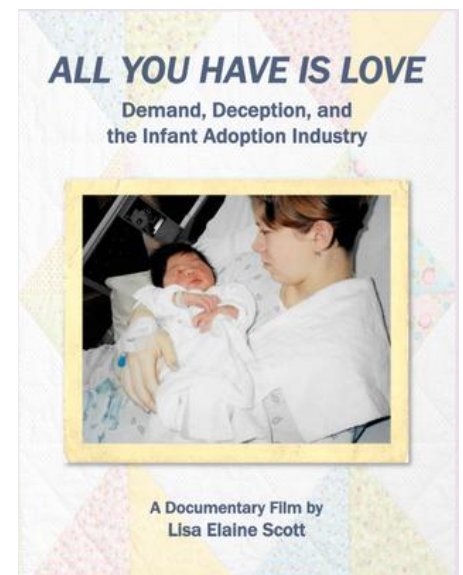
And here's the imperative: Not only are things not getting better, they're getting worse.

I want to tell you about a new Tennessee Law-SB270/HB318

This law allows for pre-birth relinquishments. Let me say that again: Mothers can now be coerced into signing away their parental rights before giving birth, and this new law shortens the revocation period to end when the woman leaves the hospital or 48 hours after the birth, whichever comes first. I'm guessing that no one here thinks that's a good idea. And make no mistake, this is clearly a trend. There is a whole segment of the infant adoption industry who is, right now, "preparing for babies". Check it out, it's disgusting.



Please visit our website allyouhaveislove.com, join our mailing list and please watch for our fundraising campaign, as we need the support of this community if we're going to end unnecessary family separations. This is our chance to tell the truth about infant adoption in America. Thank You.





CUB Members Supporting the Summit!

Untangling Our Roots, the first-ever conference bringing the adoption, assisted reproduction, and NPE (non-paternal event) communities together, drew attendees from 38 states, Canada, and Australia to Louisville, Kentucky. The hosting organizations, Right to Know and the National Association of Adoptees and Parents, collaborated for more than a year-and-a-half to join the three separate communities around their many overlapping needs and concerns. Summit was created to unite our communities and constellations into one amplified voice; advance awareness and education; seek truth and healing; and foster connections and understanding.





The success of this life-changing gathering left folks from each community clamoring for a "next time" and ignited think-tank style brainstorming about how standing strong and standing together will impact the future for persons from our communities. In addition to planning and preparation for a second Summit in early spring 2024, the Untangling Our Roots leadership team will participate in the National Genealogy Society 2023 Family History Conference in Richmond, Virginia in June, the National Conference of State Legislatures in Indianapolis in August, are developing a legislative roundtable for organizations working to enact legal changes, and have launched the Bear Witness Project to document our communities' journeys.





The Bear Witness Project

The Bear Witness Project is a powerful collection of interviews featuring those who have experienced genetic identity challenges or genetic continuity loss due to adoption, assisted reproduction, or a non-paternal events (NPE). This ongoing program operates under the non-profit organizations Right to Know and the National Association of Adoptees and Parents (NAAP). Launched in March 2023 at the Untangling Your Roots Summit in Louisville, KY, The Bear Witness Project was developed to provide a brave and supportive platform for individuals to share their unique stories. The initial response was overwhelming, with countless requests for interviews pouring in. Recognizing the tremendous need for this type of program, The Bear Witness Project was established to accommodate as many voices as possible.

The name "Bear Witness" was carefully chosen as it reflects the profound sentiment expressed by those who were interviewed prior to the project's inception. They felt unheard and invisible, as if their experiences and perspectives did not matter. The current objective of the project is to continue bearing witness to the realities faced by individuals dealing with genetic identity issues and loss of genetic continuity. All interviews are stored on a secure server and are available for visual access. Additionally, we will offer services such as editing and social media linking for interviewees.

Our goal is to use these interviews to provide education and raise awareness on this importance of knowing your genetic identity and relatives and untangling your roots.





Want to help with the CUB Newsletter?

We can use all kinds of help
from curating and creating
content to administrative tasks.
No experience necessary.

If interested, contact Amy at
editor@concernedunitedbirthparents.org

