



*Honoring All
Mothers
Today & Always!*



Writings & Music

- Letter from the Editor, Amy Barker
- "Good Enough to be Active"
by Beth Jaffe
- CUB Writing Group Info
- Writing Group Prompts
by Micki Altenbernd
- "For Noah" by Nancy Hernandez
- "The Shattered Men" and "The Lost
Detective" by Gary Coles
- "Real Mother" by Rich Uhrlaub
- "Circumstances Change, but
Surrender is Forever" by Kris Downey
- "Missed Chances" and "Clarity in the
Confusion" by Tara Matlak
- "Birthmother" by Betsey Rose
- "Dear Mommy" by GG
- "The Color of KNots" by Emily Miller
- "Dissociation" by Dani Joy
- "Constellations" by Jenni Alpert
- "Deconstructing Adoption: One
Mother's Road" by Dani Joy
- "The Ethics of Surrogacy"
by Candace Cahill
- "South Korean Adoption Fraud and
Abuse" by Julia MacDonnell Chang
- "Motherhood Redeemed"
by Leslie Pate Mackinnon

News & Announcements

- CUB Retreat 2025: Atlanta, GA!
- CUB Membership Special
- CUB ZOOM Monthly Peer Led Groups
- We Stand with Adoptees
- Recommended New Books
- Call for Future Newsletter Submissions



Letter from the Editor

When I was pregnant, my world became very small. I was working as a nanny to the two small boys of a good friend in exchange for a room and meals. Having grown up as an adoptee in an environment where adoption was the **ONLY** option for unwed mothers, I knew early on in my pregnancy what was expected of me, and since I was not going to parent, I was in my own sort of hiding. The only places I really went were the doctor's office, a church in a neighboring town, and a pre-natal exercise class at the hospital.

I really treasure the time I was in that exercise class. It was impactful to be around other women who were further along in their pregnancies and could tell us what to expect in the coming months before giving birth. At times, some women who had their babies would bring them back to the class for a visit. They would then tell us their birthing stories and how their bodies were recovering. It was a unity in womanhood I had never before experienced.



Since getting involved in CUB about six years ago, I have reflected on the women in that class many times as I again find myself surrounded by some amazing women who are further along in their journeys than I am and are willing to share their experiences. I continue to feel that same sense of belonging, but this time it is around the grief of profound loss, the motivating desire to spare others the same kind of unbearable pain, and sometimes around the indescribable joy of reconnection with our child(ren). I am deeply grateful to be in community with others who know what comprised motherhood feels like.

A fellow birth/first mother asked me this week what I would like someone to say to me regarding Mother's Day as it draws near. She acknowledges how hearing "Happy Mother's Day" feels hurtful to her as it's not a happy day for her or for a lot of birth/first mothers. I told her I would like to hear something like, "I honor your motherhood today."

As I have worked hard to reclaim my motherhood since losing my son to adoption 35 years ago and not having or raising any other children, it can still be difficult to fully embrace that I am a mother, and I have a son. Different phases of reunion have challenged my feelings at times, but during this season of growth and especially this weekend, I choose to honor myself as a mother, and I most definitely honor you and your motherhood.

May we honor one another well today and always!

Amy Barker

Essay

GOOD ENOUGH TO BE ACTIVE

BETH JAFFE

It's been a while, but these days I can say with pride, I'm an activist. I like being active. Also, in the larger sense of the word and deep down within me, I'm an adoption activist because I want to transform adoption into something much better than the ugly, hungry caterpillar it has been for so many decades. I'm tired of feeling like the adoption caterpillar chewed me up, pooped me out, and crawled on looking for another unsuspecting leaf.

“*Like so many birthmothers, my adoption story feels more traumatic than dramatic and certainly not very entertaining to talk about.*”

Like so many birthmothers, my adoption story feels more traumatic than dramatic and certainly not very entertaining to talk about. Still, I can't help myself. I have to talk and talk and talk about it. The problem is, I keep thinking nobody around me wants to listen to this story. Again. And especially me.

My adoption story is like a jailer. I call it a monster, and I poke at it with jokes and a sassy attitude. In the sanctuary of my mind, I openly disrespect its apparent and mostly temporary power over me. If you haven't guessed by now, in addition to saying I'm an activist, I call myself a Creative for good reason.

Over the years, I've discovered a fountain of creativity within me. It is the source of my willingness

to rise up, find my voice, and express my love for life as well as seek ways to speak out to help others. It carries me along on the bumpy dirt road of life I walk despite the monster jailer and the adoption caterpillar. Via my fountain of creativity, I tap into boundless energy the way one would flex a muscle. I believe we all have this gift within us. I use different names for it, and I like to help people find theirs with an unusual approach to seemingly common, even boring exercises and practices.

My story is my history. Luckily, with the right mindset, irritatingly dull, even painful facts about history can become magical portals into unknown lands rich with mystery, intrigue, and possibility. Two years ago, around this time, I hosted and led a free online workshop called "Paving the Way for Mother's Day." Like a geeky history teacher with a crooked bowtie and a head full of dandruff, I invited my participants to take a second look at Mother's Day by diving into its humble beginnings.

As we worked on new approaches to making peace

with this challenging "Hallmark Holiday," I shared the stories of women like Julia Ward Howe and Anna Reeves Jarvis, new-to-me heroines who were part of creating Mother's Day. Their pure grit and beautiful intentions soothed my frazzled nerves.

I can't go into all the details here, but what I saw and shared was a story of powerful women actively turning their grief into something to inspire and uplift others as they worked to make this world a more hospitable place for themselves and future generations. My participants and I all vowed to ewire our thoughts about Mother's Day. This paved the way for experiencing it in a new way.

Unfortunately, the problem with Mother's Day was baked into the cake it became. The movement needed momentum, and a businessman stepped in to "help." He made a lot of money "helping."

Although people everywhere know of Mother's Day, many people also hate it, crying about the pain it brings up. Modern businesses honor this problem

of Mother's Day pain by offering opt-out buttons for their Mother's Day ad campaigns. If I had big piles of money, I'd buy an ad campaign informing and transforming Mother's Day back into its origins of being an international cease-fire day of mothers across the globe who can openly mourn their losses due to war and pray for peace and justice to rule the day.

Due to my adoption story monster jailer and his colleague, the ugly hungry adoption caterpillar, I sometimes lose track of my fresh perspective on Mother's Day. But the circuitry of my thoughts can't and won't go back into the hurtful, tangled mess they've been because I have the key now.

Through writing, I'm thriving and actively working in the refuge of our CUB community, where grieving people are not just living with their mother and

“Through writing, I'm thriving and actively working in the refuge of our CUB community, where grieving people are not just living with their mother and motherhood wounds, they are transforming them.”

motherhood wounds, they are transforming them. The strength and courage I see in my fellow CUB members from all the generations reflect back into me, and I find my own courage and strength. By stretching and flexing my creativity muscle, I dance with my discomfort to the rhythm of my beating heart. Despite the dark ongoing circumstances of my adoption experience, I'm feeling good enough to be active again.

If you are a parent of adoption loss, I hope you will consider joining us for at least one of our monthly writing sessions. If you know any parents of adoption loss, I hope you will consider encouraging them to join us. We're working to transform our grief and tragedies into something better.

Beth Jaffe can be found almost every 3rd Sunday of the month on the CUB Monthly Writer's group and anytime at BethJaffe.com.

CUB MONTHLY WRITING GROUP

We welcome all first parents who have a hint of curiosity about how writing could help smooth the bumpy road of life post-relinquishment. Every month we share the same evergreen prompts and each month we provide a few unique prompts. Below is a list of some examples. No pressure, but just today, why not set a timer for 10 or 20 minutes and watch what your fingers want to write?

Sample Prompts:

- Write about the days after...
- The social stigma of adoption loss feels like...
- My favorite steps on my healing journey have been...

Evergreen Prompts:

- Write a vision of yourself as thriving.
- I feel best when I...
- If I could do anything, it would be...

Please join us every third Sunday
Link to Sign up: [Writing Group](#)

Writing Group

WRITING GROUP PROMPTS

MICKI ALTENBERND

PROMPT: The social stigma of adoption feels like:

*A tight grip around my heart
A vice grip around my whole body
"Keep it quiet
Don't tell anyone.
You'll be lost forever if you share."*

PROMPT: It feels like:

*Darkness shrouded in deep grief
A body floating down the river to nowhere.*

PROMPT: The inner picture is of:

*A little girl lost in a big, dark room with no one there.
She is the light in the darkness
But she's frozen.
Her light can't shine to anyone.
She's trapped...locked up.
No one is there for her...just so alone.
So scared.
If she says anything what will happen?
Will the anger come out and make her blow up?
Will her heart shatter and break into pieces?
Alone. Frozen. Who can help?
She wants out of this dark confining room.*

Poetry

There is light and freedom outside.

Flowers, birds singing, blue sky.

She longs for that.

She puts her hand up.

Who can help her get out?

CUB strangers help.

They have ears.

They take her to the water for a drink.

She sits and gazes at the water.

It shimmers. It smiles at her.

It receives her tears as they flow out joining others' tears.

The strangers form a circle. She joins. She talks. They hear. We dance.

We remember what happened. We talk. We share our grief.

We extend mercy to everyone.

*There was a girl locked in this dark room who has slowly come out –
to CUB strangers.*

Most in my world don't know what I carry.

Many don't care.

If only the little girl felt strong enough.

She still needs support and acceptance.

She needs inner strength...

*- An inner belief that even though she relinquished a baby boy
she's not a bad girl.*

*- A belief that she is loved and accepted
no matter what.*

When will that come?

It is a little seed inside her that grows into self-compassion, love, light.

It is a flickering light – unsteady.

The flame will grow thanks to the love and light of others.

*The strangers in the CUB group who took her hand and walked her out
to the light.*



Poetry

FOR NOAH

NANCY HERNANDEZ

In shadows deep, where silence dwells,
A heart, once whole, now softly swells,
With love that blooms, yet tears that sting,
A choice so heavy, a silent ring.

Tiny fingers grasping dreams,
In whispered nights, the longing screams,
Yet hope's soft light begins to glow,
For love, not loss, will help them grow.

Each breath a battle, each thought a war,
The ache of parting, a heart left sore,
^{Body} But in this pain, a truth takes flight,
To give them wings, to seek the light.

With open arms, a future waits,
A family's joy, a new heart's fates,
Through tear-stained eyes, the path is clear,
Love's greatest gift is letting go, my dear.

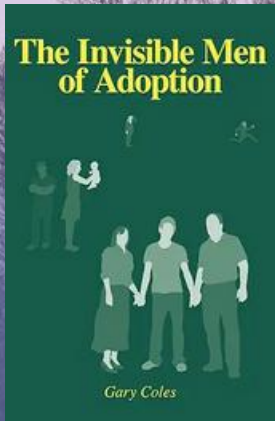
So though it breaks, this heart of mine,
A sacrifice that feels divine,
In every tear, a seed is sown,
A love that's fierce, yet softly grown.

For in this choice, though harsh and tough,
I find the strength to rise above,
With every heartbeat, every sigh,
I'll cherish you, as I say goodbye.

THE SHUTTERED MEN

GARY COLES

**AUTHOR OF
THE INVISIBLE
MEN OF
ADOPTION**



Poetry

Adoption is often perceived
To be solely women's business
Which is by no means accurate
Because men are affected too
Truly both male and female
Adopted persons are dislocated
And don't forget the fathers
Who grieve for their lost child
But men are heard from
Generally rather less often
For many a product of being
Less connected with their feelings
Then others acutely aware of
The remarked gender imbalance
Stay safely in the background
Until invited to have their say
Let us realise any opportunities
For these men who have suffered
The impact of adoption separation
To add their voices to the conversation
And help expose the present shuttered view.

THE LOST DETECTIVE

I can but reflect
That after years
Of detective work
Searching for my son
I find him
Yet we do not connect

He does not want to know
And I feel
As lost
As I did
Before I set out
Keen to seek and grow.

Music

a duet from the
new musical
For the Record(s)



REAL MOTHER

RICH UHRLAUB

Listen to a
recording of
the song here:
[FTR Recordings](#)



Eliana

My heart is racing
So happy embracing
My son, my little man.
And though we have just met,
I'm so thrilled that I get
To hold his little hand.

Blanca

My heart is racing
Someone is replacing
The role that I should fulfill.
I have no real choice now,
I have no real voice now,
I signed against my will.

Eliana and Blanca (together)

Am I a real mother,
Because there's another
Who gives him what I could not?
How will I explain this -
That I will remain his
True mother; I am and I'm not.

Blanca

I leave him to strangers,
God, protect him from dangers.
I'll never know his name.

Eliana

Her secret is hidden
He will be forbidden
To learn from whom he came.

Blanca

He'll never know how much
I loved him first

Eliana

He'll never know much
I wanted a child

Blanca

I pray that he'll feel loved
- never cursed

Eliana

I'll raise him to be smart and
free from guile.

Eliana and Blanca (together)

Am I a real mother,
Because there's another
Who gives him what I could not?
How will I explain this -
That I will remain his
True mother;
I am and I'm not.

Eliana

Never will he know,
Never can I show
This fear I have inside
(looks at amended birth
certificate)
This document's a lie!

Blanca

Never will he see
What he means to me
How can i ever heal
This haunting grief i feel?

Eliana and Blanca (together)

I am his real mother,
Although there's another
Who gives him what I could not.
I'll never explain this
I'll always remain his
True mother; who is and is not.

I am his real mother
Although there's another
Who gives him what i could not.
I'll never explain this
I'll always remain his
True mother, who is and is not.
I'll never explain this
I'll always remain his real mother,
who is and is not,
who is and is not

Watch a reel of
short clips here:

[FTR Sizzle Reel](#)

FOR THE RECORD(S)

Book, Music and Lyrics by
Richard Uhrlaub

A new musical in development
about Adoption, Truth and Identity

Essay

CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE, BUT SURRENDER IS FOREVER

KRIS DOWNEY

The hospital was a blur of white uniforms. The year was 1973. I was crying, but attempting to be brave. No one seemed to notice. I was one of “those girls,” barely 18, unmarried, and pregnant. As I was whisked into the delivery room, I could hear the nurses laughing at the holes in my knee socks.

People were shouting at me not to push. The doctor barely made it in time. A towel was thrown over my face as I heard my baby cry. I tried to look toward the cry, but the towel was being held in place. I heard commotion and yelling. “Get him out of here. She’s not allowed to see him.” That cry has haunted me every day since.

The next thing I remember was waking up in the recovery room, what I saw was green Jello cubed in a clear plastic cup on the tray.

My mom was sitting beside me. She looked like she’d been crying. When I asked to see my baby, she said, “We’ve decided it’s best for you not to see him.” She teared up and went on, “We’ve told the family he was stillborn.” I didn’t know what that meant. “You can make your own decision, but your father and I are not raising another child.”

“A towel was thrown over my face as I heard my baby cry. I tried to look toward the cry, but the towel was being held in place. I heard commotion and yelling. “Get him out of here. She’s not allowed to see him.” That cry has haunted me every day since.”

She kissed my forehead, stood to leave, and slid the green Jello closer on the tray. My tears were suffocating me.

I was put in a private room at the end of the hall. When the nurse responded to my call light, she emphatically told me the light was for “real mothers” only.

I never saw my son. Any hopes I had of making it work were quickly dashed. I was reminded over and over that it was selfish to consider keeping him. At 18, I was unfit to be a mother. I had ruined my life, why ruin his too?

I agreed to surrender him for adoption. Surrender is the right word. I was truly surrendering, giving up, yielding to those who were supposed to know best.

“*Surrender is the right word. I was truly surrendering, giving up, yielding to those who were supposed to know best.*

Sixteen years later, I was pregnant again, only this time everyone was thrilled for me, telling me what a wonderful mother I'd make.”

Sixteen years later, I was pregnant again, only this time everyone was thrilled for me, telling me what a wonderful mother I'd make. Even strangers wanted to share their stories, wish me luck, feel my belly, all the things that go along with a married woman's pregnancy.

I played along, acting as though this was my first time. On the inside, I was terrified someone would see through my facade. I'd silently carried the brand “unfit mother” my entire adult life.

How was I suddenly in the wonderful mother category? Intellectually, I knew it was my circumstances that had changed. Not who I was.

My baby was born on a cool, crisp April evening. My husband was by my side through it all. Within minutes, I was holding my precious little one. I was treated like royalty. What a difference the passing of time and a gold band make.

MISSSED CHANCES

TARA MATLAK

Poetry

A title of mother
Nurturing and loving you as you grew

Seeing your first steps
Hearing your first words, songs
Helping you through your first problems
Mending you through your first heartbreaks

A shoulder for you to cry on
A support system you needed
That I needed to be, feel and experience
But couldn't

To love someone more than yourself
While being forbidden to love them or call them yours

Connections shared
By blood, genetics
Prevented from growing
Mirroring each other while the mirror fogged
or was simply just turned from your view

Unallowed
Unpermitted
Unworthy

Of parenting,
Loving,
Mothering

What do I do with all of the love I have to give?
How do I channel it?
Who has received your love?
Do they appreciate it and know its value?
Waiting and hoping for that chance to do and be what I couldn't then
Ready and desperately wanting to prove that you and I are both SO ...
allowed, permitted and worthy of loving and being loved.
Then. Now. And always.

CLARITY IN THE CONFUSION

TARA MATLAK

Pouring out thoughts and feelings
Like a beverage filling a drinking glass

Swirling.
Fitting into the space tightly.
Bubbling up

Reaching up from the bottom,
From the depths of the space
Rising slowly.
No current or rapids yet

Just still
Until the bubbles begin again
Stirring, possibly boiling

The level rises
Nearing the surface
Becoming clearer for a moment

The constant risk of
Overflowing and becoming
Messy, uncontained,
Even out of control once again

BIRTHMOTHER

BETSY ROSE

Music

The baby's due in summertime,
She just got the news
Now she's flying home to tell the only one
That it should matter to
He's working in a factory,
She's a college girl
But the night they spent before she left
Crossed the borders of their worlds

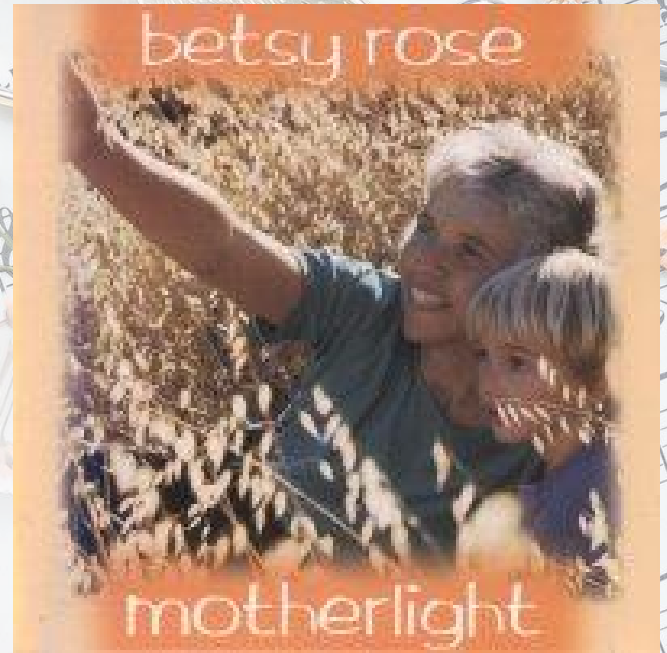
Now she's memorizing what she'll say
Head held high, no one can shame her
She's got a dignity they just can't take away

*'Cause when you're 18 years,
You hide your fears
In a show of being strong
The whole wide world gonna tell you
You done wrong*

She's smiling as she tells him,
He's silent as he hears
He sees another light a motherlight
Shining in her
She's gone beyond her years

His future's folding in on him,
His dreams are losing ground
But he's got his own pride, a manly side,
He'd never let a girl down

And side by side they take their stand
Against the parents and the rules and the plans
"We'll make it work- please understand-
It was love,"



Listen to the
song here:

[YouTube.com/p/
birthmother](https://www.youtube.com/p/birthmother)

Three months at a day job,
She'll pay her way alone
And three months at a home
For those wayward girls
Have to hide what love has done

Three weeks before due time,
She's bleeding and she's scared
Lying in a bright light cold white chamber
Half drugged and no one there

He comes at last, when the babe is born
Face to the glass, his heart is torn
He's got a father love waking up
In a boy too young

*Barely 18 years he hid his fears,
And he hoped that he'd be strong
Now he slips out the back door
And she knows he's gone*

For more of
Betsy's music
and work, go to:

betsyrosemusic.org

The baby came in summertime,
Baby's gone by fall
Gone to another home, left the girl alone
To make sense of it all

They tell her she'll forget in time
And love and bear again
But there's no comfort in the kindest words,
There's no easy way to mend
And her tears dry up like the milk in her
breasts
Blankets and bonnets laid to rest
Her mama buys her a brand new dress,
She's just a teenage girl again

She's 18 years, she hides her tears
In a show of being strong
Took her twenty-two years
To write this song



Letter

DEAR MOMMY

GG

Dear Mommy,

I miss you.

I'm afraid to tell you.

I want to but I can't.

You loved me and cared for me.

You're the only Mommy I will ever have.

I don't want to hurt you.

I want you to understand why I must
do this.

There are so many blank spaces that fill
my soul.

So many questions of who, what, where
and why?

I want to be able to fill in the spaces.

I need to in order to complete myself.

It's nothing you did wrong.

No one will ever take your place.

She was so young, Dear Mommy.

They took me away.

She did not get to hold me.

I was separated from the only thing I knew.

I was so young, Dear Mommy.
I was so new.
I cannot explain it.
I have held life in my body with my babies.
I have felt their spirit inside my womb.
My babies are my life.
I know she did what she thought was best.
What else could she have done?
She was so young, Dear Mommy.
She may not want to see me.
She may already be gone.
I love you, Dear Mommy.
Please try to understand.
If she wouldn't have done what she did,
you never would have been my
Dear Mommy.

Love,
GG



I wrote this Poem/Letter during the search for my Birth Mother. I was afraid to tell my Mother that I was searching for her. After I found my Birth Mother, I waited 9 months to tell my Mother that I had found her. ~ GG

The color of KNotes.

Haunt me.

These notes.

Cord of life ties you to Me.

Un - Tied knots of great consequence.

Pink. Red. White.

Good Grief - knots my stomach.

The Gall of the bladder.

Removed. For sanity.

Phantom insides. Lacking color.

But all the colors.

Are in You.

Love -

More than the color of pain and longing.

You -

Sparkle. Roy, G and Biv,

Invite me in. They did for a while.

I dyed. Something purple.

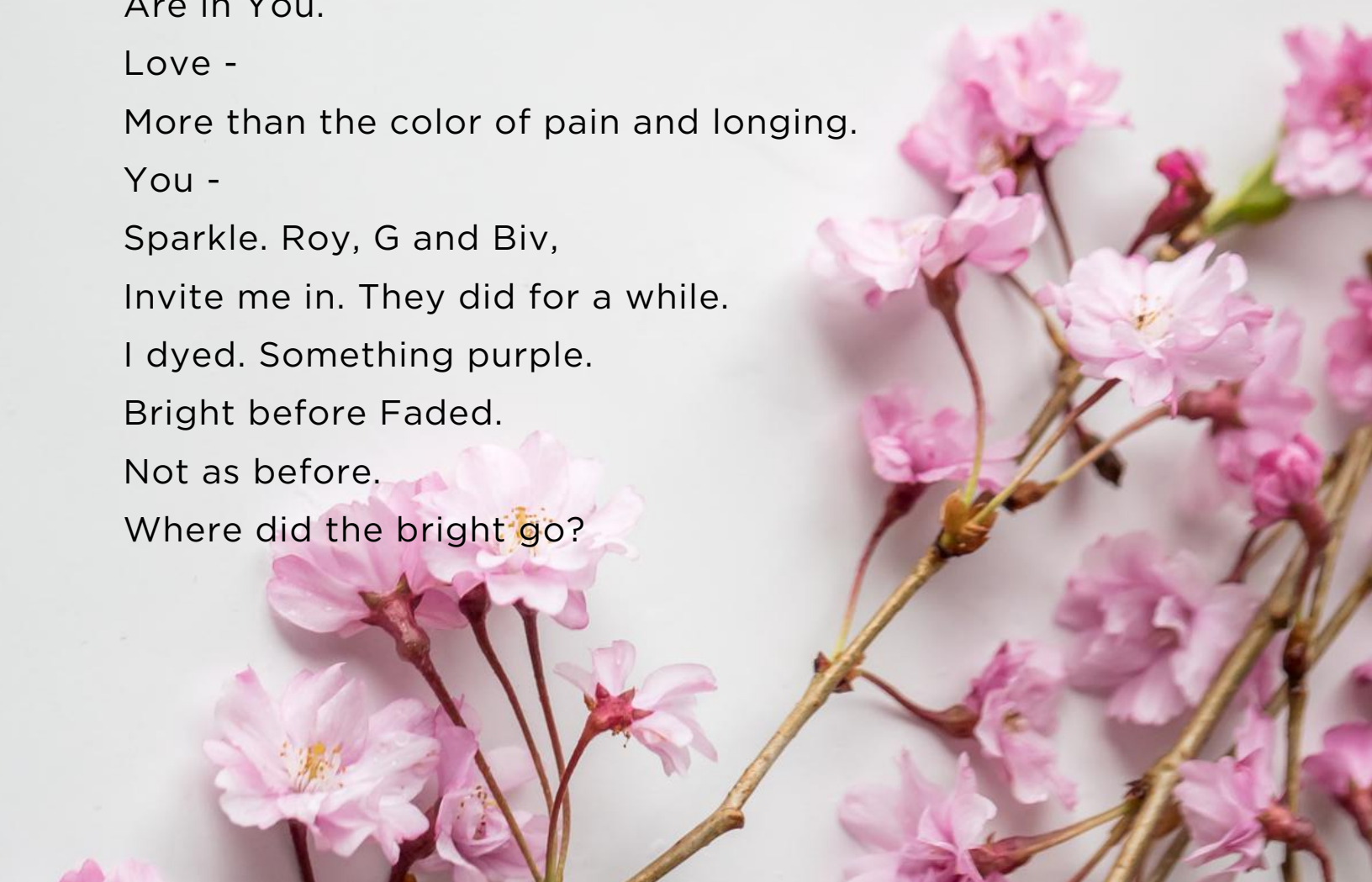
Bright before Faded.

Not as before.

Where did the bright go?

THE COLOR OF KNOTS

EMILY MILLER



Poetry

Insurmountable.

Understanding is the color of confusion.

Remembering the sand, the stones.

Hot - red, Brown, caramel.

Salt of the Dead Sea.

No rain to keep dry soothed.

It stings.

Then heals.

Blue. For you. Your eyes.

Made from Me.

The color mirrors are not what I C.

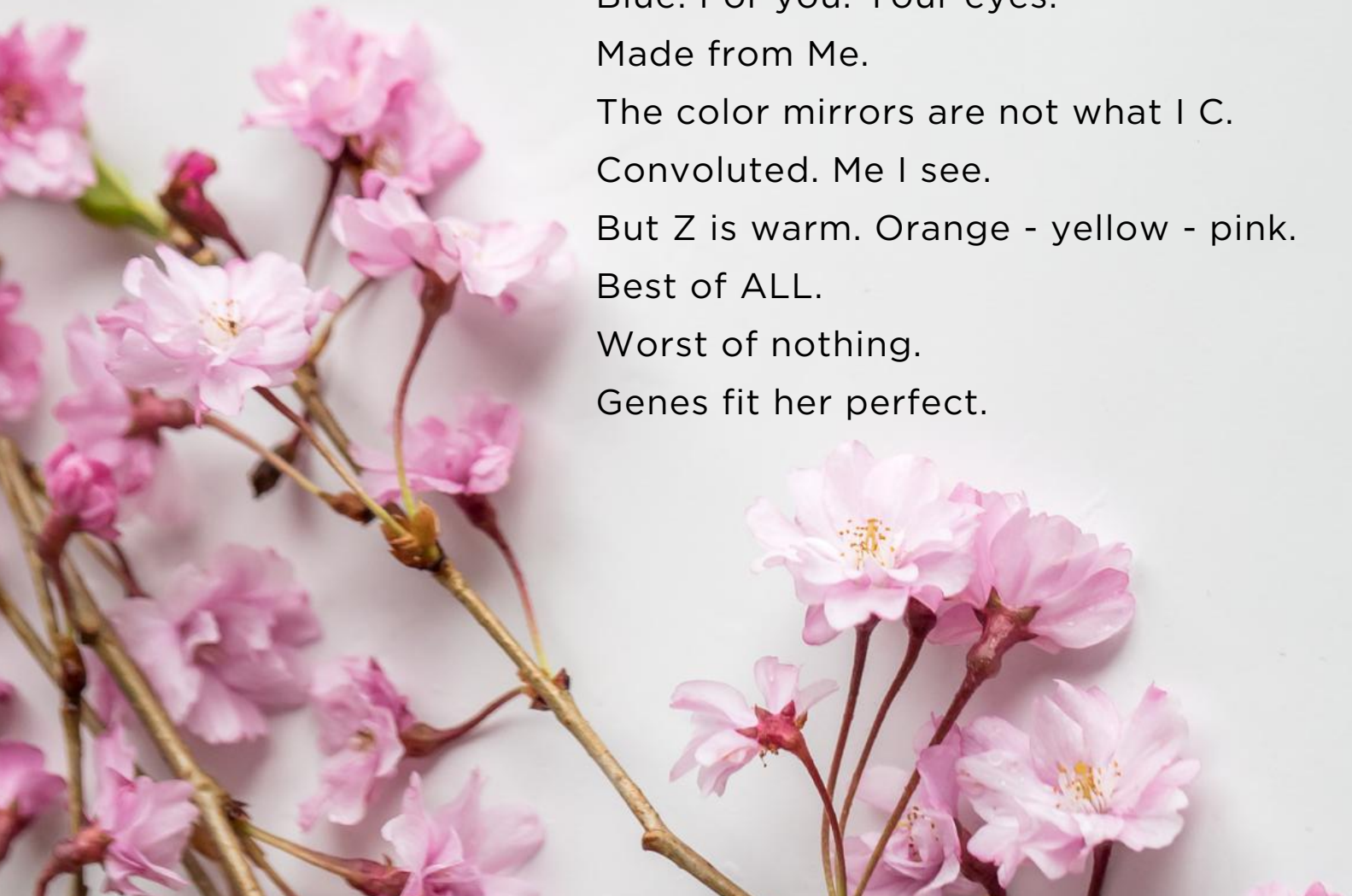
Convolutd. Me I see.

But Z is warm. Orange - yellow - pink.

Best of ALL.

Worst of nothing.

Genes fit her perfect.





Knots made from the Belt.
Hoping to hold up the Stars
if they will it.
Blue, black, indigo
Concealed in my cloak.
Tied and tried, knots of thoughts.
Thoughts of Nots.
Might eye slip to the Bottom.
Must knot spill these threads.
Loop our loops.
To keep the Found. A shin.

Spliced.
Light, never bent for me.
Might dread braided threads unravel?
Help me lost colors.
Want not to be dimmed
by everlasting formalities.
Only bend. To the things
never told in all times hours.
Knots steeped in Nots.
Reconfigured Regrets.
Surpass the Self.
When hitched to Blue.
Not slipping through.

Poetry

DISSOCIATION

DANI JOY

I'm floating now
My body sits inert
Lost hold of my tether; don't know the way back

I'm floating now
But urgently
Buzzing with energy; aswirl with anxious thoughts

I'm floating now
Following a program
Moving robotically through the day

I'm floating now
Bodily present
Mentally alone, unconnected, encased in fog

Can't stop floating now
I've run from the pain inside for too long

So I'm floating now
Losing my grasp on all I hold dear
Yearning to be present

Music

CONSTELLATIONS

JENNI ALPERT

(AKA CAMI OF CAMI AND DON)



VERSE

Where are you in my Constellation
Have you been searching too?
Celestial Bodies of creation
Each of us longing for the truth

Remnants of these broken planets
Scattered through the universe
Like asteroids of ancient granite
In endless cycles of rebirth

CHORUS

Cuz all we are
Are shining stars
Suspended in a boundless sky
Don't you know we're not too far
To heal what's just beneath
Together you and me
These primal wounds can't keep
Us from finding home

VERSE

Cosmic shades of second chances
Rays of hope around the sun
Making peace with circumstances
Hoping for peace for everyone

Listen to the
song here:

[YouTube.com/
constellations](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=constellations)

For more
of Jenni's
work go to:
jennialpert.com

For more of
Cami and Don's
Reunion Journey
go to:
youtubestory

CHORUS

Cuz all we are
Are shining stars
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Don't you know we're not too far
To heal what's just beneath
Together you and me
These primal wounds can't keep
Us from finding home

BRIDGE

Inside the telescope all is magnified
Light moves through time and space
Across the great divide
Beyond the distant starlight gleam
Where nothin's what it seems
There's no gravity

CHORUS

When all we are
Are shining stars
Suspended in a boundless sky
And we'll know we've come so far
Cuz we've healed what's just beneath
Together you and me
Primal wounds can't keep
Us from finding home



DECONSTRUCTING ADOPTION: ONE MOTHER'S ROAD

DANI JOY

Essay

I didn't go looking for the truth about adoption.

I wasn't bitter, angry and regretful. I had spent the last decade clinging determinedly to the belief that it was 'God's will' that my son should be adopted. And that I had done what was best for him.

I became a regular visitor in the adoptive family's home. I had the unicorn of open adoptions and told myself that this was good. This had been right. This was how adoption *should* be done.

I spent the intervening years distracting myself in a deeply unhealthy marriage and feeding my need to mother by taking care of a 6' 2" angry and demanding baby who never seemed to remain consoled for long.

All my life, I had been fed one encompassing worldview.

I was taught what to think — never *how* to think — about God, salvation, sex, purity, family, adoption, abortion, missions, other religions, and on and on. After my marriage ended, I had a lot of deconstructing to do and I started with race and the institution of white supremacy.

So when I joined a Facebook group focused on transracial adoption, it wasn't because I thought I had something to learn about adoption. Members of my white family had adopted transracially, and I longed to learn ways I could possibly become a corrective experience in those family members' lives.

I was prepared to hear hard things. I had already been in anti-racism spaces for a few years and had been mentored by a Black woman (RIP dear Lace) who taught me so many tools for staying in uncomfortable conversations and difficult relationships.

I thought I was ready.

But then I started hearing adoptees say words like abandoned, unwanted, and unloved. And I started feeling defensive. And the ground under my feet felt unsteady.

I had come here to learn tools to de-weaponize my whiteness, not to hear that the very hardest thing I ever did, the thing that was supposed to be **best** for my son and 'God's will', the thing that supposedly *redeemed me*, might actually have felt like abandonment and been traumatic in his tiny infant brain and body.

I was suddenly grateful for the tools I had learned. I did a lot of stepping away from my computer and taking deep breaths, but I also kept listening.

I defended myself but only in my head. Online, I stayed quiet **and kept listening**. And slowly my fists began to unclench and in tiny increments, I opened my mind to the idea that, here too, intentions mattered far less than impact.

The more I listened, the more I learned. I learned that it is common

for children who were adopted as infants to think that something was wrong with them or some reason their mothers had abandoned them — regardless of being told over and over:

She loved you so much, she gave you to us because she wanted you to have a better life.

I learned that in fact, that very narrative is not the reassurance that many adoptive parents may think it will be. That narrative teaches that loving means leaving and can contribute to abandonment fears and attachment struggles.

I learned, piece by piece, that pretty much everything I had ever thought or been told about adoption was not true but rather, a carefully crafted narrative that upholds a wildly lucrative industry.

I learned about falsified records and sealed states and what "open adoption" actually means.....and what it does not.

I learned that adoptees are not a monolith and we cannot, nor should we try, to fit all experiences into one mold.

Stages of Awareness

I spent a few years learning how much of a hold the “rainbows and unicorns” narrative around adoption has on our society; and how much more nuanced and complicated the truth is.

I unpacked the financial pieces and finally understood why I had felt so uncomfortable when family members shared on social media their fundraiser to adopt one of their kids. That money they were raising would have more than enabled me to parent my son.

I learned that for many mothers, as little as \$1,000 would have made the difference.

I learned terms like *family preservation*, and how to talk to people who, for some bizarre reason, think those words mean I want to leave abused/unwanted babies in dumpsters.

But I balked when anyone tried to imply I had been coerced. Yes, the system was coercive, manipulative, and predatory. But my situation was different, and *I* had not been coerced.

No one tells me what to do!

I wrote in my journal about how I told my family this needed to be MY decision. This was after a family meeting had been called to talk about “what we should do now that Dani is pregnant.”

I remember reiterating that statement when my mom and dad let me know that they had spoken again with a sibling and their spouse and were concerned about what my decision would be.

“But I balked when anyone tried to imply I had been coerced. Yes, the system was coercive, manipulative, and predatory. But my situation was different, and I had not been coerced.”

This particular sibling and their spouse had told me at the family meeting that in order to be forgiven, we must repent. Repent means to turn fully away from the sin. And in order to turn fully away from MY sin, I must relinquish my son to adoption, they said.

There are reasons (that tell too much of other peoples' stories) why a relationship with my child's father wasn't an option and my sibling and their spouse believed that if I parented my son, I would be remaining linked to the sin I had chosen.

They said that if I chose to remain in sin, they would have no choice but to excommunicate me.

So when my parents mentioned the conversation and asked me for my decision, I wrote in my journal *"I am feeling the weight of my whole family to be on my shoulders. I feel like it is totally on me to make a decision that will hold my family together. This is way too much pressure and stress for me."*

And yet, I remained steadfast. This was to be MY decision.

It is notable to me now that not only did one sibling threaten me with permanent loss of relationship, every other person in the room that day (parents and siblings) stayed completely silent in the face of that threat.

Another sibling had offered me the huge gift of childcare if I decided to parent. It was less than a week later that they called me to say they needed to rescind the offer. *"I believe adoption is God's will for your baby",* they said, *"and I think I will be encouraging you to go against God's will if I offer this help."*

And so I made MY decision but it took me YEARS to be able to look at — to truly see and acknowledge — the ways my family absolutely contributed to that choice.

Who is to blame?

This story is not about finding blame although if you want to look, I'm guessing there is plenty to go around, and I will own my fair share.

This story is simply the story of my unpacking the truth. It has been hard. I have cried many tears and continue to do so. It has been painful and challenged many relationships.

And it probably is not complete.

Op - Ed

In the last few years, there's been a flood of articles and commentaries regarding surrogacy, looking at the impact of the war, surrogacy market research, and even a NYT feature that highlighted a growing lack of surrogate mothers in the United States. But there's a massive oversight in these media offerings: nowhere are the ethics of surrogacy mentioned.

THE ETHICS OF SURROGACY

CANDACE CAHILL

Surrogacy is an arrangement, usually supported by a legal agreement, whereby a woman agrees to bear a child for another person or people who will become the child's parent after birth. There are multiple variables, such as the origins of the eggs and sperm, but essentially, surrogacy involves renting a woman's womb to carry a child.

Those in favor of surrogacy point out that women voluntarily "choose" to be surrogates and are paid, but there are few wealthy and middle-class women who sign up to be surrogates. And except for a family member or close friend choosing to carry a child for another, surrogacy contracts involve payments to entice women. This is the reason even the Pope came out in opposition to surrogacy. While coercion and exploitation of the poor prevent the sale of human organs, laws that include a similar ban on gametes and wombs are lacking in the US and many other countries, including India, Thailand, Ukraine, and Russia. This needs to change, or at the very least, we need internationally recognized laws to protect surrogates and prevent the commodification of wombs. Many countries, like Italy, Spain, France, Portugal, Bulgaria, and Germany, prohibit surrogacy in all forms, defining it as exploitative and recognizing it as baby-selling, making it universally illegal.

And what about the children—the entire reason and the end goal? They are seldom mentioned in articles and stories about surrogacy. For a society whose policies claim to have the child's best interests as a guide, there is no acknowledgment that surrogate-born children experience the primal wound; just like infants placed for adoption, they develop a relationship with their birth mother in utero.

I sympathize with the plight of those who desire a child, but surrogacy is unethical and just another branch of

the multi-billion-dollar child-procurement industry. Gametes are being bought and sold via third-party brokers, just like children obtained by baby-brokers in adoption-land. Purchase of donor eggs, attempts to be the highest bidder to acquire a surrogate, and bumping up the ante by offering “other compensation,” all provide crystal clear imagery for even the least knowledgeable reader: babies are big-business commodities, along with women's wombs, and surrogacy is just child trafficking in sheep's clothing.

SOURCES:

[In a Kyiv Basement, 19 Surrogate Babies Are Trapped by War but Kept Alive by Nannies](#)

[Ukraine's Surrogacy Industry Has Put Women in Impossible Positions](#)

[Surrogacy Market Report](#)

[Desperately Seeking Surrogates](#)

[Who Becomes a Surrogate?](#)

[Francis Urges Ban on Surrogacy, Calling It 'Despicable'](#)

[Reuters: Which countries allow commercial surrogacy?](#)

[How Mother-Child Separation Causes Neurobiological Vulnerability Into Adulthood](#)

[Relinquishment Trauma: The Forgotten Trauma](#)

[The Baby Brokers: Inside America's Murky Private-Adoption Industry](#)

Op - Ed

Corruption and coercion, along with human rights violations, were the most damning findings in the South Korean Truth and Reconciliation Commission on adoptions released just last month. The report covered the first 100 of 367 complaints brought to the government by international adoptees from eleven countries. It found that the government's adoption program was rife with corruption throughout its existence, beginning in 1953 at the end of the Korean War. The Commission demanded that the nation open all of its adoption records and offer a formal apology to children adopted out of that Asian nation, the world's largest baby exporter.

The report of the South Korean truth commission is horrifying, but it's not surprising, at least not to me, a birth mother who relinquished a son in 1967 in Boston. What's horrifying is that those most involved, parents and babies, were deceived and mistreated,

SOUTH KOREAN ADOPTION 'FRAUD AND ABUSE' JULIA MACDONNELL CHANG

and had so little power over their own futures. But it's never surprising when adoption programs, formal or otherwise, descend into corruption; when what may have begun with good intentions evolves into self-dealing. This happens – over and over again – because of the wealth and passion of those desiring to become parents, and the lack of resources -the poverty – of the parents giving birth. The only mediators appear to be adoption agencies whose greed oversteps their ethics. For many decades, this has apparently happened in South Korea.

“What's horrifying is that those most involved, parents and babies, were deceived and mistreated, and had so little power over their own futures.”

In a recent Washington Post op-ed, Korean adoptee Laura Manley details her heart-rending search for her birth mother with whom she was reunited in 2014 after ten visits to her natal country. After her birth, “my birth mother was left devastated and without support,” she writes. “In the aftermath of the Korean War, single mothers in South Korea faced intense stigma and shame. Raising a child alone wasn’t just difficult—it was nearly impossible... She was urged to place me in an orphanage temporarily to give her time to stabilize her life, believing she could find a foster family, and we would soon be reunited she agreed.”

But when, several months later, Manley’s mother, returned to the orphanage to retrieve her, her baby was gone – adopted to the United States. All the mother had was a photo that she’d secretly paid for, “the only remnant of the daughter she had lost.” More than 30 years would pass before she saw that daughter again.

While the golden fairy tale of adoption as a ‘win/win’ underpins

these stories of mass adoption, Manley’s essay shows that each one is deeply personal and emotional with enduring grief at its heart.

The adoption program in South Korea began when Harry and Bertha Holt, evangelical Christians from Oregon, adopted eight Korean ‘orphans.’ These were mixed-race children, their fathers American soldiers, many of them black. Such children would be shunned in the Korean culture. Early on, the Holts, who founded Holt International Services of Children, were joined by other agencies.

“*But what began with apparent good intentions, an evangelical mission to save children, soon evolved into something else, what I would call baby brokering.*”

But what began with apparent good intentions, an evangelical mission to save children, soon evolved into something else, what I would call baby brokering. This was motivated by the money Europeans and Americans could pay to bring these children ‘home.’ The human rights of the mothers and their children were not on the agenda.

The Commission investigated adoptions that took place between 1964 and 1999. They were only a few of a vast adoption boom in Korea that saw 200,000 babies and toddlers sent abroad. (All of these children were categorized as orphans, though most had at least one living parent.) This mirrors the Anglophile “Baby Scoop” in which millions of babies in English-speaking countries, including my son, were taken from their birth families and given to others with the means to pay the many fees related to adoption.

The South Korean commission found that the government, through several adoption agencies, supported birth parents being lied to and coerced, as long as the steep fees were paid by the adopting parents. The most egregious violations were falsified birth records, changing the true identities of the adoptees and their birth parents with no records kept. Countless South Korean births were never registered. Without birth certificates, newborns are vulnerable to many human rights violations. Only with the introduction of commercial data bases in the past 20 years, have adoptees discovered a way to sometimes find their true genetic identity. Until the truth commission’s report, this was never a matter of

concern to the South Korean government. They’d figured out, early on, that sending native children to other countries was easier and more cost effective than setting up a social welfare system to support and protect vulnerable infants and children, not to mention their mothers.

Most effectively, the government declared infants and children to be orphans when they had living parents. And the agencies, unchallenged, clung to their go-to stories that the child had been abandoned when one or both of its parents stood outside the orphanage begging to retrieve their child.

South Korea is only the latest country to reveal wide-scale malfeasance related to adoption and family separation. In 2013, as the result of a national outcry over its forced adoptions, the government of Australia officially apologized for what has been called its half century of ‘baby farming,’ forcing an estimated 250,000 mothers to relinquish their babies. In 2021, the United Church of Canada apologized for its “regretful and damaging role in pressured, coerced, or forced” adoptions of First Nations people. Also in Canada, during a visit in the summer of 2022, Pope Francis apologized to “all victims” of family

separation at Indian Residential Schools run by the Catholic Church. At least 130,000 native children were taken from their families, most of whom were beaten, denied food, and many of whom died. "I humbly beg forgiveness for the evil committed by so many Christians," said the pope in his unprecedented apology.

And then there's Ireland where another 'truth' commission apologized in 2017 for its treatment of unmarried mothers and their babies. The apology noted the "appalling level of infant mortality" in the country's mother-and-baby homes from which more than 60,000 children were adopted without maternal consent. The government and the Irish Catholic Church combined to offer \$900 million in compensation to mothers and children impacted by the practice. The sorting of those payments continues today.

Every mass program of adoption is the same and every one is different. Mass adoptions are the same, no matter what the country, because profound loss by child and mother

remains an indelible part of the transaction, resonating forever in their lives. They're the same because one family, the birth family including the child in question, is left devastated while the other family moves forward into the golden dream of adoption as a win/win.

But every program of mass adoption is also different because of the intentions of the purveyors, and their levels of human decency. So far, no overt cruelty has been ascribed to the South Korean adoption program, as was the case in Romania and other Eastern European countries. Countless Korean adoptees have grown into successful lives in other countries, surrounded by love and care. They're known to be the good adoptees. The worst one can say about the adopting parents – so far – is their naivete, believing the fabulous tales told to them by the agencies. But as the truth has leaked out, it turns out that, no, the streets of Seoul were never lined with abandoned infants. The South Korean adoption program, the world's oldest, has shut down.

Julia MacDonnell Chang is a birth mother and an adoptive mother who writes often about adoption issues. Her most recent book is the memoir, *Hidden Girls: A Birth Mother's Story of Reunion and Reckoning*.

Link to PBS documentary about South Korea: *South Korea's Adoption Reckoning*.

Link to Laura Manley's essay: *Lies to me from my birth mother. 30 years later, I found her.*

It's not often that CUB's relinquishing mothers have the opportunity to celebrate with a mother who narrowly missed becoming part of our ranks. Today we hold up and rejoice with "Ms. T" who found herself in difficult circumstances. Pregnant and already parenting a 3 year old daughter, Ms. T could not envision how she could possibly accomplish the task before her of parenting two tiny ones all by herself. So doing the best that she knew how, she moved forward with a plan of adoption with a couple, with whom she was close friends.

MOTHERHOOD REDEEMED

LESLIE PATE MACKINNON

In the weeks following her son's birth, she experienced doubts as to the wisdom of the plan and began searching for answers from those who had experience in this realm. Numerous posts on Reddit encouraged her to contact CUB. Being a bright and inquisitive young mom, she went to CUB's website and signed up for an on-line Birth/First Parent support group. When she shared her story, she was met with understanding and concern for her predicament, one with which the other mothers were well acquainted. The group was kind, considerate and mindful of Ms. T's fragile, post-partum physical condition.

Ms. T's group facilitator followed up a few days after that fateful Saturday to offer support and resources. Within just a few days, Ms. T had become determined to find a way to parent her infant son. Friends and family stepped up offering support to the little family of three. Within a week, T's mother, the grandmother to the little ones, arrived to assist. With the help of Ms. T's auntie, the family made their way back to the grandmother's home, several states away.

In follow up contacts, Ms. T and her entire family have extended their heartfelt thanks to CUB, first for being there. Second for offering support to countless women caught in the same hopeless conundrum, by shining a light on ways to overcome the temporary overwhelm. And finally, for not pushing Ms. T into a decision but allowing her the time and space to line up the essential support required for a new mother to successfully parent.

“On this this Mother’s Day, join us in celebrating Ms. T, her lovely family members, and the CUB community who came together to prevent this precious little boy from being separated from his clan.”

The African proverb rings ever so true: It takes a village to raise a child. On this this Mother’s Day, join us in celebrating Ms. T, her lovely family members, and the CUB community who came together to prevent this precious little boy from being separated from his clan. I do believe angels ring a bell in heaven to commemorate these miraculous events.



.....

Reading this brought up so many emotions. I relived each aspect of this article all over again. I am honored to be represented in this article and I truly hope my story can touch the hearts of many other families. I wish I had better words to describe how I feel. I'm grateful to you and the CUB meetings. The information that was provided to me felt like my eyes were open for the first time since making the initial decision to place my little chunky monkey in another family's care. What the CUB organization is doing is incredible. I was blessed to have found out about it. And blessed again when you reached out. In a way I feel saved.

My mother also cannot express in enough words how truly happy and elated she is to have all 3 of us home with her. The chance to be a grandmother to her first grandson and the joy on her face each evening she comes home serves as a reminder of how much we are truly loved. She is forever grateful for you taking the time to act upon your gut feeling and reaching out to me to help in any way. May you and your team be greatly blessed because you each are doing God’s work and literally saving lives.

*Thank you so very much,
Ms. T*

SAVE THE DATE: OCT 17-18, 2025



CUB ANNUAL RETREAT

SAVE THE DATE! October 17-18, 2025

The Georgian Terrace

659 Peachtree St NE, Atlanta, GA 30308

Atlanta!

We can't wait to get together in person at the lovely Georgian Terrance in Atlanta, Georgia! This is an opportunity to create new memories, connect with old friends, and meet and make new ones. We will also relax, learn, heal, and GROW! We are busy working on a great program for you this year so plan now to join us for this very special and memorable time together!

Please check the CUB website to make sure your membership is up to date so you will get the discounted early registration price when it becomes available. If you are not a member yet, please consider joining us today! A membership special and all that is included with your membership is detailed on the next page. Now is a great time to sign up!

The CUB Retreat hotel discount will be available soon, so please watch for retreat registration, itinerary and speaker updates in the days ahead.

MEMBERSHIP SPECIAL!

Mother's Day through Father's Day

May 11th through June 15th

Get a 10% Discount

**with a new CUB Membership or
renewal of an expired CUB Membership**

Join here: [CUB Membership](#)

Use code: cubmothersfathers2025

Memberships support CUB's important work as the only national organization focused on birthparents – their experience, healing and wisdom.

Memberships include our many in-person groups around the country, our monthly CUB Zoom peer led support groups including our Writing Group, our online forum and a discount on the annual retreat.

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Join here: [CUB Membership](#)

CUB ZOOM Monthly Peer Led Groups

Constellation Support Group

Every 2nd Sunday

11AM PST / 2PM EST (2 hrs)

Register here: [CUB Constellation Group](#)

Birth/First Parents Support Group

Every 3rd Saturday

11AM PST / 2PM EST (90 min)

Register here: [CUB Support Group](#)

Birth/First Parents Writing Group

Every 3rd Sunday

3PM PST / 6PM EST (90 min)

Register here: [CUB Writing Group](#)



We stand with Adoptees.



**We believe an adopted person's
right to their own original birth
certificate is absolute.**

And we celebrate with all the Adoptees in the state of Georgia after legislation was passed earlier this year granting them access to their OBC's! We applaud the Adoptees & Birth Parents and all those in the Georgia Alliance for Adoptee Rights who worked tirelessly to make this happen.

WAY TO GO!

Georgia was the 16th state to pass laws for unrestricted access to Adoptees to their original birth certificates.

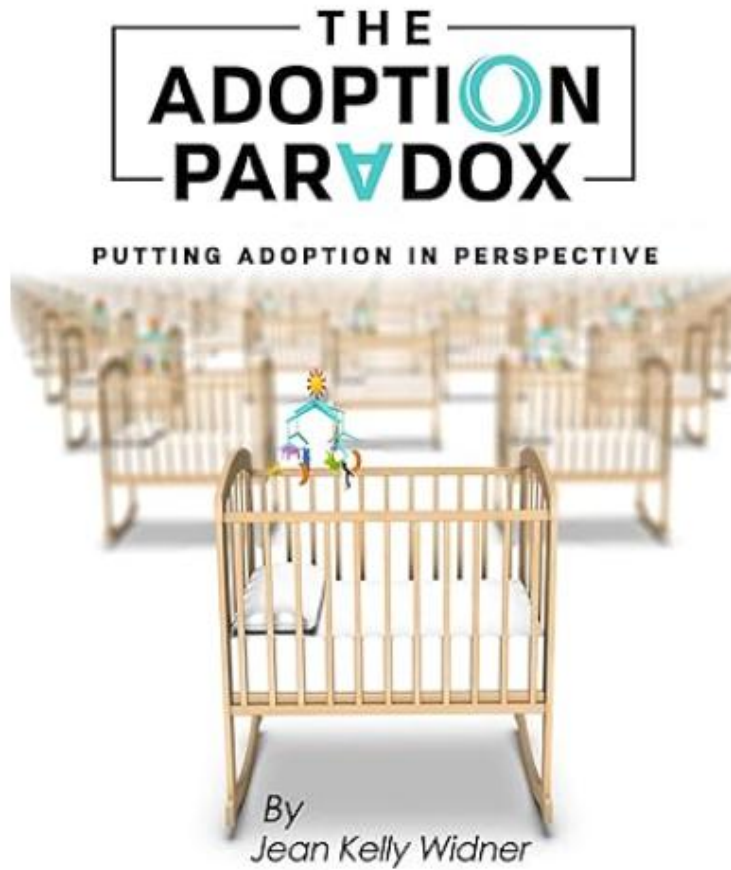
We still have a long way to go!

Find more resources and printable materials that you can take to legislators here:

[CUB stands with Adoptees](#)

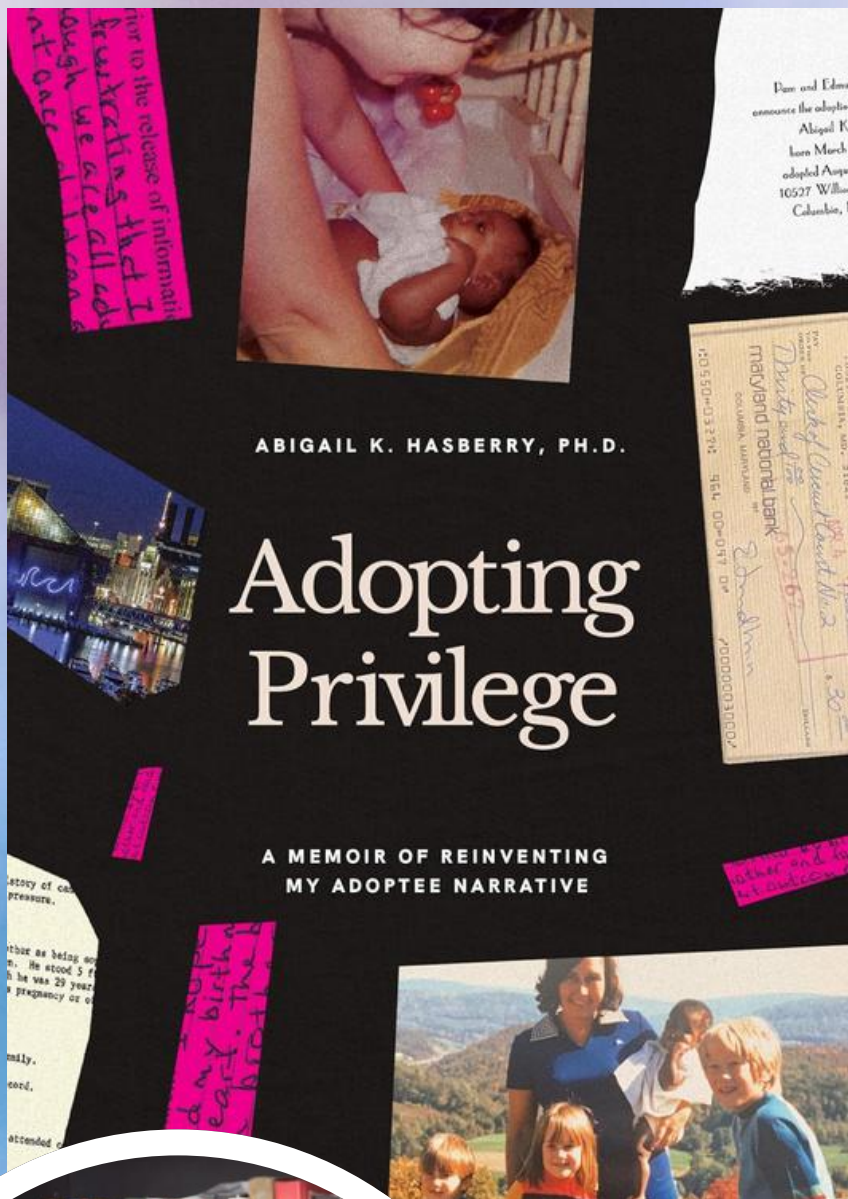
LAUNCHES MAY 20TH!

Pre-order here:
[Adoption Paradox](#)



Author Jean Kelly Widner

HOT OFF THE PRESS!



Order here:
[Adopting Privilege](#)

Author
Dr. Abigail Hasberry



We Need You!

We had a record number of submissions for this edition with many thanks due to Candace Cahill & Beth Jaffe for their continued hard work in the Writing Group.

We all heal by sharing our stories,
so please continue to share!

All creative forms of expression are welcome for consideration. We are happy to have so many different kinds to bring in this one! Please consider writing a book review or film/show review so we can continue to share about helpful resources too.

Please be encouraged this weekend!
Our community is doing great things, and
we are so glad you are a part of it!
We seek to honor you this
weekend and always!