

# John Lewis

I do not wish to return to my adoption story like a dog to its vomit, however interesting, grotesque, and fascinating it may be to me, informative and entertaining as it may be to others,

Suffice to say that I was legally adopted soon after birth in Victoria (1952) from the Methodist Babies Home. My biological mother was "fostered" within her mother's extended family in England (her mother apparently being on the Autism spectrum and becoming the family's "black sheep").

My mother came to Australia as a "ten pound Pom", and met my father, who came to Australia as a "reffo" from German labour camps via England via Bonegilla. Paternalistic welfare intervened, and my mother "did what was best for the baby". My biological parents subsequently had my three sisters, and continued to try to make contact with me over the next thirty years, until after my father's death I was able to meet my mother and sisters via Jigsaw and the 1984 reforms in Victoria.

My adoptive mother, who was a relinquishing mother in World War II, had family connections with the Methodist Church, and despite her shameful secret was able to adopt me with her husband, a war veteran with low self-esteem and a drinking problem. They told me I was adopted when I was thirteen, and it was never mentioned again until I confronted them about it twenty years later and my adoptive mother burst into tears and told me about her relinquished son.

She later sought reunion with him, and discovered him in a NSW prison, probably "never to be released". He had been abused by his adoptive parents, run away, become involved in juvenile offending, been incarcerated most of his life, etc etc...

My file was one of several "in Sister Twyford's bottom drawer" at the Methodist Babies' Home, apparently because of my adoptive family's personal connections with the church network, so I was "lucky" my records came to light at all. My adoptive parents were "told by the judge" not to tell me I was adopted until I was twenty-one, and almost did so.

I continue to seek information from England about my grandmother, whose Intellectual Disability apparently contributed to my mother being "fostered", which in turn contributed to her low self-esteem and lack of assertiveness, which in turn enabled her to become a relinquishing mother.

At that time there was no social support for single mothers, and there were no immigration support services available to assist my parents in dealing with the various bureaucracies which kept them separated from each other and from me prior to my adoption.

Secrecy was imposed by legislation and custom, and I thus grew up in a world like Peter Weir's "The Truman Show", a replacement for my adoptive mother's relinquished son, an inadequate substitute for the children my infertile adoptive parents could not have.

Having returned to the story as I hoped not to do, I'll now try to get to some opinions:

Adoption's main function is to provide children for the infertile, and all the blah blah about the child's best interests is just that, blah blah.

If it were not, adequate resources and social policy would be directed to enabling parents to care for their children. The reduced number of "healthy baby" adoptions as a consequence of legislative and social change in Victoria since 1984 is evidence that with adequate social support, parents will choose to care for their own children. The infertile couples now raid the Third World "in the best interests of the child".

My family's story over several generations demonstrates that people with disabilities and their families need appropriate support; that single parents need appropriate support; that immigrants need appropriate support; that social workers and other professionals need to be conscientious in their professional practice and their record-keeping; that social policy needs to be constantly reviewed; that people who are unable to have their own children need to be supported in coping with that reality.

Finally, it is my opinion that adoption should be replaced by Permanent Care, and/or "Open Adoption", as the secrecy and denial of reality involved in traditional "closed" adoption constitutes for the adopted person the denial of a fundamental human right: to know who you are; and for the relinquishing parent, a lifetime of grief.

There are a lot of words here. None of them can ever express how it feels to be the victim of a bad "closed" adoption.

Ask the Jews about the Holocaust.

Ask the aborigines about the Stolen Generation.

Thanks

John Lewis