

Judith Hendriksen

I am a Natural Mother who was the victim, as was my first born, to an illegal and forced adoption in 1973. This happened to many Mothers thousands in fact here in Australia I assure you from about 1940 to early 1980. I will not refer nor allow others to refer to me as either a birth Mother or a relinquishing mother. Both titles are degrading and inaccurate. As to what really happened. I am not a mere incubator as a birth mother suggests just of use until you have given birth then brutally discarded, nor am I a relinquishing mother. I never gave my permission for my precious first born, baby, a daughter to be snatched so barbarically from me the minute she was born on my 17th birthday 11-9-1973 and put up for adoption. Nor did I ask to be heavily sedated and given anti lactation medication. Nor have I ever found any Mother who willingly gave up a baby or child for adoption and doubt I ever will. I always wanted and loved my baby but was denied my Motherhood by others who should have known better.

I was told so many lies at the time by the nun's just one being since I was a minor I had no rights. I found out some 13 years later after joining a support group that I did in fact have rights after all and realized then I had been tricked all along. At the time of my daughter's birth I was her Sole legal Guardian, my parents, the nuns the doctors and midwifery staff were not. No one told me that "deliberately". I asked three times on 3 different days to see my baby but the nuns reply was always the same, its not your baby. The most vivid memory I have after birth was when I was leaking milk from my breasts in the bathroom. In my head I recall thinking I would like to feed my baby natures natural Mothers milk. I was refused access to my own baby, and instead was told to stay put and given tablets quite a few I was told these were to dry my milk up, then the nun put a binder tightly around my breasts even that one act was abusive brutal and barbaric to say the least. My baby was never referred to as my baby even before she was born I was told "its not your baby". This was highly illegal under the law of the day, and yet this abuse was widespread and common practice within Australia. Its not a lot different to war crimes in my opinion this fundamental abuse of power and denial of basic human rights over the weaker more vulnerable members of society in our case "unwed unsupported Mothers" by those in authority. I don't think the perpetrators of these adoptions crimes ever thought that their victims would one day hold them accountable for past practices. And of course adoption being closed then they very nearly did get away with it had not the adoption laws changed and or we had remained silent and did what we were told at the time to simply forget it and get on with our lives. As if we really could go and pretend it never happened. Did they really think we could???? I didnt know for 15 years if my daughter was alive or dead. Is this any way to treat Loving Caring Mothers? No its not. Taking babies off their Mothers as happened not so long ago was wrong and should never have happened. I am doing all in my power NOW to make sure what happened to me and thousands of others will never happen ever again either here or overseas. Sadly now it seems the poorer countries are losing their children to the richer countries mainly because they are poverty stricken.

There has never been any doubt in my mind back then and now that those Nuns wanted my baby off me, regardless of what I wanted. Not once during my pregnancy or after birth was adoption ever discussed with me Ever I was simply told.

In March this year 2010 I received a written apology, by the sisters of Mercy Perth for the part they played in taking my baby from me against my express wishes "I don't want my baby adopted out". I have been on the news TV channels Win and Gwn here in WA. Three papers the West Australian being just one of them, published the Story, heading read "Nuns Sorry For Forced Adoption" and dated 8th April 2010 this in Ref to the apology I received. The public support I have received has been fantastic many others mainly Mothers who lost their beloved children to adoption rang and thanked me for having the courage to speak out stating the truth. Telling it like it was as opposed to the lies and myths about adoption that are sadly still being promoted today. It makes me so angry, understandably. One such myth for example being "that we didn't want or love our babies". Nothing in fact could be further from the truth. That is what many people want to believe so they can still go on justifying adoptions.

I lost my baby due to one reason and one only I was an unwed unsupported Mother.

My parents blindly followed the advice from our local GP in a small country town who happened to be Catholic we are not. He said that adoption is the only option as a single teenager and he also highly praised St Annes unmarried mothers home in Perth WA. My parents sent me there when I was about 4 or 5 months pregnant, so they wouldn't have to face the shame I had supposedly put on them, by getting myself pregnant. My mum didn't tell me the facts of life I was very naive about sexual matters and wasn't well informed. On the night I conceived a young man three years my senior whom my brother and I knew, was asked by my brother if he could give me a lift home. He did eventually take me home, but only after he had taken advantage of me first. I was a virgin at the time and didn't even know I had full sex or not. So finding out I was pregnant came as a big shock to me. No shock however could ever compare to when I was raped of my first born the minute of her birth.

When I returned home to country town after my baby was stolen from me I went off the deep end so to speak???? I still hid myself in my parents house for a time, not sure how long exactly as even though not pregnant then must have still felt the shame. I did however venture outdoors at night and can recall walking in my pyjamas late at night searching for my baby everywhere in the streets and gardens. I guess my brain couldn't accept that my baby was truly gone. My parents didn't know what to do with me. At the time of my 6-week post delivery check up that same doctor gave me a script for the pill and Valium. I recall thinking at the time that the pill was of no use to me I wasn't ever having sex ever again. I also attempted suicide once, the pain and grief on the loss of my daughter was too much to bear and I would at that time have welcomed death. When I lost my baby I felt numb, violated, shocked and deeply traumatized' I felt dead inside". Now the tables have turned, and the nuns have admitted at long last to the part they played in robbing me of my beloved daughter. We should have never been parted. I did tell a nun about two weeks before my daughter's birth that I don't want my baby adopted out. I was told it is not your baby and how could you be so selfish to even ask there are many deserving married infertile Christian couples who have everything a baby could want you have nothing. You can go have a baby of your own when you get married.

I did have a reunion in 1996 but sadly my daughter wants nothing to do with me. I doubt she believed me when I told her she was illegally taken from me. Maybe she knows better now. I have in fact never lied to her about anything and that is probably why I surmise she isn't in my life now, it was all too hard for her to make sense of.

I recently watched the DVD entitled "The Magdalene Sisters" this is based on a true story. The setting being in Ireland and these "so called fallen women" were sent there and forced to work in what was known as the Magdalene laundries. This laundry only closed down as recently as 1996.

I will close off with these two quotes the first being from current Prime Ministers Kevin Rudd he said,

"One of the worse things in this world was to separate a Mother from her child".

I hope that word WAS gets the message across the world, and that we do stop separating family members so unnecessarily as was done in past adoptions practices here in Australia.

The second quote on closing unsure of author.

"It is not the nature of love to force a relationship but it is the nature of love to open the way".