[Senate Inquiry Regarding Forced Adoption Practices Submission]

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Re: Senate Inquiry Into "Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption Policies and Practices"

Dear Committee:

I would like to be able to present a full submission to the above Inquiry.

I am the Director of the Baby Scoop Era Research Initiative ("BSERI"), an organization founded in 2007 and devoted to the study of improper, unethical and forced adoption practices in the United States of America, especially during the Baby Scoop Era ("BSE"). I am also the founder and former President of OriginsUSA which was formally affiliated with the Origins branches around the world. I subsequently resigned and founded the Baby Scoop Era Research Initiative which has continued to work very closely with Origins, Inc. NSW, Origins Canada and Trackers International UK. Recently the Origins organizations and its affiliates united to form Origins International.

BSERI is dedicated to research and education of the period of American adoption history known as the Baby Scoop Era. The Baby Scoop Era occurred in the United States post-World War II to 1973. BSERI is established on principles of historical accuracy, truth and justice. We demand acknowledgment of the historical truth surrounding adoption practices in the United States during the BSE. We demand recognition for the millions of women who were systematically denied their inalienable right to raise their infant sons and daughters.

Today I offer my letter as my personal and formal submission and ask that it be included with the submissions from exiled mothers who were also robbed of their newborns in Australia, the United States and elsewhere around the world.

At the age of seventeen, and a senior in high school, I was ripped from my school overnight and deposited in two different "wage" homes, one of which was abusive as I was forced to serve alcohol at their parties and paraded around as "their little unwed mother." When I was seven months pregnant, I was then made to live at the maternity "home" full time as an "inmate." Here I was to learn my fate from the other girls: I would be expected to surrender my baby. I never had any education about what was happening physically during my

pregnancy. I was not told about labor and delivery. These methods were intentional and meant to keep us terrorized and compliant. I received no counseling except from my social caseworker which was “you must give up your baby to a married couple,” “you are not worthy to keep THE baby,” “you will go on with your life and forget.”

No one was with me when I was taken to the hospital and told to get out of the taxi and go in and “tell them you’re from the maternity home.” No one was with me while I labored and gave birth. No caseworker, no family member... no one. It was extremely traumatizing. I was never told I could keep my baby. I was never told I could get child support and welfare (for a short time). I was never told anything that would have respected my civil and legal rights. Instead my newborn was removed from my arms at the maternity “home” when she was ten days old and I was told she was given to a “good family.” Decades later I found out that she was, in fact, in foster care for months before being officially adopted. I never spoke to a lawyer. The agency’s lawyer handled all paperwork. I was never asked or told to read what I signed. I was never even given a copy of the surrender papers, not even after reuniting with my daughter thirty years later. This is a conflict of interest and signing was not fully informed. It was not informed at all.

These people shamed, blamed, manipulated, and coerced me into signing away the rights to my own child. I never knew I had a right to keep her. The workers told me “THE baby” already belonged to a married couple who could give her everything” that I could not. The adoption social workers never told me I could keep or how to go about making that happen. It was their social duty to do so! I worked for over 35 years and paid into welfare. I should have been able to use it when I needed to for a short time. I was abused as a 17 year old girl. Terrorized and traumatized. For thirty years I lived without knowing where my flesh and blood firstborn was or how she was or even if she was alive. There is no worse fate for a mother and no worse fate for a child than to be torn apart forever!

These people deliberately caused harm. They knew what they were doing. In fact, many talked about it being wrong yet did nothing to change their operating methods. They clearly wanted to keep the supply of babies coming in order to further their fledgling profession and pad their payroll:

“Because there are many more married couples wanting to adopt newborn white babies than there are babies, it may almost be said that they, rather than out of wedlock babies are a social problem. (Sometimes social workers in adoption agencies have facetiously suggested setting up social provisions for more ‘baby breeding’.)” SOCIAL WORK AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS, “Unmarried Mothers,” Helen Harris Perlman, National Association of Social Workers (1964)

All adoption workers cared about was taking my baby and giving it to married people whom they deemed to be more worthy than me! I had no recourse to that outcome. I didn’t have a job. (Who could work when forced to l I’ve in a maternity “home?”) I wasn’t told where my daughter was being kept once she was removed from me. I wasn’t helped to get welfare and child support or to learn child care. All mothers are deserving of keeping and raising their own children.

As an exiled mother from 1966 (the BSE) and as an adoption activist since 1996, I strongly support an Inquiry into adoption practices during this time so that government and society will learn the truth of what occurred during the BSE and who was responsible. Many regulations and guidelines (suggested methods of operation) regarding adoption practice were ignored in the United States, Australia, Canada, Ireland and England as agencies, social workers and their attorneys practiced adoption methods that were punitive and very damaging to unprotected and at-risk single mothers. This caused newborns to be removed en mass from these vulnerable single mothers. The Welfare League of America and the Children's Bureau guidelines were ignored. The legal, human and civil rights of mothers were also ignored.

I have been damaged beyond repair. What was done to me, and to other exiled mothers like me, is unspeakable. Our children have also been severely injured. These destructive adoption practices must be exposed and those who are responsible should be held accountable.

Respectfully submitted,

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