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December 2010

My Submission:

I would like to tell my story of how the loss of my son to adoption has affected me, and this account is for the purpose of an Inquiry into the past practices of adoption.

I was eighteen years old in 1959 and had a relationship with my boyfriend and found out some months later that I was pregnant. I kept this information to myself and took special care of my health, visiting a private doctor regularly, because my child I was carrying was very precious to me. I naturally expected keep it, and it did not enter my mind it would be taken away from me.

My boyfriend broke off with me when he knew I was pregnant. I was kept busy working in my job until I was about 6-7 months pregnant. My mother asked me if I was expecting a child and then told me there was no way I could bring a baby home.

I later found myself entering 'St. Josephs', an unmarried mother's home in Carlton. Now I believe that it was my parents who arranged this without consulting me. This was the beginning of them trying to separate my baby from me. They did not discuss my pregnancy with me, there was no mention of it, or any explanation of what would happen to either of us after my baby's birth. I had still several months to carry him and never had a clue what would happen to me.

No social worker ever told me of any of the options available to help me keep my child with me.

I was used and abused.

When I finally went into labour, I was taken to the Royal Women's hospital and it was a very long and difficult birth. But I was delighted with my son and bonded with him, breast feeding him and taking care of him. I never imagined he would be taken away from me.

On the sixth day a nurse came to my bed and told me that someone wanted to talk to me in a nearby room. I went to this room and I now realise the person in it was a social worker. She started talking to me about my baby son. I can't remember what she said to me except these words; 'I should not have been breast feeding him and I had no rights to him.'

I was extremely shocked, I believed that he was mine. She then placed in front of me some papers and told me to sign them: they were adoption papers.

Numbly I signed them.

As I was in complete shock I returned to my bed immediately, my baby was taken away and a nurse bound my breasts tightly and painfully to dry up my baby's milk.

I never saw my baby again.

Over the years, many times I have woken suddenly in the night hearing a long drawn out echo: a voice, but a voice with no words.

But I knew it was my son's voice.

Now, four decades later, the grieving and the pain of the loss of my baby still continues today, despite finally knowing him. This pain never diminishes.

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