I was adopted in 1962. My adoptive family were not bad people but they were quite dysfunctional. We lived in my grandmother's house. She was tyrannical, completely dominated my mother, humiliated my father regularly and called all of us names and put us down. It was hard to develop any sense of self-worth in this environment.

My adopted mother was warm and sweet, but also a compulsive gambler who stripped the household of anything beyond basic requirements. My elder brother is a biological child and there is almost no bond between us. He was very jealous of his much younger siblings and has been treated quite differently to us.

I am very, very different to my adopted family. I just took the isolation that comes from this difference as normal. It was not until I was almost 30 that I discovered I was actually very intelligent. Before that I thought I just thought in a completely different way to everyone else. I was ridiculed often for this so stopped sharing my thoughts with anyone.

To this day it takes a lot for me to be convinced I'm not ugly and I have bouts of deep depression. My teenage years were very painful; I had no confidence at all and was bullied badly by both males and females. I was depressed for most of my teens and 20s and have anxiety to this day (which I am now medicated for). To this day I have enormous resistance to sexual intimacy, in fact all forms of intimacy. Closeness feels very dangerous to me. I very rarely have sex and have no libido to speak of.

The above legacy is quite typical for adoptees. There is a lot of evidence that separation from babies from mothers has lasting damage. Of course this is not remembered, which makes it even worse in a way because it feels in-born: you are rejected, you are defective, you are alone, you cannot let anyone get close, you are to blame, you are horrible etc.

Adoption practices in the mid 20th Century were based on prejudice. It was a practice of discrimination and oppression of women leading to theft of their children supposedly in the interests of providing a stable environment for the child. In fact the child's stability is most effectively provided by a mother who is supported to care for her own flesh and blood. Only my biological mother would have been able to help me become myself. I spent most of my life trying to do this because I lacked her.

To this day babies and children are taken from their families in other parts of the world largely because of poverty. This is baby selling under another name. If we care so much for children why not help families keep their children not adopt them out to families who can afford to raise them. This is for the adopting parents, not the child's benefit. Childlessness no doubt is another form of suffering but I'm sorry this to has to be endured rather than solved by creating a market for separating children and parents.

When the laws were finally changed and I could be reunited with my birth family I found that my biological mother had already died. She seems to have told no

one my biological father's name so I cannot find him either. I have been reunited with some siblings and an aunt but although I would very much like to have them in my life, in some way, they do not feel this same need. After all they grew up in an intact family and they didn't actually lose anyone. I get it but I wish they too needed me.

Life deals us things we just have to deal with. I think this is the central incident of my life that will take a lifetime to work through. I know it isn't the only form of suffering but it is a deep and profound form that impacts upon the very nature of the self and alienates the self and all others.

I would make the following suggestions for the future:

- Open adoption should be the only form of adoption. The degree may vary from case to case, depending on the interests of the child. However, open forms of adoption are in general in the interests of the child and other forms are not.
- Full disclose of historical policies and practices should be sought. The institutions involved should be held accountable, and as in case of institution pedophilia, legal recourse should be sought. If cases of sexual assault decades old have been prosecuted it should be possible with what amounts to 'baby snatching'.
- Information should be freely available for all adopted children and it should be illegal for this information to be kept from them
- Anonymous sperm donors should be illegal as this just robbing the child of their biological history
- Couples, of any sexual orientation, should be encouraged to find a sperm donor from their own circles who will be willing to have contact with the child, even in the most casual and minimal form, rather than use a clinic donor. Using a clinic donor is not in the child's interests. Knowing who their biological relatives are is more important than living a fiction that the adopted parents are the only parents that matter.
- Adoptions should not be allowed without some form of contact being agreed to by all parties (biological and adoptive families). This could be in letters or pictures and need not be contact addresses etc
- International adoptions should be allowable only from orphanages
- Adopting couples should be supported to realize that an adopted child is actually the biological child of other people and they need to accept this fact, rather than deny it, so that they can assist, rather than hinder, their child to come to terms with this. This is in the best interests of the child, any other approach, is actually in the best interests of their own emotional comfort and not healthy for anyone concerned.
- Adopting couples need to be very comfortable with their children being different to themselves and to learn how to live with and nurture this difference. This should also be a criteria for adoption.
- Stigma against single parents continues to this day. Anti discrimination projects for single parents, especially young women, are warranted in the way that anti-racism, sexual assault and homophobic campaigns are.