GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION ADOPTION APOLOGY

Marlie McMarshall
29 3 11
(...)

What could I tell that would give you any understanding or true compassion toward the truth of my life long trauma and those of so many other mothers who have been so terribly affected by former adoption practices.....

I will do my best to tell my story to you and hope that at some level you will gain insight into the treatment so many of us mothers and babies went through, simply due to the fact we were doing the most natural thing in the world....giving birth to our baby.....my baby..my son..the most precious part of me.

Hear Me Cry
For You
Mother

I'm not sure where I am,
I'm not sure where I am,
I know it's the safest place for me to be.
I'm warm, I'm fed and I'm comfortable,
I can move in total safety.
I am protected by her love
I am connected to my mother.

I'm growing now, I can't move around so much

I can tell the difference between light and dark.

I can hear the sound of my mother when she speaks.

I can feel the vibrations from her emotions

I am protected by her love

I am connected to my mother.

It's too uncomfortable to stay in this place

I know it's time for me to leave.

My mother and I are now ready

For the celebration of my life on the outside.

It's a bit of a squeeze, some thing's got hold of my head and is pulling, pulling, pulling me, get me out, I can't breath.. oh oh Whah, whah, did you hear that mum I made it, I'm out,

I made it, I'm crying Whah, whah , to let you know I'm here and I'm wanting for you to hold me so close, so that I don't feel this thing called fear. Because so far it's very unfamiliar.

Mum, MUM, MUM, where are you, I'm crying,

screaming now loud as I can mum

so you can hear me mum, why can't you hear me mum,

Help me. Oh help me.

I'm not processing this well, I'm so scared, everything is unfamiliar to me, it smells wrong. I want my mum, I want my mum, I want my mum.

I wonder who decided they would play god and make the disgraceful rules that led to thousands of women all over the western world lose their baby to an inhumane and often illegal practice... who had the right to give my son to strangers and then say it was for his own good, telling society he would be better off emotionally, psychologically and financially, portraying us new mothers as unfit, damaged goods, Yet knowing nothing about us and very little about the adoptive couples who took our children. Many of us may have been unmarried but we still had family and so did my son, naturally given to him by his birthright as he was given to me.

For too long the truth has been able to keep its lid on the horrific abusive treatment of so many human beings over many years and behind closed doors.....the general public were led to believe that we were well deserving to have our babies taken from us, seen as slags, sluts, loose, asking for it, leading them on, up the duff, prick teasers, bad girls, got ourselves in the family way, bringing shame on our families and neighbourhoods, as if the male component hadn't played any part in the conception of my son. How many times had I heard these descriptions of females who had become pregnant and not married in my own family kitchen.

We needed to be silenced by emotional, verbal, and drug abuse and were alienated from the rest of society, leaving many of us lost and broken. How do you grieve you're living child when all you can hang on to is that they will find you? Being so full up with shame and guilt now ingrained into my bigger picture and without a voice or a kind word spoken.

For the person's reading this, I understand that you can only have the mind set portrayed by a society fed on lies of the adoption process.
It depends on your own understanding of adoption policies during the 50's into the 70's and how much you are willing to let go of previous belief's.

My years of attempting to tell my truth have been severely tainted by societies belief's. Down to the loss of family and friends who saw me as a woman who gave her baby away and as they had only my word against the world, I was seen as lying and trying to cover up my supposed sins. Unless you have been in a similar circumstance all you can do is see this as a documentary of one person's life experience and then make your own judgements. I'm now 60 years old and have had 44 years of struggling with

wanting my son.

The 'ADOPTION APOLOGY' at Perth W.A. was one of the most significant moments in my life.....and trust me I've had a few, as doc phil says there are 7 and witnessing the truth being spoken out in public, was certainly one of those

I will now take you back to the time I became pregnant with my first son
(...) (...) (...)

My boyfriend of four months and I had sex, he was five years older than me and sexually active, unfortunately not sexually safe, neither was I as it wasn't something spoken about in those times. His first words after he finished were “your mother isn't going to be very pleased with me'. “Why “I asked, “because I've come inside you”, came his reply and those words shaped my life.
The next 8 months were spent at home living with my parents who ignored my swelling stomach, as I did, going about my business as usual ,getting up going to work each day, coming home eating dinner and going out with my girl friend most of the time, doing my best to keep everything in the same routine. It obviously suited them as no one questioned me, no one asked, so I went along with the belief that no one knew apart from me that I had a baby growing inside of me... (...) my FIRST BORN BEAUTIFUL SON ..... I knew I was pregnant, somehow I knew it from the time of conception but I decided to keep it to myself for as long as possible. Having no one to talk to about it, I ignored my pregnancy and my health. My belly remained small, so loose fitting clothes covered my secret well and were in fashion at the time. I had no idea what to expect and

expected it to just go away, until one night about 5 months along laying in a warm bath at home I felt a strange movement in my belly, it actually moved, and then moved again. I remember just staring at it in shock, just frozen in shock, the true realisation hit my like a brick, a bitter-sweet life moment. I had a baby inside of me, a real live baby, my baby was kicking me, it was the first time I had felt anything physically or emotionally. Trying to process the reality was horrendous, I didn't want it to be real and to face what that meant, I had to now deal with the fact that my growing baby would be taken from me because that's what happened to unmarried mother's.

.I knew what happened to females who were having a baby and not married they disappeared for a few months then returned to be ridiculed and treated as if they had done time in jail. The bad girls home a place of disrepute, a place where all was lost and your identity taken away.

I had no intention of being sent to one of those places so I still said nothing to any one, my breasts began to swell and a fluid would dribble out, I hated it, it made me feel sick. I continued to wear my usual size bra and pushed them into it, My belly remained small right until I gave birth .

At 8 months my mother said I must go to the local doctor as I looked unwell. It was the first time anyone had spoken about my health, in fact I had blood poisoning, toxaemia, my hands, face and feet had become very swollen, I knew as I walked towards the doctors office with my mum that my secret would no longer belong to me. And all hell would break loose at home.

The doctor had been our family doc for years and almost fell off his seat when I told him about my pregnancy, he examined me and went into the other room, soon he was on the phone to make arrangements for an ambulance to take me straight to hospital.

I went off, mum went home in shock to tell my father and back me a bag.

I spent two weeks on a hospital ward with others mothers who were keeping their babies, most older than me, and married, I had to wear a hospital bracelet with my name as Mrs so that I wouldn't stand out.

Of course the other would be mums worked out that I was single and due to lose my baby but they still treated me with respect, affection and as one of them.

I felt for the first time able to be pregnant and talk about it with joy,

I felt a sense of connection to my experience due to those women and about to become a new proud mum. The hospital staff, social workers, and doctors treated me as if I didn't exist, just another propagator, they only

spoke to me if it was to give me instructions, not one of them treated me as a mother having my baby. No one explained what would happen before or at the birth. Two weeks later I woke in the night and made my way to the toilet where my waters broke, not sure what had happened I pressed the emergency button a nurse came in and I was taken to theatre, again no one talked to me, not an ounce of caring or compassion. Soon my son was born and immediately taken away, I was told that I had given birth to a boy.
I don't remember much else until the following day and waking up in a 4 bedded room, no baby in sight, only the three new borne belonging to the new mums. I began to vomit and had violent stomach cramps, a doctor had a look and thought I may have a twin still inside me as I was haemorrhaging, on examination I didn't but was transferred to a sick unit for new mothers about 10 patients, again I was the only unmarried one and was treated as an outcast by the staff. As they hadn't been able to give diagnosis to my sickness my son was brought to the unit also as he may have been contagious and so couldn't be adopted out until they were certain he was healthy...I have limited memories of the 10 days in the unit, these are the ones still vivid to me.
My son in a hospital crib next to my bed one day old, me not understanding how this has come about due to no communication from hospital staff, numb in my head and my body unable to process what had happened, so alone, so nothing.
Nurses telling me what to do, put him up to your breast, you have so much milk, get him to suckle,,,words I had no understanding of, no explanation of.....
My son was at my bedside for 10 days and nights, I wasn't allowed to cuddle him, kiss him, tell how much I loved him to eternity and back, the only role I had was to pass on my milk and how that became an Achilles heel in my life.....each day I would be marched into a small room with milking machines on the table, I was told that due to the amount of milk I was producing I would be used to feed others babies, so whenever my breast were full I was attached to the milking machine like a cow.....
One nurse in particular took great pleasure sitting across from me while I was being drained and telling me over and again how bad I was, how my son deserved better than me, she would say I had nothing to give him and if I truly loved him I would give him to two parents and not be so selfish to think of keeping him, every day she would say these terrible things to me, I COULDN'T EVEN CRY I felt like a block of wood unable to do or say anything as if I were there in body but not in my mind.

My mum would visit most days and told me that Dad had said under no circumstance would I be bringing my son home, he must be adopted out, the shame I had brought about to the family must be silenced.....I asked mum to bring him to the hospital to see his first grandson, hoping it would change his mind.. he came once but it made no difference to his decision. He wasn't a man who showed compassion toward others unless it was an animal. And I was seen by him as worthless, useless and stupid.
Mum did her best to persuade him but he as always shouted her down.

During those 10 days I did as I was told without question even when with (...) beside my bed, I didn't touch him until I was given permission by the nurse, she would take him out of his crib and hand him to my for feeding for the first few days, then he was put on the bottle to get him used to not having his mum. I wanted so much to have him against me, tellin him how beautiful he was, soothing him, kissing him and telling him how much I wanted to keep him ……..but I didn't.
It was as if I was frozen to feeling anything, I had just given birth to my first son without any essence of human kindness, not one person.
How alone and in shock do you think you would feel? Not knowing what may happen in the next 5 minutes, the only communication was telling me what to do.....
I understood that he would be taken, it's what happened to people like me.
I had not one person on my side saying, “ I'll help you”.
No member of my new son's extended family welcomed his arrival.
Forms were signed by me and I don't know who else, it didn't matter at that stage nothing made sense or felt real.

On the 10th day at the unit I was told to have a bath after breakfast, I knew nothing of what was taking place in my room during this time until I came out of the bathroom to find my bag packed. My brother and his girlfriend standing there and no baby to be seen. Whilst I had been having a bath they had taken my son, my brother and his girlfriend had taken him to a foster home, and were now waiting to take me home to my parents.
No one told me or even allowed me to say goodbye to him, my son my precious boy gone.....

He was never celebrated into the world, my baby was never given his birthright as a human being, all he knew from the second he came into this world calling me, was fear and distrust.

My life back at home was silence, do not mention it, those were my final instruction from the nursing sister, go home and forget about him, you will have more her words followed me down the hospital steps.and into my own black hole. I went home and told no one, it wasn't spoken off in the home as if it had never happened. Very surreal to me, My mother told me years later that I had shut down for a few months after arriving back home, she described as a blackness around me,I again have no memory of those months only walking down the steps of the hospital on that 10th day, obviously never forgetting my son...he was with me every waking breath and often in my nightmares.
Baby clothes in draws, so many of them all neatly folded and put away out of sight,
I would tentatively open them one by one and touch the clothes and smell them making sure they were all folded again and put away back in the draws in case someone found out I had looked, I would wake as they found me opening a draw and drag me away, I would wake pleading with them to let me see and hold those tiny clothes, that dream stayed with me for many years and how it drained me.

From the moment I left the hospital I had to lie to everyone, people I already knew and the ones I was yet to meet. My lie was that I had never had a child. How do you carry that and be expected to be O.k.? Each time those words left my lips I would think of him and feel so guilty...so very guilty....by denying him..Always on red alert when talking about babies. So scared they would find me out and see me as something less than themselves.....

I began a new job in a new area, covering my lose by drinking and partying, Being numb was the way to go, feel nothing, say nothing.....
7 months after (...) birth I went on holiday to the seaside with friends, we hitched a lift to get there as we had little money. I unfortunately paid a huge price for the ride, being raped by the driver in the back of his Jaguar. Again I told no one, carried on with the weeks holiday and waited until I returned home to being my own assault on how to deal with being pregnant again, I was fixated on the fact that I was pregnant whether I was or wasn't will never be known, the rape to me was a side issue, after all I was already damaged goods.
Each night for 3 weeks I took one of my mums biggest Knitting needles and sat over the toilet finding the opening to my womb and pushing the

needle in as far as it would go and until I couldn't stand the pain. Each day I got out of bed and went to work as if nothing had happened, the cramps came and went and I welcomed each one, They spurred me on knowing that I couldn't go through the the same thing again, I COULDN'T BE PREGNANT AGAIN AND LOSE MY BABY.....
I had reached the train station on my way home after a 10 hour day, on the bus to the station I begun to have painful cramps, much more than previously, I made my way to the station toilets and either aborted or haemorrhaged it was excruciatingly painful and so much blood, so many clots and again so alone. Somehow I managed to get myself on one of the packed trains and to the bus that took me home. I must have looked like death as the next day mum took me to the doctor, the same one who had organised my son's adoption with out any consultation with me, he couldn't look me in the eye and so I lied to him as well as the rest of the world. Just a heavy period, bed rest for a few days was his remedy.
Easily fixed all round. Ask no questions get no lies told...Lying began to take shape.

Shortly after this I moved out of home and into city life, went onto a couple of physically violent relationships, one of whom I married and divorced 6 months later because of the violence. I then met my second husband and on the night he asked me to marry him I told him that I had already had a baby,,,,it had taken me days to work up the courage and somehow expected him to be horrified but he wasn't, he said “Oh is that all, I thought it was something important”. One part of me was sheer relief and the other was, not important, my son was not important, but like any other time I said nothing more and neither did he. We went on to have my second son, being pregnant was not something I enjoyed, the thought of having another baby was wonderful but the process to get there was not.
I wanted to hide my swelling belly. I couldn't look at myself naked like other people seem to do and feel so proud, I needed to cover it up as much as possible, it felt degrading somehow, I hated my breasts as they begun to swell and having to wear huge bra's, it still felt like a cow waiting to be milked, so when my son was born I managed to breast feed him for 6 weeks, and as it was a stressful and painful thing to me, my milk dried up. I was back in my pre pregnancy clothes 2 weeks after his birth and that felt better to me.....through out the pregnancy I lied, to my friends, to other mothers at mothers groups, to my husbands family, to all the people who are involved with a new baby, apart from my doctor, this one knew and

scribbled it down in my notes, I was always on high alert in case I slipped and said something that would make them think this wasn't my first baby. And then it happened, I had asked the midwife to please not mention to my mother-n -law that her new grandson was my second child, she promised me she would say nothing but within 2 minutes of them being in the room with me, she said “oh of course this is your second baby isn't it”, it was a moment that halted in time for me, I saw my mother-in-laws face processing the information and knew that she now knew. “No, no you must have got me muddled up”, was all I could say, the midwife, upon her realization of what she had said, mumbled something and left.
My mother-in-law and I kept up the pretence even though no words about it were ever exchanged between us.

I realised years later through lots of counselling and other mothers similar experiences, that the choices I made in my life, especially in relationships were coming from a place of emotionally unavailability.
As were the partners I picked.
One violent, one alcoholic and one unable to have one women in a marriage.
I continually needed to be needed and look after another human being, neglecting my own needs, possibly why I became a nurse at 19 and still work in the health system today.
My husband and I divorced after 7 years together and within a couple of years, I was getting married again.
My son now 4 years old believed he was my first child due to the continuing beliefs of adoption in society and my own fears of being discarded if the truth came out.
My 3rd marriage lasted for two years and during that time I had my 3rd son.....again I went through the pregnancy shame and feeding difficulties. Once he was born as with my second son they became my life the reason to be here on earth, I was seen as over protective by many and hello people, what else would you expect...

Miracle's sometimes happen

Being 6 months pregnant with my 3rd son the phone rang it was my father informing me that he had received a call from social services checking my details and passing on the messages that my son was looking for me.
I remember sliding down the wall as my father began relaying the details to me, and still so detached from his first grandson.

Again it all seemed so surreal, so untouchable, yet the inherent connection I have with my son, gave me the pull to keep going in life, the reason not to give up or give in to my desperately, deep sadness.
I knew he would find me, he was part of me yet he had to grow up being part of something alien to himself and constantly wondering why he didn't fit.

We finally met at a train station just before his 21st birthday, he had been to a football match and was looking the worst for wear, torn jeans, long straggly hair, leather jacket, as I came toward him I saw my baby in his eyes, his beautiful blue eyes those of his father all those years ago.....I saw my mother, I saw me in my long lost beautiful precious son.....

Another pivotal moment was my second son at the age of 19, who stopped me in my tracks one night and said, "aren't we not enough for you mum, you raised us and we still live with you, but all you do is stress about (...) its like we don't exist at times (the name (...) adoptive parents gave him), it was a light bulb moment for me, I had no sense of how desperate I had become in wanting my first born son to be part of our family, to just be who he was meant to be, I couldn't understand how my love for him as his mum wasn't enough for him to be comfortable with us. My battle within had affected my other two son's and their trust of my love.

Much soul searching and counselling gave me the ability to accept he couldn't adjust to how we were, as he had been raised to think I had given him away, it was push /pull.....push /pull....he would need me when he was in crisis and drop me when he got through it..struggling with the feeling of rejection by me and scared to let go of that belief as it meant going against his adoptive parents, much long term loyalty.
He has also been in the middle of trying to placate both me and his adoptive parents..usually by lying to us all. They have never been able to come to terms with (...) finding me and having a relationship with me, which is sad for them as well as my son, it could have been very much easier for all of us.....
Due to all the turmoil with his now two families he was unable to connect safely to us.

Time has now passed and we have had years of grief, anger, sadness, as we tried time and again to put the pieces together in our family, my other two son's lived their life with a brother who'd be OK one time and very un-O.K. on another. Still we sometimes struggle with the expectations of family conditioning, I have to remind myself that his early life was programmed by his adoptive parents and how they interacted in a family built on lies, as was my own. Unfortunaelty for (...) outside of the fact that he had been taken from me, his adoptive home life was very fractured and poles apart from my parental upbringing of my other 2 sons,

On the day of the apology I proudly went along with my 3 son's not quite knowing what to expect or how any of them would be affected by the occasion. We listened to each of the speakers witnessing our story being told our story that also belonged to thousands of other families. We said very little afterwards and it wasn't until a few days later that I spoke individually to each of them, all said it had changed them.
They couldn't quite put their finger on why, only that the struggle had now gone, no more treading on broken glass we could all be who we are and feel the freedom of the truth.

Most cherished gift of nature
The mother had taken from her, the most cherished part of herself, her baby. The grief took shape in the form of self-destruction. It was not to be shared, it was not to be heard, and it was not to be felt. It became the empty void of the untouchable, the unspeakable, the shameful, the scared, deeply wounded, isolated mother.