



Mother's Day

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Welcome again to the newly styled newsletter!
All you have to do is click to turn the page!

Honoring All Mothers

This edition of the newsletter is dedicated to honoring all the mothers in our community. We understand that Birth Mother's Day and Mother's Day can be difficult for so many of us in the Adoption Constellation, but remember, you are not alone! In the pages that follow, you will hear from other mothers who have transformed their deepest grief and pain into beautiful expressions of honor to their motherhood.

A HAIKU FOR MOTHERS

*Hand on heart, inhale
Wild permissions granted now
Exhale shame this day*

- Jennifer Joy Phoenix



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- CUB Board Elections
- All You Have is Love Documentary
- Next CUB Retreat October 2022
- Adoption Trafficking Awareness Symposium
- Remembering a Hero in the Adoption Reform Movement
- Book Review "Love Never Leaves"
- BPAC Opportunity

2021 CUB RETREAT GRATITUDE!

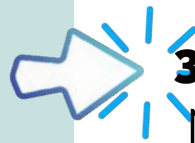
We want to give a special shout out of gratitude to Betsey Holt, Deborah Meyers, Marina Tunes-Nichols, and Desiree Stephens for all their efforts to create an exceptional retreat in Marina del Rey in 2021, during the pandemic no less. It wouldn't have been possible without all their hard work and devotion to this community! Thank you to all of you who joined us in LA, and those who were speakers, filmmakers, authors, group leaders, helpers, and wonderful drivers. It takes a community of volunteers to pull off this very special annual event and we are deeply grateful for your commitment to our group!

CUB ZOOM SUPPORT GROUP

The CUB Zoom Support Group was launched in March 2022 and was kicked off by Leslie Mackinnon and Mimi Janes. Each month the group will be peer facilitated for 90 minutes at no cost to attend if you are a current CUB member and a birth/first parent.

Space is limited to 12-15 participants per group, so be sure to watch your email to sign up.

If interested in participating or facilitating, please keep an eye out for email updates. To learn more, [click here](#) or contact us at: admin@concernedunitedbirthparents.org.



3rd Saturday of the Month

Next Group: Sat, May 21st

11am PST / 2pm EST



Don't worry or feel left out if you're not a birth parent, there will be Triad Groups coming soon where we can all meet up and get support! We hope to see you join us online soon!

CUB BOARD ELECTIONS ARE COMING UP! STAY TUNED!

All positions on the CUB National Board of Directors are up for election for a two year term of office beginning September 1, 2022. Please watch your email for more information on positions, eligibility, dates, nominations, ballots and voting. We invite you to join us in CUB's mission to help support our community!

ALL YOU HAVE IS LOVE

The Story Of Infant Adoption In America



a documentary film by
Lisa Elaine Scott

A new documentary film, All You Have Is Love: The Story of Infant Adoption in America, is now in production. The film is directed by Lisa Elaine Scott, an adoptee, an advocate, and CUB member. She made the film Creating Social Space: CUB's Legacy of Connection, Support, and Determination for our last retreat. Lisa's daughter Laura Scott will be involved and adds the dimension of lived experience from the legacy of adoption and its multigenerational impacts.

Lisa will explore the challenges that may arise with an unexpected pregnancy and examine how adoption professionals use persuasive coercion to convince mothers that their children are better off being raised in an adoptive family. Through interviews with first family members, industry professionals, and reform advocates, this documentary film will explain the adoption process that so often exploits expectant mothers and reveal the tactics used by an adoption industry that profits from family separation.

This important film will identify the various entities involved in the industry, take an unflinching look at "open" adoption and present and evaluate proposed regulations and reforms. The filmmakers are committed to creating an educational tool that can be used by all those who support and promote family preservation. This film is in collaboration with Renee Gelin of Saving Our Sisters, Katie Nelson Burns of The Family Preservation Project, Betsey Holt and Marina Tunes-Nichols, and many others. For more information and to get involved, please visit www.allyouhaveislove.com.

SAVE THE DATE: October 14-16 2022 CUB Retreat in Tampa, FL

This year's CUB Retreat will be in sunny Tampa, Florida on October 14-16 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Tampa Rocky Point. Early registration will start in July, and CUB members receive discounted rates, so be sure to become a member if you haven't already. [Click here to join.](#) Our CUB retreats are unique events for connection, understanding, healing, and down time in a beautiful location by the water. We'll have support groups, education from interesting and relevant speakers, authors, and films. We welcome birth/first parents, adoptees, adoptive families, relatives, professionals, and anyone who wants to learn more about the impact of the lived adoption/separation experience. There will be scholarships available for those with financial need. Watch for more info to come, and we hope you'll join us in Florida in October!

Love in Three Parts

A poem by Barbara Bazett & Vicky Graham

	<i>Barb</i>	<i>Vicky</i>	<i>Marilyn</i>
<i>My role</i>	First mother... discarded after giving birth.	Daughter...a gift of love.	Adoptive mother...love her as my own.
<i>My job</i>	Produce a perfect baby. Trust the authorities. Go away.	Mask infertility's sorrow. Banish loneliness. Be grateful.	Protect and guide her. Pretend I am fulfilled. Hide my deep longing.
<i>My story</i>	A birthmother is brave and sacrificing.	An adoptee is lucky to have family at all.	An adoptive mother is the real mother.
<i>My shame</i>	I punished myself, believing I deserved to suffer.	My first mother took one look and threw me away.	Being a mother did not make me happy.
<i>In reunion</i>	I'm grateful to be in her life.	She wants me after all.	I am happy for them.
<i>My fear</i>	Will she ever trust me?	Careful what I say. They might leave.	Does she still love me?

Barb & Vicky in reunion since 1994. For more of their story including a podcast visit: www.freeyourselfthrough.com



Left to right: Vicky, Chuck (adoptive father), Barb and Marilyn after reunion

This poem was written by birth mother Patti Sullivan from her chapbook collection, *At the Booth Memorial Home for Unwed Mothers* 1966 published in 2015 by Evening Street Press.



Tabu

Mother's Day May 1966

The Salvation Army Band performed for us
on Mother's Day in the patio
we each got a corsage to wear and a bottle of perfume
TABU, with its fake fur animal print cap

The whole thing was just too much for me
what was wrong with these people
flowers, music, a perfume called TABU

How did they think we got here in the first place

Didn't they see the irony in any of this
we're pregnant teenagers about to give birth
we're not becoming mothers
we had nothing to celebrate that day.

I had hoped the day would be ignored
swept under the rug—
isn't that what the Booth Home was about anyway
hiding dirty secrets

I wish we'd gone to Echo Park
maybe take a paddle boat ride on the lake
just watch the ducks
people playing with their kids

Well, maybe the concert wasn't such a bad idea after all
confined to a safe place
where we couldn't see such things
as children and their mothers
on this
their special day.



AdoptionHistory.org

WHAT ARE FAMILIES SEPARATED BY ADOPTION SAYING?
SATURDAY, JUNE 18TH, 2022 10-5pm WASHINGTON STATE HISTORY MUSEUM



Adoption Trafficking Awareness Symposium



INSPIRED BY THE BOOKS OF DR. REV. JANINE VANCE

Dear Guest,

We are sure you've already heard the happily-ever-after adoption stories. But, to establish laws that could potentially protect families from exploitation, we must also acknowledge that there could be not-so-happy stories--and that these stories are just as long-lasting, forever, and ever-after as the happy ones.

Before you trust the system of adoption or pay the non-refundable and sometimes hidden application fees that can run up to more than tens of thousands of dollars, or before you become attached to a charitable photolisting of a child that might not be a true orphan, consider arming yourself with information. Knowledge is Power.

Here is an opportunity to know more about the practice of adoption than most of the public. Consider listening to these presenters, panelists, and participants, and let's make history together.

Sincerely,

Rev. Dr. Janine Vance

Program Director,
Against Child Trafficking
Info@AdoptionHistory.org

LOCATION:

Washington State History Museum
911 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma, WA 98402
Saturday, June 18th,
Registration: 9 AM | Program 10 AM -5

Sharing Ideas and Experiences:

Rev. Dr. Janine Vance - ACT USA

Arun Dohle - ACT Europe

Anjali Pawar - ACT India

Tyler Graf - Chile

Mohamed Nabieu (Nabs) - Sierre Leone

Christopher Emanuel - Sky is the Limit

Renee Gelin - Saving Our Sisters

Leslie Mackinnon- Catholic Unwed

Mother's Home Survivor

Melisa Trejo - Colombia

Gustavo Tobar - Guatemalan Father

Osmin Ricardo Tobar - Guatemala

Maline Caroll - Haiti

Nora Gateley - China

Sandy White Hawk - Sicangu Lakota

Of Rosebud Reservation

Jess Graf - Paraguay

Recommended reading:

RARE ADOPTION BOOKS FOR ADULTS

- THE SEARCH FOR MOTHER MISSING
- ADOPTIONLAND
- ADOPTION HISTORY

Remembering a Hero in the Adoption Reform Movement



With sadness but great fondness and appreciation, we report that another one of our leaders in the fight for adoptee rights and open records has died. Virginia M. (Ginny) Burns, a Social Worker and Adoptee Rights and Children's Rights Activist, passed away on February 10th, 2022, at the age of 96.

A Boston native, Burns was a graduate of Boston University, where she earned her MSW and was twice named Social Worker of the Year. She was also a graduate of the London School of Economics, and a Fulbright scholar. Early in her career, she was a special assistant in the Kennedy Administration, working with Robert F. Kennedy in the Department of Justice. A strong civil rights advocate, she returned to Massachusetts in the 1980's, and became Director of Advocacy for the Massachusetts Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and a Children's Advocate for Boston Children's Services. She brought all this experience to bear on her work as an advocate for adoptees and foster children, and in the fight for open records.

Known for her skills in building alliances, Burns was one of the leaders in the movement to pass one of the earliest adoption laws meant to guarantee that all parties had access to adoption records. The

coalition of adoptees, parents, and adoption professionals that she helped create still exists today. While not perfect, the law was one of the first of its kind in the country and served as an example of the power created when adoptees and birthparents unite and work together to promote access to records, and fight for progressive legislation.

Other heroes of the movement from that era include Susan Darke, Founder of The Adoption Connection, a search and support group for all members of the Triad; Marie McLaren, Adoptive Parent Researcher; Debbie Blanchard Birthmother and Board Member, The Adoption Connection; Susan Miller-Havens, the first Education Director of the American Adoption Congress; and Joyce Maguire Pavao, the Founder and CEO of Center for Family Connections. Our own CUB Board Members Kathleen Aghajanian and Gail Hanssen Perry were also part of this coalition to open records, working together with Ginny Burns since the 1980s in the on-going quest to gain full access to their original birth certificates for all adoptees born in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We remember her and salute the work of these leaders in the field of adoption with deep gratitude.

Postscript: Ginny Burns was my aunt and a deeply beloved figure in my family and in my life. Due to the nature of closed adoptions and secrecy, however, I never knew of her activism on behalf of adoptees until several years ago. (She was very humble in that way.) And she never knew I had relinquished a son. It is a sweet coincidence to learn about her efforts and how she helped people in her own family who were touched by adoption without their ever knowing it, never seeking the limelight, or seeking credit. What a gift to us all. - Sarah Burns

CAN I OPT OUT?:

When Mother's Day is Just Too Much

One of my Adult Adoptee clients told me this past week that she got a notice from a local chocolate company that she could opt out of any Mother's Day ads. What a brilliant idea from this company to minimize something from them that could be painful or triggering to some of their customers! My client went on to say that she wished there was a button she could click to opt out of this holiday altogether. We laughed for a moment but realized it was something she'd actually been trying to do for years.

Her adoptive mother was very abusive, and they are no longer in relationship. She is in reunion with her biological mother, which has been a positive experience, but there is little affection in the relationship. She also has a stepmother whom she is not really close to especially since her adoptive father has passed away. Now in her forties, she herself has chosen not to be a mother for various reasons. To make the holiday even a bit more loaded, she was born and relinquished on Mother's Day, and this year, her birthday, which is typically a day already so conflicting for many adoptees, happens to fall on Mother's Day again. She asks, "Can I opt out, please?!"

It reminded me of my own story and how Mother's Day has always been such a complicated time for me as well. I also have a difficult relationship with my Adoptive Mother due to childhood abuse, and having recently experienced secondary rejection by my own Birth Mother over political differences, of all things, this year's Mother's Day is a painful reminder

by Amy Barker D'Alessandro, LMHC



of that loss. Fortunately, my relationship with my Stepmother is solid and close and has been healing in many ways over the years, but she is now struggling with dementia, and it feels like I am losing her bit by bit every day. Further, having myself lost my one and only child to an adoption decision, I feel the pain of not only mother-loss on this day, but also the loss of my own motherhood as well. I told you it was complicated!

“ I feel the pain of not only mother-loss on this day, but also the loss of my own motherhood as well. ”

I reflect over the years on the ways I've worked to personally minimize the potential pain of this weekend, and it has been most impactful when I have spent time with other Birth Mothers. In Seattle, we have hosted several events on Birth Mother's Day (the day before Mother's Day) and have deeply enjoyed honoring and just being with the amazing women in our local group. We are all at different places along the journey, but we hold each other's story with sacred reverence and are personally invested in one another's healing.

I'm 56 years in to experiencing Mother's Days on this earth. Every year looks a little different, and there were several years where I

did find ways to opt out of a day so loaded with potentially triggering and painful emotions, but mostly that was by numbing or running. Now I find more solace and satisfaction in honoring the important mothers around me in special ways. By the way, I now have a lovely Mother-in-Law, and my Stepdaughter is a mother of three young children making me a very happy Grandmother!

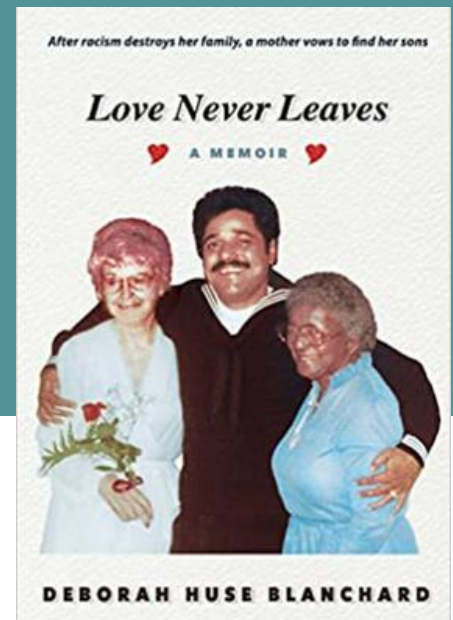
Additionally, I continue to spend time with other Birth Mothers as only we can hold one another in true empathy and understanding. This year our local group will gather and participate in a collective Kintsugi project, making gifts for other amazing women impacted by adoption while mindful that we can transform our own brokenness into something beautiful and stronger than it was originally. Though our stories may differ vastly, we all know the complicated grief of losing our child(ren) to adoption, and we all know the emotional complexity of navigating every birthday, holiday, Mother's Day, and every single day as a Birth Mother. Being with a group of others who "get it" like that is an experience I will "opt in" to every time.

My dear friends, may we all give ourselves permission to opt in or opt out as we determine what is best for each of us and most honoring to our true selves on Mother's Day, Birth Mother's Day, and every other single day of this lifelong journey.

Book Review

by Sarah Burns

LOVE NEVER LEAVES: A MEMOIR by Deborah Huse Blanchard



A recent addition to the adoption-birthparent genre is a new memoir by Deborah Huse Blanchard called "Love Never Leaves," published in February of this year. The book is the story of Blanchard's having to surrender her two biracial sons for adoption in the 1950s due to the racially-charged environment then prevalent in her hometown of Lowell, Massachusetts. It should be of great interest to anyone wishing to learn about the hidden racism and segregation prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s in parts of the northeastern United States. The story takes us on a journey of what it was like to become the mother of biracial children during that era, and why it was impossible for the author to keep her two sons.

Blanchard's own story is about how she met the boys' father as a student at the New England Conservatory of Music but was naïve and unaware of the racial turmoil that was taking place in the country at the time and how it would limit her options and destroy her chance to raise her children. Although Blanchard then married her husband, he warned her early on of the difficulties they would face as a mixed race couple. But despite their love for one another, he eventually grew away from her, and struggled in his own way with the racism of the day. Unable to raise her sons due to the threat of racist violence toward them and toward her, Deborah made the agonizing decision to relinquish her sons for adoption but not before insisting that they be placed with an African American family.

Later, Blanchard suffered from deep depression (teaser: getting out of her depression has to do with a member of the Boston Red Sox, the famous outfielder Jimmy Piersall). With that as a turning point, she made a vow to find her sons, and she began an ongoing effort to rebuild a life with them.

The book is different from many in the adoption memoir genre in that while half of the nearly 400-page book is devoted to the author's own story, the second half is a compilation of stories by other adoptees and birthmothers who share their own stories. Those 23 essays of adoption by members of the adoption constellation are moving and enlightening. All of them make for lively reading and provide an opportunity to learn more about the tenor of the times surrounding the quest for open records and the adoption and relinquishment experience starting in the 1950s and extending to present day. The book is available through Amazon and is definitely an interesting read.

Mother's Day - A Bittersweet Holiday

by Candace Cahill

As a child, I remember the light-hearted joy of making my mom a Mother's Day Card. Paper plates and construction paper, hands sticky with glue, and the words "Best Mom Ever" embellished with glitter in uneven print. As a teenager, I penned heartfelt poems on flowery stationery in soft-lead pencil, expressing my deepest love for the woman who, just days earlier, I could barely stand.

But after the relinquishment of my son, I quit celebrating Mother's Day. I hardened my heart to thoughts of myself as a mother and couldn't soften to the woman who'd said, "he's dead to me now," after signing away my parental rights.

For years, I avoided anything related to Mother's Day and just pretended it was like any other. It wasn't until my new husband, almost seven years later, asked me, "How would you like to celebrate?" that my perspective began to change. He asserted that despite placing my child for adoption, I still had the right to claim motherhood, and, perhaps even more importantly, he maintained I have every right to grieve the loss of that child. He assured me I could both honor and mourn simultaneously. This was a foundational shift for me, and my life changed forever.

But I'd spent so long pretending I was okay that it was hard to make space for sadness. And amidst voices that said my choice was beautiful and wise and brave, I retreated into the shadows where I could hide the pain that I thought I wasn't supposed to be feeling. However, the sorrow pulsed and oozed under the edges, ever ready to spill out.

With my husband's support, I worked for years to develop the ability to share that I had a son. I'd sit at a Mother's Day brunch/lunch/dinner and respond to questions about children with tear-filled eyes, facing the questioner's confused expressions with as much forthright honesty and



vulnerability as I could muster. But now, that task has become heavier. I want to scream from the rooftops I HAVE A SON but fear the repercussions of that statement. Because now, I am faced with another reality: my son with whom I reunited died suddenly after a brief reunion. So, what used to be the internal conflict to share a child placed for adoption, now intertwines with that of a dead son, and sometimes I'm just too tired to try.

Today, I have mixed feelings about Mother's Day. I don't like that Birth Mother's Day is celebrated as a separate holiday. It feels like I'm being ostracized and excluded. However, I understand how it could be, and is, a balm for other first mothers - how they find solace in the special recognition. So, I hold space for both.

Whether you celebrate Mother's Day or not, or like the distinction of a separate day for Birth Mothers, I encourage you to be at peace wherever you are in your journey. I try to live by the motto that two things can be true at one time: yes, I mourn for my son and our lost past and future, but I also embrace the joy I have found in his adoptive family. In our son's absence, they provide memories of his life while I remain a willing listener, ever grateful to share the weight of the sorrow.



GETTY IMAGES/CHARLES MCQUILLAN

| Tuam home survivors visiting a shrine for the Tuam babies last year

“IRELAND PLEDGES \$900 MILLION TO UNMARRIED MOTHERS AFTER MASS GRAVE OF BABIES DISCOVERED ON GROUNDS OF A ‘MOTHER AND BABY HOME’”

By Julia MacDonnell Chang

Mother’s Day in Ireland is celebrated on the fourth Sunday in Lent. This year, that was March 27. So we missed it! But this Mother’s Day, here in the states, we can still celebrate an incredible victory achieved by a particular group of Irish mothers in the past year: the 30,000 or so unmarried women whose children were taken from them in coerced closed adoption in the 20th century – and who have just been promised \$900 million in government funds to help compensate for this abuse.

This pledge of financial compensation to birth mothers for the mistreatment they suffered in the country’s so-called ‘mother and baby homes’ came after a four-year long investigation by an Irish church/government commission into practices at the homes. There were 18 of them, functioning throughout the 20th century, where unmarried girls and women were sequestered during their pregnancies.

Among the documented cruelties were coerced confinement; slave-like labor; coerced adoption of their children or adoption of their children without their knowledge or consent; poor to nonexistent health care (of both mothers and babies) and severe malnutrition. The last home didn’t close until the 1990s.

This wretched treatment of Irish unmarried mothers - by an unholy trinity of family, church, and state - had gone on for ages but remained shrouded in secrecy. Shame silenced the women and children who’d experienced it while religious orders and government officials denied it.

In more recent years, some of the cruelties have been exposed in popular books and films, most notably in the 2003 movie *The Magdalene Sisters*, followed by Martin Sixsmith’s excellent 2009 book *The Lost Child of Philomena Lee*, and the outstanding 2013 film based on it, *Philomena*, starring Judi Dench.



Jan 12, 2001 CNS/Reuters/Clodagh Kilcoyne

But national outrage about these practices didn't explode until 2017 when the skeletal remains of 800 infants and children were discovered in a sewage tank on the grounds of what was once a church-run home in Tuam, County Galway. Forensic pathologists have since said that neglect, starvation and untreated illness caused the deaths. The home was run by an order of nuns called Bon Secours, which is French for good help. In the wake of recent revelations many call them instead the Sisters of No Mercy.

The horrific discovery in Tuam (pronounced Tomb) triggered the appointment of the Mother and Baby Home Commission of Investigation which, in turn, opened the floodgates to more appalling discoveries, and more bodies buried at other 'homes', not a few of them mothers who'd died in childbirth. At last, the commission released a 3,000-page report. It revealed that 56,000 unmarried mothers and 57,000 children came through the homes in a 76-year period. At least 9,000 babies died at the homes, an infant mortality rate more than twice the national average. The report described the mother and baby homes as 'dumping grounds' and called Ireland's traditional treatment of unmarried mothers one of 'harrowing abuse, neglect and callousness.'

In the years before 1960 mother and baby homes did not save the lives of 'illegitimate' children," the report states. "In fact they appear to have significantly reduced their prospects of survival."

The Irish Catholic church had always turned a blind eye to the goings on in its own institutions. But finally in 2021, Eamon Martin, the archbishop of Armagh and the head of the Irish Catholic Church, issued an apology heard around the world. The church, he stated had been party to a culture in which unmarried pregnant women were "stigmatized, judged and rejected...For that, and for the long-lasting hurt and emotional distress that has resulted, I unreservedly apologize to the survivors."

His stunning apology was followed by the government's pledge of \$900 million to compensate birth mothers who'd lost babies to adoption or death while confined to a home and for the abuse they'd suffered.

What a moment! The jubilation of the mothers and an international cohort of adoption reform activists made international headlines and news broadcasts. It's still rippling around the globe.

But those tiny bodies in the sewage tank at the Tuam home might have remained hidden forever except for the curiosity of a local historian, Catherine Corless, a mother of four who grew up near the home. The home itself, a massive and forbidding prison-like structure, had long since been demolished and a housing development built in its place. As a child, Corless passed it daily on her walk to school. Even after its demolition, Corless remained intrigued and unsettled by what had gone on there.

After her children were grown, Corless took a course in historical research and found she had a knack and a passion for it. While researching an article about the Tuam home in 2014 for the town's historical society, she examined the death certificates of the many hundreds of children who'd died there. She found only one burial certificate - a startling and befuddling fact. Where were all those babies buried? she wondered, passionately concerned about those 'lost souls' because of her Catholic faith. Had they been named? Had they been baptized?

It took many years, and the help of many experts for Corless to convince those with power that the discrepancy should be investigated, and more years after that to figure out that the bodies were likely buried on the grounds of the home. A subsequent preliminary dig and a survey with ground penetrating radar spearheaded by Corless, revealed the scores of little skeletons in the underground tank on the property. This discovery shook Ireland like a major earthquake, its aftershocks enraging the entire population, and reaching the highest echelons of the church and government.

In her just published memoir, *Belonging: A Memoir of Place, Beginnings and One Woman's Search for*



Rolling News / 2014

Truth and Justice for the Tuam Babies, Corless describes her decade-long struggle to get to the truth about the fate of those babies, to identify them and give them proper burials. It is a riveting account, by a plainspoken Irish mother and grandmother, of her fight to bring dignity and honor to those lost babies. That her initial questions about the lack burial certificates at the Tuam home would end up revealing the hidden machinations of the country's secret system of incarcerating and humiliating unmarried pregnant women had never occurred to her. The actor Liam Neesam has since reached out to Corless. They are collaborating and coproducing a documentary film about the Tuam babies and Corless's journey that is expected to be released within the year.



August 25, 2019. Getty.



Survivors of the Tuam mother and baby home hold a vigil for the 973 babies who died at or near the home during its 36 years of operation. Sourced from: [CNN.com](https://www.cnn.com)

The exhumation of the mass grave at Tuam, and the recovery of the remains, is expected to begin this year, after years of controversy about the fate of those buried there. The hope is that the remains can then be matched to the names of the children who died and returned to their families.

As for the first payouts from that \$900 million fund, they aren't expected for at least another year. A complicated application process was established. It has already been described as "flawed"

and "humiliating" despite the government's promise that it wouldn't traumatize the victims all over again.

Even without the release of that money, the birth mothers of Ireland, and their loved ones, have much to celebrate. The public acknowledgement of their suffering and mistreatment at the hands of their supposed care givers is an emotional gift, one that cannot be calculated or paid for with money. On our own Mother's Day let's think of them for a moment and celebrate their victory.

CUB member Julia MacDonnell Chang is a published novelist and journalist who writes often about family matters and mother/child relationships. She is the mother of four and the grandmother of three.

Her website is: www.juliamacdonnell.com





MOTHER'S DAY

By Tami Hawley

The beginning is always going to be the opposite of the end.

Which means the story in the middle isn't stagnant. It changes, shifts, transforms into something different. And it does that because of the choices we make, the love we give or deny, the joy we allow ourselves to experience or the grief we refuse to move through.

My son and I were separated thirty-two years by an adoption I did not choose. When we found each other three years ago, I had a different view of how this story would unfold. It would be love at first sight and we'd live happily ever after. As the initial days, weeks and now years have gone by, I realize that was an illusion my seventeen-year-old self, who was about to lose her baby, created.

I've spent a lot of time with her, sitting in that silent prison with the teenager I was when I got pregnant. I've nurtured her. I've mothered her. MY way.

When the rage comes, it manifests into a deep hole of depression. And I allow it, because I refuse to no longer feel everything I've kept bottled up for 35 years.

When my emotions overwhelm me, I have to continue to ask myself: "Is this me reacting, this fifty-three-year-old woman who is wiser? Or is this that seventeen-year-old child going through the worst pain she will endure in her life?"

I guess that's why it's been hard for me to feel like I AM a mother. A mother raises children. I never had any other children, so what right did I have to that title? And my own mother failed me. She did what she thought was best for me and for her, I suppose. But she chose a permanent solution for a temporary crisis. She didn't think of the life-long consequences. And of what I'd been told of the other mothers in my family bloodline, I honestly didn't want to be like any of them.

I had found myself on an unexpected spiritual journey after my first marriage ended. God and Jesus, the Divine male stand-ins for my own absent father, were my guides. The twenty years that followed made me stronger and wiser, gave me the foundation to keep going.

But that foundation still housed secrets. I wasn't telling myself the real story. My story. I was telling myself the story that others had told me to tell. The fabricated tale that fit into their stories better.

When my son and I found each other, the mystery began to unfold, and the old stories unraveled. Over the past few years I've dug up the pain, the anger, the grief. I've realized how much of who I am today is because of the trauma I endured all those years ago. It's been painful.

I'd forgotten what joy felt like. I was so busy trying to heal from the unhealable, and trying to make my son accept and love me, that I'd forgotten how to live.

Then something magical happened. My spiritual focus changed. Mother Mary, the Divine Feminine. Again this wasn't a path I actually chose. I found myself aligned with other spiritual women, other mothers, birth mothers and even adoptees, and the path unfolded in front of me. And my story has changed again.

I AM A MOTHER.

I AM my son's mother. I am my son's MOTHER.

Everyone else can deny this for themselves, including him, but THIS is the reality that no one can change. I am my son's mother. I always will be my son's mother. I am in his blood and he in mine, a thread that links us eternally that he has with no other.

I am slowing down the process of grieving. I am stopping the process of healing and shifting it to living. Slowly. I am creating healthier boundaries. I say what I feel. I see the other characters in this tale with more compassion. After years of being told what my reality should be, I am telling myself what my reality is.

I'm stepping away from what I was told was normal, healthy, right. Through emotional and physical pain, I am deciding I want to transform my life from one of devastating grief into, hopefully one day, one of unconditional love from my son.

Somewhere along the way, we need to tell the story differently. We need to purposefully leave stuff out, the really bad stuff that we'll never have closure to, the stuff we'll never have answers to or can control. We need to spend smaller amounts of time telling it, not reliving all the horrible details.

So despite the moments of depression, grief, sadness and anger that still make their way to the surface at any given time, I remember every single day that the heaviness will not last. That at some point, the story will change.

Because the beginning is always going to be the opposite of the end.

Tami with her son, Matt,
during reunion



Mother Power:

We didn't know our own strength

by Eileen McQuade

Like so many state adoption reform organizations, Access Connecticut worked for years to win the right of adopted adults to have a copy of the original birth certificate. Progress was slow, and success incremental. We were down to the wire in 2021 - just about out of energy and out of hope. One more round of committee hearings and soliciting testimony, and the results were dramatic; 190+ testimonies from adoptees, adoptive parents, parents who relinquished infants, and professionals in support of the legislation, and 1 testimony from Catholic Public Affairs Conference (lobbying arm of the church representing Catholic Charities). Their position: "We speak for birthparents; they were promised confidentiality, and want it still."

Mothers who relinquished, especially Catholic women, had to reclaim our voices. And we were more than willing and ready to step up and be heard. We were eloquent speakers on the trauma of relinquishment, and shared our stories on the front pages of newspapers statewide. Legislators heard the 100+ members of Catholic Mothers for Truth and Transparency, and now all adoptees born in Connecticut can now claim their original birth certificate.

We were just getting started. Meeting monthly, we began to discuss how else we wanted to use our newly found power. Various ideas were raised, and an enthusiasm for change began to build. It was easy to identify some changes that were important to us, but we knew we could not do it alone. The CUB retreat seemed a wonderful opportunity to widen the discussion to include more mothers, and get a broader perspective on the changes we wanted and could work to bring about.

I presented along with a few of our team members behind the Connecticut bill, fellow mother Karen Quesnel and adoptee, Desiree Stephens at the 2021 CUB retreat last October. Our workshop was titled Harnessing the Power of Mothers: Where do we go from here? We solicited ideas and conducted a poll to gauge the enthusiasm and importance of various initiatives. We kicked off three projects late last year after the retreat. They are now underway, and we are still interested in soliciting more people to work with us.

PROJECT 1: GET THE MONEY OUT OF ADOPTION

Infant adoption is a subset of human trafficking. While agencies and adoption attorneys can skirt the issue, what is prevalent today is baby selling...an ugly but accurate description. Humans for sale is a human rights issue that transcends American adoption. Our Facebook Group Mother Power: Trafficking Education was established to mobilize victims of infant adoptions and provide the voice of relinquishing parents for the human rights effort.

We have partnered with Adoption Truth and Transparency to support the [Adoption Trafficking Awareness Symposium](#) in Tacoma Washington on June 18, 2022. Attendees will hear the stories of the destruction caused by trafficking and raise awareness of this issue. I hope you will consider attending.

(McQuade con't)

PROJECT 2: MOTHER POWER: RELINQUISHMENT EDUCATION

The adoption industry is a sophisticated marketing machine that has spent millions promoting adoption, but no one invests in family preservation, or even talks about the realities of adoption. Our first attempt to fix this is to develop a brochure targeting a woman with an unplanned pregnancy, asserting her right to make an informed decision, some truths about adoption, and a referral to SOS if needed. The brochure has been in development for months by a wonderful dedicated team carefully crafting the right message, detail, image and design. Jennette Yamamoto's technical skills and Renee Gelin's SOS experience were critical to this effort. We are just about ready to begin our first distribution as a pilot trial. The Facebook Group [Mother Power: Relinquishment Education](#) is our command center and we welcome anyone who is interested in doing projects like these moving forward.

Our target audience for the brochure is anywhere a pregnant woman would go for help: Planned Parenthood clinics, OBs, counseling centers, university health centers, social service agencies, etc. We need volunteers for distribution to physically visit likely sites, explain the brochure, and ask them to give it to pregnant women who are wondering what to do. [Click here](#) for more information if you think you could be a part of this effort.

THE PRESERVATION OF MOTHER AND CHILD IS THE REAL ALTERNATIVE TO ADOPTION SEPARATION

FROM MOTHERS AND ADOPTED PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN THERE.

STOP
DON'T SIGN
Anything

YOU CAN STILL PLAN FOR YOU AND YOUR BABY

PREGNANT? SCARED? NEED SUPPORT? MAKE AN INFORMED CHOICE.

YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO MAKE AN INFORMED CHOICE.

MOTHERS SUFFER LONG-TERM TRAUMA AND GRIEF

A. Relinquishing mothers are at a higher risk for long-term physical and psychological problems than those who choose to parent.
SavingOurSistersAdoption.org

ADOPTED PEOPLE SUFFER LONG-TERM TRAUMA AND GRIEF

B. Adopted children experience trauma when separated from their mothers, especially early on. Adopted people are 4 times more likely to think about suicide than a non-adopted person.
SavingOurSistersAdoption.org

ADOPTION IS A PERMANENT SOLUTION TO A TEMPORARY PROBLEM

C. Open adoption agreements are not enforceable. Adoption agencies work for the adoptive parents, not for you.
SavingOurSistersAdoption.org

EVEN WHEN YOUR PREGNANCY IS UNPLANNED, YOU CAN STILL SUCCESSFULLY MOTHER YOUR CHILD.

Know all the facts about adoption today.

SavingOurSistersAdoption.org

OFTEN ALL YOU NEED IS SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THOSE OF US WHO HAVE BEEN THERE.

Catholic Mothers for Truth & Transparency
Catholic Mothers for Truth & Transparency
Adoption: Truth & Transparency Worldwide
Information Network

If you think this double-sided tri-fold brochure belongs at a place in your community (a medical facility or another high visibility location where it can be seen by young women and those who provide services to them), let us know and we'll send you a stack.

Click here to contact us!

PROJECT 3: MOTHER POWER: APOLOGY

The institutions (states, religious organizations, social service agencies) that conspired to coerce mothers to relinquish must start the truth-telling and reconciliation process. Active efforts are under way to get an apology from Connecticut's state government as a result of the awareness we built with the current administration's understanding of why our experiences should not delay the process of restoring adoptees' rights to their original birth certificates.

But, most remarkably, there is a very real possibility the Episcopal Church will be considering a resolution to acknowledge their role in the forced adoption era this summer at their General Convention...which is HUGE. CUB member Francine Gurtler is leading the charge in this effort so stay tuned or join the [Mother Power: Apology](#) group on facebook.

Remember we started out to get a single bill in a single state. I am astounded on how much has been accomplished in a few short months. Please consider adding your voice and volunteering for a project that is of importance to you. MOTHERS = POWER



casey family programs
fostering families. fostering change.



Join Our Team!

Casey Family Programs Systems Improvement Birth Parent Advisory Committee (BPAC)





We are looking for:

- Young parents (ranging in ages from 20 to 35 years)
- Fathers
- Native American/Alaskan Natives
- Parents who are involved with the Alliance's Birth Parent National Network or other state or national networks

BPAC members partner with Casey Family Programs to:

- Advocate for improvements to the child welfare system
- Provide recommendations for policy and practice changes
- Promote Leadership development of parents
- Model the value of parent partnerships

The BPAC ensures there are strong parent voices in shaping programs, policies and strategies in child welfare that lead to better outcomes for children and families.

If you are a parent who has been involved in the child welfare system and are interested in joining the BPAC, please apply online:

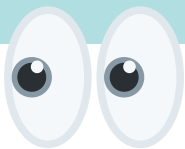
CLICK to APPLY

Questions?

Contact Kara Georgi, Alliance Parent Partnership Associate, at 315-729-4866 or kara.georgi@ctfalliance.org

Casey Family Programs is partnering with Children's Trust Fund Alliance to develop and support the BPAC.

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KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO GET MORE INVOLVED WITH CUB...

Consider running for office!



Election information coming by June 1.

Consider facilitating once for our Zoom Support Group!

Our plan is to round-robin the facilitator role such that no one, or few, people are having to do it frequently. The first step in volunteering for one month as a facilitator is to attend one so [sign up here](#) to attend the May meeting.

Help us publish the Summer 2022 edition of this newsletter!

We're forming a group of individual contributors to help publish this newsletter. If you were an editor of your school paper/yearbook or love tools like Canva, email Amy Barker D'Alessandro editor@concernedunitedbirthparents.org. Kick off meeting coming soon!