

## Rape of the Soul

When one person, or more people, force someone to indulge in sexual activity against their will, we call this act a rape. We are aware of the horror of this despite our attempts to glamorize it in media and television. We know that a rape is a trauma, we know that the victims of rape take years to recover and we know that this road to recovery is a torturous one.

When one person, or more people, force someone to relinquish a baby against their will, we call this act adoption. We choose to ignore the horror, and describe this as a win-win situation. We choose not to acknowledge adoption as a trauma. It is a trauma for the natural mother, a trauma for the baby, a band-aid recovery package for the adoptive parents who do not get to deal with their real issues around sterility and infertility.

No one consciously chooses to have their being penetrated by a stranger, to give away an intimate, vulnerable part of themselves. No one does it freely. It is an act done out of fear. It is a desperate act done because the belief exists that to do otherwise would result in death. No mother chooses freely, willingly or easily to give away her precious child, whom she has created. The overt and covert pressure from family, from society, from social workers, from people she believes have a greater power and knowledge than the power and knowledge of her own mothering instincts take over her being in an abusive swoop. She has to believe the direct and indirect threats in order to relinquish her flesh and blood. She believes her own life is in danger, that the shame that she will suffer will annihilate her. She believes that her child will be better off elsewhere, in a two parent, financially secure stronghold. These beliefs are false. The information fed to her is untrue. Her decision to relinquish is based on lies.

A victim of sexual abuse is made to feel guilty by his or her perpetrator. The shame, the guilt, the self blame, the horrific feeling of being dirty, the one at cause, the one who deserves to have this happen, results in a downward spiralling, all consuming powerlessness. A powerlessness which silences. A powerlessness which does not allow for the truth to be said. A powerlessness which robs us of our authenticity. A powerlessness which can kill.

When a mother is separated from her infant, two beings enter a state of agony. The agony is turned inwards, for the society who created the shame, the society who does not approve of the mother's sexuality, who does not approve of a bastard being born into the world, does not validate the torture that the separation creates. It does not wish to see the effects of its hypocrisy, and demands that the mother pretend that she did not give birth to her child. It demands that the child live as if the strangers to whom it is given created it, mistakenly believing that this relieves the child of its illegitimate status. Society creates denial for itself. It hides the real facts in brown envelopes, which are not allowed to be opened. The secret must be preserved at all costs.

The secret is preserved by refusing to allow mothers and children to speak about their experience. By pretending that everyone is better off. By creating a packaging around adoption which is so appealing, that no one thinks to look below the cover and ask what this institution is really about. A packaging so seductive that even those who are the most closely involved do not see what is really going on. People imagine that mothers are relieved to see their unwanted children leave their lives. They do not imagine that the mother is no different from the blissful expectant mother who is radiant and glowing, alive with the sensuality of carrying her unborn child. They do not imagine the mother being desperately in love with her child, wanting to be there to hold and nurture and love her child in the same way that any other mother would. They imagine this mother to be different, to be a monster. But she is not a monster, she is the loving mother who is not allowed to love. The caring mother not allowed to care. The supporting mother not allowed to support. She is the mother whose soul has been raped.

The primary definition of rape is to take by force. No word is more apt to describe what adoption is really about. 'Force' has been smoothed down to such an extent that it is hardly noticeable. It is a technique which has become so subtle and professionally polished, that it gives the opposite impression of what it is about. Cigarette companies advertise their product with a huge dose of sexuality and glamour. They hide the truth that cigarettes are about addiction and the destruction of one's health. Cigarette companies wish to create a fortune by promising love, attraction, romance, partnership, sex appeal. When will they be truthful about what they are doing? Why do their advertising campaigns not show deceased lungs, people on support machines, bodies which are yellow and crippled, with barely enough air inside them to keep them alive? This is what cigarettes do to a person. But the truth is distorted, and a lie is put in its place in order to make a profit through deceit. A person's health is taken away from them, intentionally. This is a rape of a person's birthright.

Adoption is the same. The lifelong effects of adoption are not made clear to anyone. The natural mother, by now relegated to a breeding machine by the inhuman prefix "birth", was not told that she would suffer lifelong, irresolvable grief. The adoption agencies didn't mention it. That the adoptee, literally born into a vacuum, will feel the loss, will spend the rest of his life searching for the missing link, is also glossed over. There is no acceptance of reality, no attempt to deal humanely with the consequences. We are all supposed to feel happy about this event. Society wants us to believe we have all been done a favour. Rape is too gentle a word for what has happened.

As if this vile violence is not enough, America has now decided to make a sport out of it. ABC television has created a show where prospective adoptive couples get to compete, on TV, for a baby. The lucky couple will get to take the child home. It is a return to medieval times, where human atrocities were spectator sports. People will cheer as the 'prize' gets torn away from its mother. They will gloat over the good fortune of the 'lucky couple' who have had their dream come true. This kind of behaviour mirrors a society which has become so out of touch with itself that it mistakes its own barbarity for entertainment. Did anyone wonder how the baby will respond during adolescence when she asks "Mummy, where did I come from?". The reply won't be "From my tummy, darling". It will be "You were first prize on a game show honey." How many of us can say we would enjoy hearing that from our parents. I suspect the answer is a resounding zero. Yet, the show must go on. The glamour is important, after all, and plenty of money is waiting to be made.

Rape by Media. Society sits back and enjoys the blood, and then washes its hands. Pretends it is innocent. The torn lives are never fully healed.

As with the excessive smoker, adoption, also has fatal consequences. Unlike the tobacco industry, there is no large warning sign on the consent forms. This month, April 2004, two women took their lives due to the pain they suffered from being separated from their children. I dedicate this article to these two women, Cindy and Kate. May we stop manipulating and lying to each other with fatal consequences, and may we do it before too many more Cindys and Kates have to sacrifice their lives for us to take some notice.