

Panic Attack

Yes, I was there when it happened. No one seems to pay any attention to this. I was only one day old when it took place, but it was the biggest tragedy of my life. It left a hole in my heart and as I grow and get older so does it. Like any wound that goes untreated, it becomes worse as time goes on. No one sees it, but I can feel it. It is not something that has a name, because it has not been acknowledged. The vocabulary does not exist. It pierces into my heart and trickles down slowly, torturously into my toes. My head, miraculously, escaped unscathed. I can always hide there when I need to. This nameless, bitter pain hits me often with its unrelenting ubiquity. Although it is a part of me, I am a part of it too, inextricably interwoven with it, unable to free myself. It is like being in an aeroplane which is about to crash, there is no way out. I am inside it and we are both about to explode into a billion pieces, leaving a wreckage of burning misery and panic over the mountains on to which I fall. Except that the mountains are nowhere in sight. If they were, there might be an end to it. But there is no end. Instead of the mountains is only a vast, bottomless space. The anxiety stretches itself into this space with the power of a dragon, and I continue to freefall, helplessly into it. A space which has no definition, no beginning and no end. A space whose only intent is to swallow my soul and vomit out my limbs, one by one, crushed and defeated. Finally I realise that what I am feeling is the pain of separation. The anxiety has been immortalised, and fastened to the centre of my heart with an almighty, socially acceptable bang. There is no turning back, no way out. But my pain is also my truth. It remembers back to the first day of my life. It reminds me again, that I was there when it happened. I am not supposed to remember, and I am not supposed to ask questions. I am only supposed to be grateful. The two worlds, my outer and my inner do not correspond with each other, and I cannot understand why.

We who have this pain are the fortunate ones because we were given better lives. The grateful adoptees who have everything that we could have ever wished for. I find this judgment to be extremely arrogant. It is based on an assumption that life with our real mothers would have been a bad one. There is no truth whatsoever to this allegation, it is a complete unknown how our lives would have turned out, this scenario was never given a chance. Even logically it does not hold to reason. In order to be better than something, we need to have a comparison. You cannot compare a child's life as an adoptee to the life it was never allowed to live out with its truthful parents. Yet, the myth is well and alive. Apparently, we were saved from a miserable life by Adoption, and born again into a new, materially abundant world. Adoptive parents, of course, never lose their jobs, gamble away all their money, fight, hit each other, divorce. They never hit their adoptive children, the ones they wanted so much. They are the perfect parents. Adoption agencies check them out beforehand, just to make sure. There is something deeply disturbing about society's blind faith in the adoption agencies. I wonder about all the trivial things that people complain about from day to day, things organized by governments and local councils. We don't trust them to fill a hole in our pavements. We don't trust them to take away our garbage on time. Yet we trust them implicitly with the children of tomorrow.

In our effort to forget about this pain, we escape to dangerous places. Addictive, seductive places. Hard drugs, alcohol and other forms of self abuse are not uncommon among adoptees, as are sexual dysfunctions. The world of drugs and alcohol offers a seemingly safe place which floats just above reality, but as long as it is only just above, we feel safe. There is no pain there, but the downside is that there is also no real feeling. When we make decisions about our lives with the absence of feeling, the results are often catastrophic in their infliction of misery on innocent people.

Imagine the people in developing countries who suffer from diseases like HIV who are dying, simply because drug companies cannot make enough profit from these people. They can only make profit from rich, white, sick people. It is unnecessary. Imagine Iraq, which is probably the country that has been most damaged by the western world over the last few years, leading up to the recent

war orgy. I remember back to the famous interview with Madeleine Albright in the day of sanctions against Iraq. Asked whether she thought the price of 500,000 deaths was worth it, she replied yes. Profit over people. Is the price of half a million lives something that can be compared to anything? How arrogant it is to be in a position of such power, that you are able to decide whose lives are those worth sacrificing to justify your means. It seems, however, that the infliction of suffering in the name of big profit is a socially acceptable pastime and that the arrogance, cloaked with enough reasoning and justification also escapes unnoticed. With Iraq, the so called goal is freedom. What exactly, is the goal with adoption? Is it a moral cleansing project, where babies become legitimate and acceptable through them being passed on to married couples? Is it a money saving project for governments, whereby by passing the financial costs on to those with more wealth than the real family, the immediate financial burden is removed? It is time for decisions like these to be given a longer term view. Is it a means of creating huge profits for the middle man in the adoption game, the baby brokers? What, exactly, is the purpose of adoption? Giving unwanted babies a loving home is a myth. There is nothing unwanted about the babies of adoption. 'Unwanted' is another word created by the middle man, enabling adoptive parents to feel good about what they do. They would not adopt babies who were wanted, after all. It is a perfect label.

The glossiness of the helpless black child highlighted in the brochure at the adoption office that I was in sticks in my memory. Who would want to adopt this child? Well, who would not want to adopt him given how cute he is smiling at me. This is how the advertising works. It makes us feel that we are being good, doing the right thing, saving someone from a miserable fate. In that instant, despite gradually losing my blindness to the myths purported by the adoption industry, I was seduced. The advertising momentarily blinded my higher knowledge, and I was sitting back on the convenience of the western consumer conveyor belt. No longer consuming the Mars bar that I do not need, but now trading in human lives. Nowhere in this brochure does it mention that western policies have been responsible for much of the third world suffering, thus bringing about the circumstances which created the poverty that led to the family not being able to financially support the boy and nowhere does it mention that we need a drastic change of lifestyle to bring about the change that these countries really need - a change that might even reconnect us to a more wholesome sense of self and being. No, we westerners want to feel good about everything that we are doing. If we have created such destruction, at least we want to feel good about providing the finances to purchase the band aids. Nowhere in this brochure does it mention that this boy has a mother, who is suffering without him. Nowhere does it say that the healthiest thing would be to find a way to bring the boy back to her. No, the only option is to have this boy adopted. Whom, exactly, does this serve? The illusion of doing something good may be maintained, the illusion of doing the right thing may be maintained, but whom does it serve to take a suffering child away from its home, its culture and place it with strangers? Does it serve the boy? Does it serve his parents, his grandparents, who will never be allowed to have contact with him again?

Adoptees have become rather expert at hiding their suffering. We have learnt that adapting to our surroundings is a survival necessity. Sitting in the grass, we appear to be green and swimming in the sea we could dissolve into the wave, just in order to survive. We do not have a sense of self, because the safety of our origins was never allowed to grow within us. Our genesis, our growth is stunted, and emotionally we are all handicapped. Our lives are fraught with an anxiety that bears no relationship to the reality around us. Once, at the beginning of our lives, it did. It had a purpose. It was something, had we been able to express ourselves, that would have warned us that something was not ok. The anxiety would have spoken to us and led us back to our truth. But our consciousness was not developed, and so the anxiety was repressed and had to take on a subconscious life form which grew with every day, constantly trying to be heard, constantly needing to be pushed back down in order for us to survive. It is an anxiety that sees rejection and abandonment in everything that crosses its path. In its worst, blackest, moment the fear speaks of death and the feeling of being cut off from everything, being so separate and different to everything

that we see, that we cannot possibly belong to this world and everything in it. We are outsiders, strangers in our own body. We are denied the basic right of feeling comfortable inside our own skins.

Am I writing this in order to feel sorry for myself? No. It is simply how it is. A day in the life of an adoptee. The most frustrating thing about it, is that it is avoidable. Perhaps most death and misery on the planet is avoidable. But as long as power is concentrated and sucked in by the outrageously wealthy the status quo will remain. That this pain is real, should be noted by society. That it means that for the millions of people who have been adopted, that we live with emotional handicaps when this is unnecessary, should be noted by society. Society, each and every individual member of it, should rethink the meaning of the institution. It should start by listening to our stories instead of the hyped-up glossy mumbo jumbo advertising of the adoption agencies. They will by necessity create PR in order to promote their product, for their survival depends on it. It is of no importance to them that innocent people will have to carry a lifelong legacy of negativity as a result. Their goal is to survive, expand, make more money than they did in the last quarter. Like I said, decisions made in the absence of feeling are often dangerously flawed ones. Let's face it, if adoption was born of necessity, there would be no need to advertise. Adoption is not born of necessity. Mothers do not need to have their babies taken away from them, and babies do not need to be given to strangers.

Those of us living within the adoption paradigm must find the courage to speak out about it, honestly. It is a difficulty which borders on the impossible when denial and escape seem like our only saviours, but we are stronger than we think, and need to draw on our strength to speak our truth. Adoptive parents must learn to come to terms with their infertility, and not see bringing up other parents children as their own as the solution to that. It is not. Infertility must be recognised and grieved. They cannot have their own children, and using another human life to hide from this fact should become criminalized. It is tantamount to child trafficking. Adoption agencies will also have to cease to traffic in human beings in order to make a living, as will many other companies all around the globe. Cloaked in fancy terms such as "administration costs", paying \$20,000 to pick your own baby should be a high priority for those who wish to put the morals of the world back to rights.

The hidden legacy for the adoptee is often a legacy which is hidden from the adoptee. Our ability to deny the truth from ourselves is miraculous, and to the point where we needed to do this to survive, also understandable. Survival is, however, possible beyond denial. We have been denied many things in our lives – our roots, our heritage, our family, the truth - and the legacy of panic and anxiety will most likely remain with us, not only to our own detriment, but also to the detriment of those who are closest to us. They will also have to live with the child and baby-like emotions which plague us well into adulthood and threaten to decimate us.

Beyond denial is where we can search for our truth. However painful it may be, it is only by touching the truth that we can begin to bring about the positive change that the poisoned systems of our society so desperately crave. The poisoned system of adoption urgently requires detoxification.