

## *American Adoption Congress Decree (Fall 2003)*

### **Adoptees Finally Speak Out!**

“Do you feel that way, too?” “You also have mixed feelings about your adoption experience?” “I’m glad to know I’m not alone anymore.” “Is it really true that anger can be a sign that we’re coming to life?” “Can I really be a wounded healer?”

These are comments I have heard on a regular basis when leading all-adoptee support groups for the past several years. The experience of leading groups, coupled with my personal integration of my dual identity, motivated me to write *Twenty Life-Transforming Choices Adoptees Need to Make*.

Through the support groups, I have had the joy of seeing fellow adoptees go from the point of curiosity about their origins to peace concerning their past and eagerness about their future. Group members find validation, perhaps for the first time in their lives.

In retrospect, I believe I had a “victim” mindset about my adoption. It was only through learning to identify that mindset (at my first AAC conference, in a talk led by beloved author, Betty Jean Lifton) that I was freed to see the necessity of making healthy choices that would change my life and bring me into the abundance for which I was created. Sometimes the saying that “adoption is a lifelong journey” can sound as if we were victims of a horrible fate—as if a ball and chain were secured around our ankles, impeding every step in life.

I knew that it was different! I knew that there could be healing and that some of life’s most precious lessons could be learned because my life had been touched by adoption. For example, I would not know the deep, comforting presence of God in my life until my birth mother rejected me. Had I not suffered from a lifelong lack of self-esteem, I would not have known that, in God’s eyes, I am a jewel among jewels.

Knowing psychological principles about adoption were not enough for me. They led me to understanding, but stopped short of healing. I needed a spiritual underpinning that couldn't be shaken by life's tempests. Various types of spiritual beliefs are represented in adoption literature, such as New Age and Eastern religions, but I wanted to offer something to the large segment of people desiring to learn about adoption from a Judeo-Christian perspective. My own faith in Jesus Christ was inseparable from my personal adoption journey.

With these experiences and beliefs in mind, I envisioned a book that would provide a similar healing experience for my fellow adoptees, and would then translate into future, real-life connections. It would be like a party where we could sit and "talk adoption" for hours. I wanted to see fellow adoptees discover that we have been adopted for a purpose, that no one else can take our places in human history, that we are not a mistake, but that we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Would my beliefs be shared by the 70 participants in my research project? No, we didn't all have cookie-cutter spiritual beliefs, but there was a spiritual foundation for the majority.

The book includes topics that are rarely, if ever, discussed, such as how we feel about our birth father and in which order we desire to meet our birth parents—birth mothers or fathers first? Intentionally included is a chapter about the incredible women who gave us our first home for the first nine months of life and within whose wombs we carried on our first conversations during the last trimester of those nine months.

Because it is based on so many in-depth conversations, *Twenty Life-Transforming Choices Adoptees Need to Make* is a book by and for adoptees—not another book that speaks about us as if we were specimens in a Petri dish.