



pact's

point of view

The newsletter for adoptive families with children of color

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## Teen Corner

# A Letter From My Heart

### by Melissa Cunningham

*Melissa is an African American girl, adopted at birth in 1995 by a white couple. She met her birth mother and siblings for the first time in 2008 while she was in California to attend Pact Camp. In this letter, she gives voice to her desire for deeper connection with her birth family. While most adopted kids her age are not willing or able to articulate so clearly what they are feeling, many experience a similar mix of pain, sadness, and longing as they try to sort out their real and imagined relationships with their birth families. Melissa's adoptive parents understand how important this process is for her and have always encouraged her to express herself honestly, even when her words contain pain they cannot fix and reflect deeply conflicted loyalties—feelings shared by many adoptees, in both open and closed adoptions.*

I would really like to have more of a life with my real family. I feel so alone here sometimes and I just wish I had my brothers and my sister to talk to. I want to be able to see how my life would be as it should have been. I know it wouldn't be easy, it would be probably the hardest thing in the world I have put my mind to, but I can fully and most heartedly say that I'm not content here without knowing them. I know my adoptive parents love me and I guess I love them too but I feel like a part of me is missing. I have a hole in my heart and they will fill it for me even if we don't get along to start sometimes. But [my birth brother] Sam told me that when life puts a wall in your path take a deep breath and leap. I've found my wall and I've held my breath and I'm ready to jump. I'm not talking about seeing [my birth family] all the time but I would like to have a life with them so when I'm older I can say remember the good times we had. But here I'm an only child and I'm lonely. I'm different than the people that surround me but all I want is to fit in. I really love the life I have lived so far but I would have to say if I was reborn I would like to be reborn into my real family the ones I was destined to be with. I'm not unhappy here. My adoptive parents are really nice but no matter what I WILL ALWAYS LOVE MY BIRTH FAMILY!!

I always have my adoptive parents. Even when I didn't know [my birth brothers and sister] were out there (which was up until a year ago) I have always told my friends that I had lots of brothers and sisters and I always had lots of beds in my room, which is unusual but I always had a feeling that there were four of us. I wrote in most of my stories that my oldest brother was called Sam and even though he is the second oldest I was still pretty close. I guess I always knew they were out there.

In second grade I wrote a story called "The Day I Was Born." It was about the day I was adopted and the way I remember it, which is remarkable. I used to dream pictures of my mom with a big Afro holding my hand as we stood outside in the

thick grass. Even though I have never lived with my birth mom I still feel very connected to her and I will always see her as my mom. When she sent me an email asking me to call her Regina it stabbed my heart. My own mother wanted me to call her by her real name and again I felt alone. I know she is only trying to protect me to let me have a better life. I know that this could be a painful choice for me but I know I'll never be truly content without knowing what my birth family is really like. I don't want to hurt anyone's feelings but what I would truly LOVE is to be a part of both families. I know this is a huge thing one that probably isn't worth even dreaming of but that's how I feel and I don't think I can really go through the whole of life without this one thing. And when I said I felt alone I was serious, I actually went through a long period of when I was depressed BEFORE I KNEW ABOUT YOU GUYS, I had to see a couple of therapists and I still am actually, but ever since I started emailing you in the summer last year I started getting better and when I saw you this summer it was then I saw my life. I saw myself reflected in it. I became the happiest I have ever been. That day showed me the light. It made me work harder because on my adoption papers my birth mom said that she likes educated people so I have tried to pay attention in school. I want to make her proud and show that I don't hate her for what she did. She showed me another life and I'm happy for that. She should never regret what she did but I wish she would truly accept me as her daughter even if that's just as far as it will ever go.

I guess I was wondering if there was a chance that if BOTH my moms agree (adopted and birth) to let me be able to see my birth family more and maybe even go on a small holiday with them. Like for example when I met my birth mom she said that we should go to Vegas not to gamble but because she loved the way the lights shine and glow in the darkness and maybe one day we could all go on a FAMILY holiday – all seven of us!!!