



pact's

point of view

The newsletter for adoptive families with children of color

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## **The Body's Wisdom** by Carol Schaefer

The young woman's pregnancy was barely showing. We stood together outside an Assembly hearing room. The bill that had brought us there concerned protecting the rights of mothers to choose what was in the best interests of their children. With a certainty and a ferocity that astounded me, she declared that this baby she was carrying was not hers, not in any way. This baby belonged to the adoptive parents with whom she was now living. They had already decorated the nursery. My hand instinctively rose to protect my belly. Hers remained resolutely by her side. Her growing baby seemed so vulnerable in her softly rounded belly. I realized, with surprise, that we were on opposite sides of the issue.

"I am doing the most unselfish, loving thing for this baby." As she spoke the same words that had been spoken twenty-six years before by the Catholic nun who had been my social worker, I found myself in a strange time warp. "This baby is theirs. They are wonderful. I will have my own children when I am ready. Right now, I have too much to do to be a mother. I have to finish college and start my career first. The father is not the man I want to be with for the rest of my life."

Our patriarchal culture does not teach us, as all ancient spiritual cultures did, that becoming a mother is a rite of passage, a sacred initiation into a new life. Neither age nor circumstance has any bearing on the initiate. A new mother can never again be the same person she was before birthing her baby into this world. More importantly, she will not want to be.

One week after giving birth to my first child, I was back in college, milk still leaking from my breasts, I know now, in response to my baby's cries. All I thought about was my baby. I felt strangely detached from my old familiar surroundings.

"Ah, but adoption is different today. In the old days, when you gave up your child, it was in a closed system.

Your experience is completely different from mine. I am going to have all the counseling I need afterward to help me with my 'grieving process.'" She gazed at me as if I were a relic of the Dark Ages. How could I explain to her that counseling was only going to aid and abet denial. Nothing but being the true parent to the child she was carrying would end her grieving. A mother's soul is violated when full responsibility is not taken for her baby's soul.

One of the gifts that I received from my experience in the Catholic home was that I had the opportunity to know my son's spirit. From the silence and isolation at the home, I learned the truth through my own inner knowing. Had I been out in the distracting world and never taught to "tune in." I may never have known to commune with my child's spirit. Our busy, materialistic culture has lost the reverence for this truth and it is children who suffer the most. Babies are conscious in the womb. Hypnotherapy is revealing that they (we) know (knew) their (our) mothers' feelings and become (became) imprinted by them while in the womb. What can be the experience of these babies whose mothers are detaching from them before birth?

In the Dark Ages of the closed adoption system, few mothers were allowed to hold their babies after birth. Extreme measures were taken to prevent bonding: heavy doses of drugs were given during birth and after; babies were whisked out of the delivery rooms so the mothers were never allowed to see them; some mothers were told their babies had died. Still this incredible bond was never severed.

Today, adoptive parents are being told that being in the delivery room will insure bonding. I am certain that it does indeed create a strong, heartfelt attachment in the adoptive parents for the child. But the child experiences no such sentiments. The baby wants only the true mother, the one who has just brought him/her into the world, the only mother s/he knows.

We are all Body, Mind and Spirit. In our infancy and childhood, our Body is the teacher of our Mind and our Spirit. Without the loving touch of our original mothers through infancy and childhood, we are to some degree wounded forever. An adoptive family is created with our spirits and our minds. Connections are deeply felt. Yet only through our original mother and our blood ties do we have the opportunity to learn about relationships formed by Body, Mind and Spirit.

When adopted people reunite with their original families, whether they like what they find or not, they all have the experience of finally feeling a part of the planet. This is not an intellectual recognition, but a visceral one. Genetic information that the body so hungered for is at long last received. The empty, longing void begins to fill, but never as it would have.

The joys for all involved with relationships formed by adoption come from the interplay with our minds and our spirits. The losses occur because of the unnaturalness felt by the bodies involved. The original mother feels an emptiness only her child (and no amount of counseling) can ultimately fill. Her child will always grieve the loss of not being nurtured by the body from whom s/he came. And the adoptive mother feels out of touch in an unexplainable way, because her body does not truly "know" her child's bond, this child she loves so much. Open adoptions are becoming the preferred method, really because all parties are sensing that the body connection is vital to the mind and spirit of the child and therefore to both families.

"I have already made up my mind. They told me that I would want to change my mind once the baby is born, so that I need to have my list and be surrounded by people who remind me of my reasons." Her plan was unshakable.

The mind has thousands of thoughts throughout the day. Only the Heart, uninfluenced by the Mind's desires, knows the truth. Of course she will have a change of heart when the baby is born. She will have experienced a sacred initiation. Her body will have a new wisdom and a knowing that before it could only guess about. Her motherhood will finally be real, the bond forged and felt. If her baby goes to anyone else after birth, that soul will be asked to give itself up, create a self based on cues not of its nature, in order to adapt and survive. How can anyone ask that of a child, unless the circumstances are dire?

Many of us are out of touch with these truths, because we were born into a culture that drugged our mothers enough to put them out at the time of our birth and that whisked us away from our mothers' bodies, isolating us in nurseries. Our inner knowing as women was lost at that moment, and now our minds can only begin to relearn what our spirits have never really forgotten.

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