

Hello and Thankyou for the opportunity to tell my story as a relinquished baby.

My adopted name is Wendy Donna Willis (married name now separated Vanek).
Given birth name Kim Machelles Berg, biological father's surname Diesing.
Born [REDACTED] at 7.20 Royal women's hospital Melbourne.

I write this as a 55 year old woman who struggles daily from the ongoing trauma and effects of adoption. As long as I can remember I knew I was adopted along with a younger brother and sister also adopted from different birth mothers.

As I child my parents loved and cared for me.
At school I fantasised that my father was famous (my adoptive father died suddenly when I was nine, he was 45) due to this it was my biological father I wanted to know more about.

There were times in life I was told "their not your real parents"
"Oh you look like your mum"
"Your lucky aren't you to have a good life".

I often look back and remember, but not understanding until I was older that I felt I just didn't fit in. I loved my family however the impact of being adopted was overwhelming with no one to talk to about this or any services involved throughout my life.

Through other circumstances I started seeing a trauma based psychologist and have continued this for 14 years. On my first visit I remember being told that although I may not believe this initially, the impact of being left after birth in the hospital for 6 weeks until I was adopted had affected my whole sense of identity and attachment. Why was I left in the hospital, who can fill that hole in my life that I feel, why is there no photo of me until I was adopted? My inner child screams out because nobody loved you, you weren't good enough to keep.

I received a letter while sitting in the car with my adoptive mother when I was 23 in 1989. She asked what it was and I lied to her as the letter was from the adoption agency saying "I write to you in relation to a sensitive matter concerning your family background. I appreciate that you may not be aware of this matter. My intention is purely to Inform you of the present situation rather than cause you distress. The matter to which I refer is that of your adoption". I vividly remember thinking, I knew that but what about those that didn't and received similar letters.

My birth mother made contact and I was told my birth father had died. I had lost both my father figures. I was able to visit his grave and what I remember is that there was no recognition of my existence, my name was absent on his headstone.

My biological mother told me she named me "Kim Machelles" in the hope that if this name was kept she would know it was me from the different way she spelt Machelles.

We met many times and I was told that her parents were alcoholics, she was 18, there were incidents of sexual abuse in the family, no supporting pensions for mothers, my biological father had only recently arrived from Germany and I was therefore adopted.

My biological mother gave me a ring she wore into hospital when in labor, I believe this was so it seemed they were engaged or married.

My biological mother never saw me after I was born and tells me that her breasts were wrapped in bandages to suppress her milk. Her mother whom I met remembers seeing me being taken and remembered my black hair and signed the admission papers. For many years on my birthday nothing was said but it was known in secret what the day meant.

We connected for a few years and visited one another. My biological parents stayed together, married and had two more children. My biological sister remembers feeling there was a secret and thought she was adopted, later to find out that I was the adopted one.

Contact became difficult for myself as I felt that I was there to fix my biological mother, heal her and her ongoing issues. How could I when I was the traumatised child?

I would go months without contacting her or my siblings with an uncomfortable feeling of not knowing who I was, where I fitted in, or feeling I would let people down and disappoint them. I struggled with who and when to call my biological mother "mum" and the life with my siblings I was denied and how I may hurt the feelings of both my adoptive and biological siblings.

I continue every day with this inner struggle. Sense of worth, being not enough, never good enough, which person am I, an indescribable cumulative grief, loss and trauma.

Who had a right to play god with my life? Good or bad, my choice and identity was taken from me, why? Was it the societal norms of the time and the feelings around illegitimacy? This was my life and government, organisations and individuals removed it without my consent.

I empathise with relinquishing mothers, fathers and families however this is my story and I was a new born baby who was not afforded the right of bonding and attachment in those crucial first weeks.

To those who were part of this, shame on you all, you need to live with what you have done. Where were your morals, and ethical responsibility, how could you ever think there would be no consequences?

Close your eyesand open them now. Your daughters child has just been taken from her ,all because she is young , single ,without support , and you will never know about her child how do you feel?

I don't fit in anywhere, I feel I am never good enough, I cling to any form of closeness and attachment to my own children, and if they are not contacting me or we may disagree on something I internally feel I have done something wrong or am not loved or wanted.

As my children have children, these feelings resurface and I go to my place of remembering how much I loath my birthday, Christmas and life events.

I don't know if I want to connect again with my biological mother for many reasons. In one conversation after a time of no contact I was told "I could have not had you, and about laneways, backstreet abortion clinics and what could be done with knitting needles. That in family it is give and take, you have therapy and get on with it".

This was not my family, I was taken and not given the right or choice to be with them. I'm not saying that's what I wanted it's what happened.

I am, through ongoing trauma based therapy slowly learning as the logical adult woman to sooth and heal the little girl who was given away, had her identity taken and adopted by a good family. The little girl, who through life puts up walls to protect herself, sabotages anything good in her life to show she is not loved or good enough as she was given up, listens to people saying “don’t think like that and just move on”.

The little girl who desperately wants to have healthy relationships with her biological and adoptive family and struggles with all of the above fears, rejection or pausing contact and hurting those around her, never intentionally as she doesn’t know how to attach or who she is.

Please listen to the little girl and her ongoing life long need for information, trauma based therapy, support for all affected and compensation for all the therapy I/she has needed and for what I/she will endure for a lifetime of something so unforgivable it can never be healed. Understand the impact, acknowledge my pain and suffering from past practices of willing or unwilling relinquishment of babies. Allow me the right to feel wanted and believe I am enough. Take away as much as possible my ongoing mental health issues, inner conflicts, social anxiety, depression, complex trauma, PTSD, fears of abandonment, and triggers.

The psychological trauma from adoption has lifelong, community and intergenerational consequences. I speak from a lived experience.

Who am I, what makes me who I am?

Why do I feel connected to my biological family and at the same time feel so uncomfortable and pulled apart? Why do I feel I don’t fit with my adoptive family unless I am proving I am good enough, as much as I love them and they are the family I know?

Why as a child and now, do I feel I am only praised and good enough if I am doing what others need, or always being there for others at the expense of my own self?

Afford me the decency and right to not feel abandon and never good enough.

I HAD NO CHOICE I WAS A BABY

My attachment was not afforded me, I stayed in a marriage full of domestic and emotional violence because I thought families had to stay together as I wasn’t given that right. This is how adoption shaped me and due to this I now struggle with that impact and how it has shaped my children’s sense of identity and impacted my parenting.

Sadly I was only told this week that there are records I can apply for on my adoption. Please tell me why I was never told that and why my right to my identity was taken?

My whole central factor in life around my behaviour and actions are based on the little girl’s innate belief that she is not good enough. The adult me protects her through building walls and sabotage instead of those decisions being driven by the belief that despite all the trauma I/she can believe, we are good enough, which should be driven as the adult not the child, rather than avoiding shame.

Even after long term therapy I’m still not and may never be good enough.

I am still here fighting this constant battle to soothe that child part in me.

This requires so much energy and now I am starting to talk to the little girl and use strategies. This is my life story on the impact of adoption.

Thankyou to those who have allowed part of my story to be shared.