

Introduction

I feel that *THE GIFT OF ROOTS* serves a special need within the adoption community. Adoptive parents have long needed to hear first hand from an adoptive parent about the special role he and/or she can play in supporting, connecting and unifying the birth and nurturing life threads of the adopted person. Dorothy Morrow's book offers a positive and reassuring direction that helps to overcome the fear and ambivalence that has plagued adoptive parents for so long.

Although adoption is a world wide phenomenon that has been with us since humans congregated into groups and formed communities, today it is more widespread in our country than in all of the other countries in the world put together. It developed differently here where U.S. citizens came from all over the world and left their national identities behind to a large extent. They intermarried and negated the importance of their original heritage. Many immigrants lost contact with their families and their children knew virtually nothing of their forefathers in the old world. For childless couples to feel comfortable adopting children of either different or unknown backgrounds was surely a unique American phenomenon.

Only recently has genealogy emerged as a widespread interest of Americans as we see them seeking out their roots and discovering their provenance. Provenance is a term used largely in the art world to identify and authenticate a work of art through proving its origin and the path traveled throughout the years. It is a useful term in the world of adoption where adopted persons have been denied their authenticity through lack of any root connections.

A small group of adopted persons and birth parents have always quietly and secretly searched for each other, but it is only in the past three decades that large numbers of active, militant reformers have openly advocated searching and the end of secrecy and sealed records. Adoptive parents have been largely omitted from the equation, I believe unfairly. We, the professionals in the field, are probably responsible for fostering the notion that in a good adoption, the adoptee will have no need to search, and that birth parents need to put the experience of bearing and relinquishing a child behind them, and to move on. Neither of those statements is true or useful, and it is time we gave adoptive parents credit for being able to live with the reality of their children's dual identity needs.

THE GIFT OF ROOTS addresses these needs in a sensitive and clear way. In this book, Dorothy Morrow, from personal experience, illuminates the subject

with both candor and compassion. *THE GIFT OF ROOTS* will encourage adoptive parents to give their sons and daughters permission and freedom to express their need for root connections by openly searching and contacting and establishing a relationship with their birth families. To be supportive before, during and after reunion is the greatest gift that adoptive parents can give their children. When adopted individuals have successfully merged their birth and adoptive families into one extended family, their quest for their own identity is solved. The missing pieces of their personal jigsaw puzzle are found and put in their rightful places, and the whole makes them whole. Most reassuring is the fact that, in our experience, reunion with birth parents not only strengthens the adoptee's sense of self, but also strengthens the relationships within the adoptive family.

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