

# Anything is Possible

*Joelle Tomlinson, a fourth year journalism student in Toronto, shares her story on what it means to be adopted.*

Q

Does open adoption mean that one day I will lose my child to the birth family?

A

No, the bond and attachment created with your child is the most significant. One can have many key relationships in a lifetime.

I'm used to getting confused looks from people when I'm out with my parents. It's not every day that you see an African-Canadian child with two white parents. In fact, my parents are the prototypical, traditional white parents – in the physical sense. I am the opposite.

I was surprised to find that according to a Canadian adoption website, around 58 per cent of unplanned pregnancies in Canada result in the woman choosing to parent and 40 per cent end in abortion. Only 2 per cent of all unplanned pregnancies will lead to adoption. I consider myself blessed to be part of this overwhelmingly small but significant minority.

My birth mother was 17 when she found out she was pregnant with me; she was in her senior year of high school in Saskatoon, SK. My birth father had just moved there from Eritrea, a small war-torn country in Africa. There was no future for them. Faced with a tough situation, they made an even tougher decision. They gave me up.



*“I respect my birthparents for giving me up, for doing what they thought was right, at the time. To say they were successful in providing me with a good life would be an understatement. They provided me with the best life a kid could ask for.”*

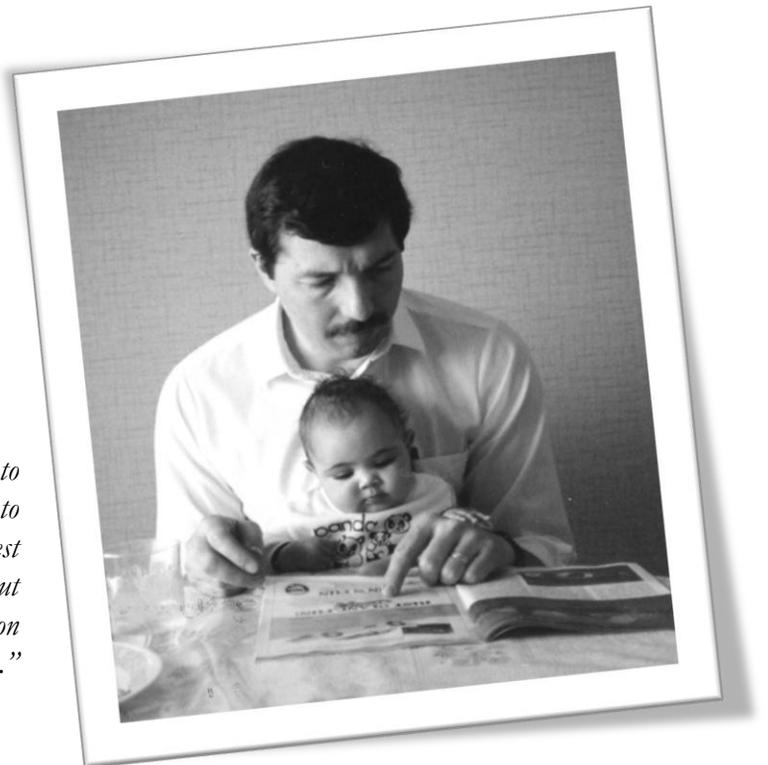
*- Joelle, Adoptee*

My parents have always been nothing but honest with me concerning my adoption. For this reason, I have become comfortable talking openly about it. When a person discovers I am adopted, they are always afraid to ask questions. I know they are just trying to be respectful, but I have nothing to hide.

I once asked my mother what the best part about adopting a child is. She simply answered, “Holding you for the first time in my arms and knowing that you were my little girl.” She knew, from that moment, that she had to share me with the abundance of people that would be involved in my life, and just like she has — I know that sharing my experience can help educate others about this process and what it can do for everyone involved.

What has adoption given me? I would not be in Toronto, living out-of-province, completing my bachelor of journalism. I would not have a father. For me, that equals not having one of my best friends. I have truly gained a different perspective on the saying, ‘blood is thicker than water.’ I don’t need to share DNA with my family to know that that is not always the case. I, along with every other adopted person out there, am a poster child for the time-old ‘nature versus nurture’ debate.

*“My dad is loud, passionate and loves to read. Some kids have fairytales read to them; I was being dictated the latest avionics magazine. I’m no scientist, but it’s fairly easy to tell where my obsession of reading came from.”*



I was adopted at birth, and it was an open adoption. There are two main adoption processes to choose from: closed and open adoption. Closed adoption allows minimal contact between biological parent and child, and maximum privacy is maintained. Open adoption, on the other hand, allows as much contact between the child and biological parents that is mutually agreed on. Anything is possible.

I am an advocate for open adoption. I share a close relationship with my birth mother, and I've grown to truly appreciate and respect her decision to give me up. Her unselfish decision is a huge part of my identity.

Some theories about adoption talk about “ghosts” that follow the adopted child throughout his or her life. These ghosts include the person they would have been had they not been adopted, the ghost of their birth mother and birth father, and the ghost of the adoptive family's child that could have been.

I can attest that I constantly wonder how I would have turned out if I hadn't been adopted. Being adopted is such an integral part of my identity — I would never want to give that up. It is amazing how our lives are a mere result of cause and effect. If one small piece of my past were altered, it would change the world today. I respect my birthparents for giving me up, for doing what they thought was right, at the time. To say they were successful in providing me with a good life would be an understatement. They provided me with the best life a kid could ask for.



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