# Statements Guaranteed to Upset Your Favorite Adoptee

## And Facts You Should Know Before You Speak

*(excerpts from* The Ten Irritants*)*

By G. William Troxler, Ph.D., adoptee searching

**You were so lucky to be raised by your adoptive parents**.

Maybe. Maybe not. But how do you know? And compared to what other set of parents? Parents make huge differences in a child's life. Some parents are extraordinary and a few are savage, evil beings who shouldn't be trusted to care for a wind up toy. When you conclude I was lucky to be raised by my adoptive parents you are obligated to know what kind of parents my birthmother and possibly my birthfather would have been. Your view that I was lucky also demands that you know the parenting qualities of other prospective adoption parents of the time who, but for the randomness of it all, might have raised me. I cannot know any of that and I don't believe you can either. My adoptive home is in fact not a piece of luck.

**It doesn't matter you were adopted. I think you are a fine person.**

Thank you for thinking I am a fine person. But you've missed the point of my search and the meaning of my origins. I am not ashamed of my life or my beginnings. I'm not looking for my birthmother in order to establish credibility or to bring some notion of honor to my life. Credibility and honor come from what we do with our lives; they are not qualities parents can give to or take away from their children.

I search because I can never be whole without knowledge of my heritage. Listen to the words of author Salman Rushdie: "Those who do not have the power over the story that dominates their life, power to retell it, rethink it, deconstruct it, joke about it, and change it as times change, truly are powerless, because they cannot think new thoughts." I search because I cannot understand my present or define my future without knowledge of my past. You see, it does matter.

**You shouldn't search.**

***Version #1: It will hurt your adoptive parents.***

I have no wish to hurt my adoptive parents. I would never do anything to intentionally hurt them. My search is not vindictive. My adoptive parents raised me and have great claim on some part of the quality of my character as an adult. I owe them a lot, but I do not owe them, or anyone, my humanity.

When you assert that I must not search because searching will hurt my adoptive parents' feelings you insist that I remain a child in perpetuity. In your view my needs, hopes and goals will forever be subordinate to those of my adoptive parents. Your view requires that my actions as an adult must be subject to veto by my adoptive parents. You see me as chattel, property, owned and controlled by my adoptive parents.

When you allow someone else to describe your reality, you are no longer in control of your life, you are no longer a free human being. I do not belive that my birthright diminishes my humanity; therefore, I search. I will search with care and concern for the feelings of everyone, but I will search.

***Version #2: You could be very upset by what you find*.**

That is true. If my search is successful, I may learn things that are very troubling. This negative potential must be weighted against the positive possibilities of a joyful reunion with birth relatives, of earning about medical predispositions, of knowing my cultural heritage. Ignorance is never superior to knowledge. Truth is always enlightening, while secrecy is always mystifying, threatening and frightening. Ignorance is not bliss. It is terror.

I search to know the truth. I accept that the truth could be either a love story or a tale of horror. In the best case, like a modern child of divorce, I will have a complex and rich set of family relationships. In the worst case, I will have to accept that I am both a love child and a victim of love. But however that search ends, the story is mine. I have a right to it and the strength to integrate that story into my life.

**The USA is an advanced country, a world leader. Many thoughtful legislators have concluded that adoption records should be sealed. In a democracy that the way it works. The greatest good for the largest number of people. Opening adoption records is obviously too risky.**

The USA is the *only* developed nation which seals adoption records. That's right, your country, the world leader, is the only developed nation that seals adoption records. The rest of the developed world has found the sealing adoption records is morally wrong, harms public health. And is too expensive for the government to administer. Many, if not most, other developed nations sealed their adoption records at one time. But, by the mid-1970's all of them concluded that sealed records don't work for anyone.

Who owns the moral ground? The government and its law or the adoptees and their searches? Who owns the economic highground? The government and its costly bureaucracies dedicated to guarding the seal on the records or the adoptees and birthmothers with their self-funded searches to reclaim what government has denied? And where do you stand? On the moral ground? On the economic ground? Or with the law, because it is the law?

I hope you now understand that: 1) I wasn't lucky; 2) a person who does not own the basic story of their life is not a free person; 3) Searching is not a threat to my adoptive parents or to me; 4) Current adoption law which mandates sealed records is morally wrong. Economically indefensible and harmful to the individuals it binds.

Now you know. Knowing obligates you to action. Challenge these laws. Help free adoptees and birthmothers. Spend five minutes and lick a few stamps to write your legislator and demand that your state open adoption records to birthmothers and adoptees.

**"No one can make us feel inferior without out consent."**

***~ Eleanor Roosevelt***

I do not consent.

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