

CHAIN OF LIFE

A FEMINIST ADOPTION REFORM NEWSLETTER

Issue 4 • November/December 1989 ▲ P.O. Box 8081, Berkeley, CA94707

EDITOR: JANINE BAER

"You're never mirrored;
there are no role models."

Lesbian and Gay Adoption Issues -- Workshop at A.A.C.

For the second time in its history, The American Adoption Congress offered a workshop about gays and lesbians at its annual conference in April 1989, when Amy Jane Cheney and Cindy Tananis presented a workshop entitled "Lesbian and Gay Adoption Issues" at the New York City conference. Amy, from San Francisco, and Cindy, of Pittsburgh, are lesbian adoptees who had not met prior to the conference. In their correspondence, they were encouraged to find that their ideas about the relationship between being adopted and being lesbian were similar.

Adoptees are viewed as perpetual children by legislatures and courts.

Being a lesbian and an adoptee can create feelings of "terminal uniqueness," said Cindy. "You're never mirrored; there are no role models." A partial resolution for this predicament can come from finding other lesbian adoptees. Amy started a lesbian adoptee group in San Francisco about four years ago. It has been "the best thing I have ever done for me" she said. In contrast to life in her adoptive family, where she felt she didn't fit, Amy feels she belongs to the group just by being who she is. She recommends starting this kind of group.

Although a drive for connectedness was always important to Cindy, she doesn't feel connected to her adoptive family the way non-adopted people feel in their birth families. In addition, having reunited with her birthfamily, she does not feel connected with them in the way she might have if she had not been separated by adoption. Her need to connect with others does not mix well with her fear of abandonment and rejection. "I want to connect, but I'm afraid of you, so I can't connect," she explained; a situation that affects intimacy with her family, friends, and lovers.

Like Amy, Cindy grew up feeling she didn't fit with her adoptive family and never would. Rather than being "placed" in her family, she felt "displaced." Amy mentioned that she looks different from her adoptive parents and their biological son, even though she has blond hair and blue eyes like her brother. She wonders if becoming a lesbian was a way to connect with someone who is similar to her physically, as well as a way to equalize power in relationships, since she felt "one down" in her family as an adoptee.

"Toxic shame" and "chronic grief" described Cindy's experience as a lesbian adoptee. Toxic shame comes from feeling not that she made a mistake, but that "I am a mistake." Chronic grief describes the ongoing feeling of loss from being separated from one's original family. As a lesbian, this is combined with another loss, the loss of the heterosexual dream, of creating an "Ozzie and Harriet" family. Cindy realized that she does not want to adopt children. Amy, too, mentioned that she had been terrified of being a lesbian because it meant she would never have a family.

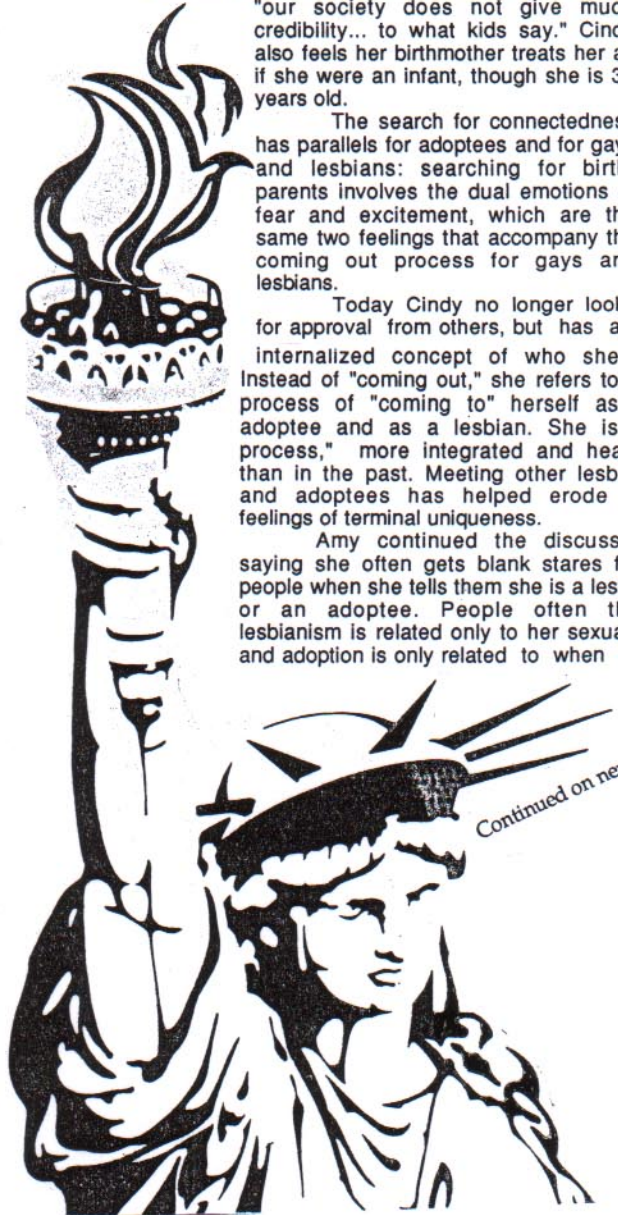
Lesbian and gay adoptees face two sets of stereotypes, Cindy continued. She assumed the workshop members were already familiar with gay and lesbian stereotypes. Adoptees are viewed as perpetual children by legislatures and courts. It is easy for people to ignore adoptees' views because

"our society does not give much credibility... to what kids say." Cindy also feels her birthmother treats her as if she were an infant, though she is 31 years old.

The search for connectedness has parallels for adoptees and for gays and lesbians: searching for birthparents involves the dual emotions of fear and excitement, which are the same two feelings that accompany the coming out process for gays and lesbians.

Today Cindy no longer looks for approval from others, but has an internalized concept of who she is. Instead of "coming out," she refers to the process of "coming to" herself as an adoptee and as a lesbian. She is "in process," more integrated and healthy than in the past. Meeting other lesbians and adoptees has helped erode her feelings of terminal uniqueness.

Amy continued the discussion, saying she often gets blank stares from people when she tells them she is a lesbian or an adoptee. People often think lesbianism is related only to her sexuality, and adoption is only related to when she



Continued on next page...



was born. They tend to assume that choosing one sexual orientation is based on rejection of the other, as when Amy's aunt asked her if she were rejecting men by being a lesbian. This assumption reminds Amy of people who ask if her search for her birth family is a rejection of her adoptive parents. "Being a lesbian and an adoptee affects all of who I am and how I view the world; and how I do and do not fit into the world," she explained. "It was only by coming to terms as a lesbian that I was able to come to terms with being an adoptee."

Cindy added that sexual expression is a fairly small part of being a lesbian or a gay man -- she knows many celibate lesbians and gay men -- just as being physically handed over as a baby was a relatively small experience as an adoptee.

Amy told the workshop how she chose her name. Amy was the name given by her adoptive parents. Jane came from the name "Jane Doe" on her birth certificate and also is her birthmother's middle name. Cheney is her birth father's last name. She chose it because she wanted to be connected to a big family, and there are a lot of people in his family. Amy embraces her illegitimacy; being an adoptee means she is connected to no man and to no family name.

One thing that feels sad to Amy, as an adoptee and as a lesbian, is the lack of ritual for her life experiences. For example, her birthday is a hard time as an adoptee because it was the day she was taken from her mother. Her goal is to come up with new holidays and rituals.

The remainder of the workshop involved questions and discussion from participants, one of whom had driven for three hours just to be able to attend that workshop. (Unfortunately, many of the questions and comments are difficult to hear on the tape.)

Someone asked about coming out as a lesbian while searching. Amy answered that it took her over a year to come out to her birthfather. She wanted to get to know her relatives first before risking rejection. Cindy met her birthmother ten years ago and did not come out. Not coming out, said Cindy, "sends a negative message to myself." For a gay or lesbian person, rejection can be a constant fear; you can be so obsessed with rejection that you go nowhere, she said.

A woman workshop participant joked about her own uniqueness as an Asian lesbian adoptee, saying she is looking for other Asian women who are "adopted, left-handed and short." She was born in Korea but raised "WASP" in the U.S. She moved to Boston to explore her Asian identity, joining a group for Asian lesbians and gay men. Now she is trying to find other women of color in Boston for an adoptee support group.

Another woman said she didn't feel guilty when she had a sexual relationship with a woman: "I didn't feel like there was any script written for me to be straight." This reminded Amy that a positive aspect of being an adoptee is being outside of things in the way this woman's comment suggested.

A man said that male adoptees tend to be non-searchers. He also mentioned a study that said stressful pregnancy has something to do with the propensity of children of these pregnancies to become gay. "Well then there's a whole lot of people here [at the conference] who need to come out," interjected Cindy, since all relinquishment births would tend to be stressful by definition.

A woman adoption social worker who also has a private practice with lesbians and gay men raised the question of lesbians who want to adopt. Amy responded that she purposely avoided talking about that topic. It has been a hard issue for her in San Francisco because a lot of lesbians who are adopting or having children by donor insemination "don't understand the issue from the other side." They aren't connecting to the adoption movement.

"What about all the birthparents who are searching who are at the conference? Are they so worried that when they search they're going to find a lesbian -- they're going to find a gay man?"

She brought copies of the debate that took place in *Coming Up!* [now *Bay Times*], a gay and lesbian newspaper in San Francisco.

Another lesbian said, "Being an adoptee, I have a very strong need for a biological connection, and I'm not going to be with a man to do that." She said she plans to use a known sperm donor because of the adoption issues she has experienced, and wonders if others are dealing with this topic. Cindy agreed that she would have to use a known donor, adding that lesbians and gays need to "pat ourselves on the back for having the compassion and courage to deal with the issues." Our experience makes it hard to deny these issues.

A woman suggested that there seem to be a lot of lesbian adoptees, and wanted to explore possible psychosocial connections between being gay and being adopted. Cindy responded that we "have to be careful about the numbers. . . . gays and lesbians tend to be more active on any issue. . . . As a lesbian, I find any injustice nearly intolerable. You have to be careful about saying, 'there are a lot of gay adoptees.'" "

Another woman said the workshop has identified "twenty issues" related to lesbians and gays in adoption, all in a one-and-a-half hour workshop. "There are mostly queers in here -- we're talking to each other! We know these issues. We're sitting here educating each other. . . . What about all the birthparents who are searching who are at the conference? Why aren't they here? Are they so worried that when they search they're going to find a lesbian -- they're going to find a gay man? . . . I want to see twenty workshops on the agenda at the next conference in Chicago [in May 1990]. On lesbian and gay parenting, us adopting, us giving birth. Maybe we should feel grateful they gave us the hour and a half. I'm not feeling real grateful."▲

-- Janine Baer

Chain of Life readers may want to write to A.A.C. with workshop suggestions for the May 1990 conference. What workshops would you like to see, organize, or present? Write American Adoption Congress, Cherokee Station, P.O. Box 20137, New York, NY 10028-0051.

Thank you to Cindy Tananis and Amy Jane Cheney for offering their workshop. Amy Jane would be glad to provide information to people who are interested in starting similar groups. She can be reached by mail at 2010 McAllister St., San Francisco, CA 94118. A copy of the tape of this workshop can be obtained from Von Ende Communications, 3211 St. Margaret Drive, Golden Valley, MN 55422 (612) 529-4493, for \$9.75, including postage. Ask for workshop #61.

A previous workshop on gay and lesbian issues at A.A.C. was offered in Seattle in 1984. However, the presenters did not mention adoption! They were therapists, one a gay man, one the mother of a gay man, whose presentation dealt with stereotypes about gay people -- a topic that seemed to bore the mostly lesbian and gay participants.

▲ LETTERS ▲

A copy of the following letter, dated August 14, 1989, was passed along to Chain of Life by Lori Carangelo of Americans for Open Records. Thanks to Lori and AmFOR for spreading the word.

To The Editor:

I returned a year ago from my Native people in the Prince George, British Columbia area. While I was there it was mentioned that it would be nice to set up a year's project to research and seek out the Native children who were adopted out into the United States.

Many of my people and the Native people across Canada have wondered what became of the many apprehended children. So many of these children were adopted out into the United States.

These children may not even know where they are from in Canada, or what Band they belong to. They may not want to know their real families, but they may want to know exactly where they are from. Usually the original last name may lead us to the Band (Tribe). Bands are set up in Clans and each Clan has several family names. For instance, the Band I am from has the names Monk, Prince, Alexes, Joseph, etc. The children may just want information. Whatever the needs, we would like to hear from them.

If anyone has information about any adopted Canadian Indian kids or you yourself are an adopted Canadian Indian and don't know where you are from but have your original last name, or you just need to tell someone your story, please write. Even if you are listed as Metis, mixed Native or Indian descent, original band unknown, please don't hesitate. If anyone has information about kids in jails or prisons, let us know.

Keep in mind a lot of these children we seek may be in their late 30s. Please help us, and help our concerned families. We would just like to know what happened to our children.

**B.M. Monk
Research Specialist**

Sept. 6, 1989

Ms. Baer:

... I thought your flyer on "adoption is not the answer to abortion" was extremely well worded and professionally presented -- the best statement I've seen to date from the Open Records Movement. A copy of my July 16 letter to a California pro-life group director is enclosed [see excerpts below, Ed.]; it remains unanswered. Neither has Dr. Willke of National Right to Life Committee altered his position re open records (he favors registries). Connecticut has had only one "match" in the two years its registry has existed (unpublicized and with an unlisted number). All state registries are ineffective.

I have been writing to both pro-life and pro-choice groups hoping for a written statement of position on adoption (or at least adoption secrecy/ open records). To date, several groups have sent me their material (perhaps their invitation to join up) but no reply. ...

I was reading a commentary about the Baby M case in "Surrogate Motherhood" by Martha A. Field. The couple decided on surrogacy over adoption, they said, because they feared an adopted infant may be carrying AIDS. It's discouraging that despite so many overlapping issues, adoption reform is moving so slowly if at all, though some are working very hard for reform and truly open records.

Best wishes,

Lori Carangelo
Americans for Open Records
P.O. Box 401
Palm Desert, CA 92261

Note: A copy of the flyer "Adoption is Not the Answer to Abortion" can be obtained by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to Chain of Life. ▲



Following is an excerpt from a letter written by Lori Carangelo of Americans for Open Records to Louise Murphy of the California pro-life Council. I personally prefer to call the "pro-life" movement the "anti-choice" movement. --JB

July 16, 1989

Dear Ms. Murphy:

... of course, NRLC [National Right to Life Committee] has made its policy statement to the effect that adoption is an alternative to abortion. We would like you to consider the child who is a pawn of either transaction -- abortion or adoption.

... The Open Records Movement is having a hard time understanding how anyone can be "pro-life" yet be "for" adoption secrecy, which (as evidenced by countless studies since the 1940's when sealing of records began) severely injures all parties involved -- the adoptee, the adoptive parents and the birthparents upon whom secrecy and lies are imposed. We have several life-and-death situations involving California adoptees. In California, disclosure requires signed waivers from all three parties, even when the "child" is a legal adult, before a judge (often based on his personal bias) decides whether the parties are entitled to the same right of contact with each other that other families take for granted -- even when a medical emergency is presented. ...

My son coerced his 17-year-old girlfriend into an abortion because, he said, besides their youth, he could not bear to see his child spend 18 years (as he did) feeling "thrown away" and rejected simply because his adoptive mother could not provide the answers to his questions, "who?" and "why?"

It is difficult for anyone who has neither surrendered a child, nor been adopted, to understand what it's like to live in limbo. The baby in Roe v. Wade was not aborted -- it was adopted. The mother's pain was briefly mentioned in one newscast but the current administration's push for more adoption as a cure-all for abortion has evidently suppressed media attention to this issue. If NRLC will take a stand on adoption secrecy, at least, which the rest of us can live with, you would not hear so many favoring abortion over the pain of adoption surrender.

... That the child is "at least alive" is debatable. Adoptees have committed suicide, unable to contend with "limbo". ...

Sincerely,

Lori Carangelo
Americans for Open Records

October 10, 1989

Dear Janine,

Enclosed is my \$6.00 for newsletter sub. I hope you can process it without the proper form as I'm quite anxious to receive my first copy!

I am a birthmother and recently joined the Orange County, CA chapter of C.U.B. I am also part of the newly formed lesbian support group which I believe you've heard of through another member (that's how I got your address). I'm not sure at this point if we will be officially sanctioned by C.U.B. or if we will even seek to be, but we will have an ad in the next local newsletter inviting other adoption-affected lesbians to join us.

We have had only two meetings (bi-weekly) and already I feel a sense of connection, belonging, commonality with these women that I

Continued on next page ...

**SET ADOPTEES FREE
SUPPORT
OPEN RECORDS!**

have not experienced in any social or political group of which I've been a member. Although we have much in common with non-lesbian birthmothers and adoptees, there are issues that are unique to our lifestyle, and it is exhilarating to be able, finally, to discuss every aspect of our experience with adoption and its effect on our lives with other lesbians.

As a birthmother who has found but not yet had a response from my daughter, I find that I'm consumed by the fear that she will reject me when she learns of my sexuality. I have been "out" and proud of it for many years, yet now find myself tempted to return to the false "safety" of the closet. I have even had fantasies of transforming myself into a heterosexual, Christian, right-winger to assure the approval of this very Catholic and very conservative (so I'm told) young woman. The fear of losing her a second time is so profound that it shakes the foundations of my most cherished beliefs. Has anyone else out there experienced this?

Perhaps it is all meant to be a "test by fire" of my philosophies -- or even hers. Perhaps I'm merely projecting and all will go well. I will hope so and will continue to exercise my most basic belief -- that being to trust the universe and my inner self to create the best for everyone concerned. Wish me luck!

P.S. If you'd like to use this letter feel free. I will ask that you omit my name and address. Funny -- I haven't made that request for many years. It doesn't feel good.▲

September 25, 1989

Dear Janine,

... The Hawaiian culture had some unique adoption practices called Hanai -- a very open system where birthfamilies and adoptive families raised their families with open knowledge of the Hanai. The children who were Hanai'd to adoptive families not only knew their birthparents, but remained in constant contact with them and their birth siblings. The closed adoption problems didn't surface here until the U.S. influence during the post-monarchy, territorial days of Hawaii's history.

Our last reigning queen, Queen Lilioukalani, was a hanai child and the adoption is well documented in her biographies.

Additionally, part of the Hawaii Statehood agreements with the U.S. established an agency called Hawaiian Homelands, whereby citizens of Hawaiian ancestry could qualify for land leases for homes and farming. Needless to say, the homelands issue is difficult for adoptees because they have difficulty proving their heritage. Will this free society of the U.S. ever give adoptees their certificates of birth? Hopefully, we'll all see that day arrive soon.

These situations unique to Hawaii may be of interest to your readers.

... Thanks again -- luck and aloha to you.

Sincerely,

Claudia B. Gilenke

September '89

Dear Janine,

... Thank so much for the good press re: my songs on Adoption tape -- loved your article on adoption music. . .

Sammi Whytecap

ANNOUNCEMENTS

San Francisco area readers may be interested to know about a series of workshops on "A Jewish Perspective on Lesbian and Gay Parenting" starting November 5.

These workshops will be held on four Sunday afternoons at 2:30 pm at 220 Danvers Street (at Caselli), San Francisco.

November 5: "So You Want To Be A Parent . . . Raising Children in the Lesbian/Gay and Jewish Communities."

November 19: "A Lawyer and a Rabbi talk about Lesbian/Gay Parenting."

December 3: "A Lifelong Perspective on Jewish Adoption."

December 17: "The Newest Special Needs Children: Caring for HIV-positive and 'Crack'-Affected Kids."

For more information call Lisa, (415) 285-4934. Childcare will be available if arranged one week in advance of each workshop. ▲

The State of Maine completed an amazingly progressive study of adoption, the results of which are available by mail. Write to: *Freda Plumley, Substitute Care Program Manager, Department of Human Services, State House Station #11, Augusta, Maine 04333.* ▲

An excerpt from Pat Parker's poem, *Legacy*, was included in issue 3 of *Chain of Life*. The entire poem and others "about being Black, female and gay" can be obtained from the publisher. Ask for *Jonestown and Other Madness*, \$5.95 paperback or \$12.95 cloth, plus \$1.75 postage U.S. (\$2. foreign) for the first book. Write to: *Firebrand Books, 141 The Commons, Ithaca, New York 14850.*

Parker also wrote about her process of becoming an adoptive mother in *Politics of the Heart*, a book about lesbian mothers.▲

Lyon-Martin Clinic Women's Health Services has created a new program, "Lesbian Parenting Services," formerly known as "the Lesbian/Gay Parenting Project." Their programs include panel discussions and forums on lesbians choosing children and childbirth education classes. They envision the program eventually to include insemination and fertility services.

For additional information, call Ellie Schindelman, project coordinator, at (415) 525-7312, or write: Lesbian Parenting Services, Lyon-Martin Clinic, 2480 Mission Street, Suite 214, San Francisco, CA 94110.▲

The October 8, 1989 *San Francisco Examiner* reports that New York state's new licensing rules for sperm banks bar gay men and IV drug users from making deposits, and require HIV testing for all donors. ▲

The WOMB BBS

An Adoption- and Search-related Computer Bulletin Board System

General Message Base; Electronic Mail;
Dedicated Message Bases for Adoptees,
Birth Parents and Adoptive Parents;
Reprints of Adoption-Related Articles
from Newspapers and Magazines;
Users' Search & Reunion Stories;
National Calendar of Events;
And Much, Much More!

To Log Onto The WOMB BBS, Call
(718) 998-6303

24 hours a day / 7 days a week / 8N1

▲ OUT/LOOK DEBATE ON SECRECY IN DONOR INSEMINATION ▲

The letters on this page are being reprinted with the permission of Jeffrey Escoffier, co-publisher of *Out/Look*, a national lesbian and gay quarterly. Subscriptions to *Out/Look* are available for \$21 a year. Write to *Out/Look*, P.O. Box 460430, San Francisco, CA 94146. The article to which my original letter refers may be available in a back issue. ▲

The Anonymous Donor Debate Goes On

■ Petra Liljestrand's article, "Children Without Fathers: Handling the Anonymous Donor Question" (Fall 88) emphasized the differences between past adoption practices and donor insemination by lesbians today. She said it is merely opinion that donor insemination (DI) conceived children will ever have a need to know their genetic background, and implied that people conceived by DI should not have a right to know the donor's identity.

Adopted people such as myself have suggested that DI conceived people (remember, children grow up) may want to know that information, as many adoptees do. Our parents thought we wouldn't and shouldn't need or want to know our birth parents, and society agrees by keeping adoption records closed in most states and countries. But this doesn't stop us from searching.

I fear the article may encourage some lesbians to choose anonymous donors. This is unfortunate, because the lessons from adoption can be helpful, even reassuring, to lesbian families. For example, the concern of non-biological co-parents that their role will be threatened if the donor's identity is known is very much like the insecurity of many adoptive parents, who fear that blood is thicker than water and believe they will be replaced by the birth parents if they are found. The reality is that children have no trouble distinguishing between the people who raise them and the people who don't.

My birth mother is very much a stranger who has an uncanny physical resemblance (including health history) to me. Yet it was very important to me as a young adult to find her and my birth father. It didn't matter what scientific research said, I just wanted to know what most people take for granted. The question arose every time I looked in the mirror. My search also led me to a gay "half"-brother who has become a long-distance friend.

It would have been a shame if we never met.

By the time "scientific" research proves anything about DI conceived people it will be too late to undo donors' anonymity—unless an unlikely series of events leads to the opening of any records of donors' names that may exist. Most likely, it will be too late for children of anonymous donors to trace them.

With gay donors, the problem of contact in 18 or more years is heightened by AIDS. Waiting until a child gains interest in his or her genealogy will be too late for some donors unless a cure is found.

A known donor simply gives children a choice. Just as most birth mothers who want to find their adopted children do not wish to take custody from the adoptive parents, I'd bet that most donors would not want to have custody even if they could. In this situation also, lesbian families can learn from adoption reunions about negotiating contact.

Social conditions *always* change. By the time any social scientific studies of today's DI children are completed, new social contexts will have been created by the next generation, who can then claim that the findings cannot be applied to *them*. That way, we fail to learn from each other and can rationalize our choices.

Janine Baer
El Cerrito, CA

Lesbian Parenting

While I sympathize with Janine Baer's and other adoptees' search for their birth parents (Letters, Winter 1989), her analogy between adoption and donor insemination, at least for lesbians, is naive and overly simplistic.

In the best of all possible worlds, donor insemination-conceived people could know their fathers *and* there would be no threat to their mothers or family units. The reality, however, is that if the donor's identity is available to his offspring, the child's identity is potentially available to the donor.

While I agree that non-biological co-parents shouldn't feel threatened that their child will reject them, they should and do have a very real fear that they will be rejected by society. This applies to the biological lesbian mother as well! A lesbian family is a third-rate family, if that, in the eyes of our society and our courts. With a known donor, that family is constantly under the threat of loss of custody.

To ignore the very real vulnerabilities lesbian parents face does a disservice not only to those parents but also to the DI-conceived people whose families would be torn apart.

Erica Martinson
White Plains, NY

Destroying the Lesbian Family

■ I am writing in response to Erica Martinson's letter [Summer 1989] in which she criticizes Janine Baer and her feelings about the identities of donors in artificial inseminations. Erica states that Janine's analogy between adoption and donor insemination is naive and overly simplistic. I feel that Erica's criticism is just that—naive and simplistic.

Erica is afraid that a donor will invade the [lesbian] family's privacy and that society will reject this lesbian family. It is true that most of society has and will continue to reject us as parents, families, lovers, people... but we cannot allow that fear to make us become like them and create a system that will conceal the truth from our future offspring.

We have lived with lies for too long. We must tell our children who we are and why we love each other and how they were created to join in that love. We must insure them the access to that biological, identifying information when and if they request it as adults. This will be their right, to choose whether or not they want this information. If we decide now that this information will be too harmful then, then this very act will contribute to the destruction of the lesbian family, right alongside society's hatred for us.

Ilene Cutler
Gardiner, New York



▲ BACK ISSUES ▲

BACK ISSUES OF *CHAIN OF LIFE* ARE AVAILABLE FOR \$2. EACH, PAYABLE TO J. BAER. HERE ARE SUMMARIES OF THEIR CONTENTS:

ISSUE 1 • MAY/JUNE 1989

▲ "Lesbian and Gay Families: Issues in Adoption and Donor Insemination" makes up most of the issue. It is a report of a speakers panel from March 1989 in Oakland, California. Speakers were a lesbian birth-mother, a gay adoptive father with an open adoption, a gay man who was raised in foster care, a lesbian mother by donor insemination, a sperm donor, a woman conceived by an anonymous donor, and a co-author (Reuben Pannor) of *Lethal Secrets* (1989), a book about donor insemination.

▲ A short article on how the **Argentine Grandmothers of the "disappeared"** are finding and gaining custody of their grandchildren, who were kidnapped and illegally adopted between 1975 and 1983. A University of California scientist, Mary Clare King, has been helping them use state-of-the-art blood tests to determine the children's biological families. Why should these children be returned to their birth relatives? Professor King explained why the courts agreed with psychologists in favor of the Grandmothers' custody in most cases.

ISSUE 2 • JULY/AUGUST 1989

▲ "Chain of Life Goes to Gay Day." I handed out newsletters and articles and met people with various perspectives on adoption at the rally after the San Francisco Gay Pride Parade in June.

▲ **Resources for Adoption Reform.** A listing of organizations working for legislative reform and/or education about adoption, especially regarding the negative effects of closed records. Groups listed are: American Adoption Congress, PACER, ALMA, Adoptive Parents for Open Records, Concerned United Birthparents, International Soundex Reunion Registry, ALARM Network, and Donor's Offspring.

▲ "Some Random Thoughts on Being Gay, Being Male, and Being Adopted" by William L. Gage. Do gay men search for their birthparents more often than non-gay men? Gage tells of his experiences meeting adopted gay men.

▲ **Book Review: *Sacred Bonds: The Legacy of Baby M.*** by Phyllis Chesler. A short review recommends this book for its incisive chapter on adoption, titled, "A Pound of Flesh."

ISSUE 3 • SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 1989

▲ **Songs about adoption.** Popular and alternative songs that relate to the experience of being adopted -- some explicitly, others evocatively. Songs mentioned are "Johnnie Be Fair," "Silver Threads and Golden Needles," "Love Child," "Gay and Proud," and the recent collection of songs, "Adoption Adventure."

▲ Dictionary definitions of "illegitimate" and "bastard."

▲ "When are Lesbian Mothers Safe from Donor Custody Claims?" The situation in California, and who to contact for more information.

▲ **Book Review: "Lethal Secrets, New Book About Donor Insemination."** Authors Annette Baran and Reuben Pannor took several years to research this book, and several more to find a publisher. They interviewed adults conceived by "DI" as well as lesbian and heterosexual parents who had children through DI, and offer their recommendations.

▲ **Announcements:** These are divided into Lesbian/Gay-Related and Adoption-Related, though the categories overlap.

SUBSCRIBE!
\$10. for 6 issues
or \$5. for 3 issues

*Make checks payable to J. Baer
and send to:*

**Chain of Life
P.O. Box 8081
Berkeley, CA 94707**

Why Chain of Life? A note on the title

The name Chain of Life was taken from a 1973 hippie travel book, *Vagabonding in America*. In his acknowledgements, author Ed Buryn thanked his parents and his children, by name, "for linking me in to the chain of life."

When I read that line, not yet having found my birth family and having no children, I felt a sense of cosmic isolation and sadness. I was *unlinked* in the chain of life.

This is the image I drew and pasted all over this newsletter sixteen years later -- the unattached link, the adoptee in closed-records, stranger adoption. It is this isolation that *Chain of Life* addresses and seeks to end. ▲