

Rebecca Dragon – further testimony to Senate Judiciary

I want to take the opportunity to share what it is like for adopted people to listen to non-adopted (quote) “experts” talk about us and the risks they believe receiving a copy of our OWN birth certificate poses. I want to explain to you how it feels to listen to people, who have little to no context to know what it is like to live the outcomes of adoption, advocate that we not be given equity under the law. I want to explain what it feels like to live our entire lives as adopted people who must beg and implore the State and adoption facilitators, who are used to being praised and lauded for being the good guys, for scraps information about themselves, and maybe a little dignity and autonomy.

Scapegoat: a person who is blamed for the wrongdoings, mistakes, or faults of others, especially for reasons of expediency.

Now let’s define “expediency”: the quality of being convenient and practical despite possibly being improper or immoral

When you propose denying an entire class of people of civil rights that all others enjoy, in this case adopted people, you are making adopted people the living breathing solutions to the protection of the quote “rare birthmother”. Protection from who? Not the adopted person, no one has said that. No, we are instead scapegoated. For expediency. We are the ones who are made to bear the burden of living as a state secrets to ourselves for just the risk of a crime....a crime that hasn’t even been committed....a thought crime.... A crime that MIGHT committed by an unrelated third party. Instead of placing the burden of protection of vulnerable women solidly where it should lie: on the State, social services, and heck...even the actual person who might be the one to commit the act of violence, you instead advocate that we, adopted people, must bear this burden.

It is expedient for adoption facilitators, social workers, adoptive parents, and well-intended humanitarians with guillotines to place this burden on the adoptee because these decisions, these sealings of records, these unrealistic and harmful promises of life-long secrecy happen TO the adoptee WHEN they are incapable of giving their consent or acting with agency. These things are done TO US without any rights of revocation. Need to protect birthmoms? No big deal, just make adoptees live under different laws than every other citizen for their entire lives, laws that deprive them of full personhood. That’ll do it! Too bad so sad for you adopted people. “I’m sorry, BUT”. That BUT....imagine looking at a group of any other marginalized people asking for equal rights and equal access to their own information and saying “I am sorry, BUT....”

I have heard so much care for the well-being and safety of birthparents. Where is the care and the concern for the well-being and safety of adopted people? According to one study, adoptees are four times more likely to attempt suicide than the general population. We are over-represented in therapeutic settings and addiction recovery programs. Can any of you here that are not adopted imagine the indignity of having to come before strangers who hold ignorant assumptions about us, and then listen to those same people advocate that we be denied a key part of our personhood at the whim of another? Can you imagine what it is like to have to beg and implore STRANGERS simply for equity under the law, and to be seen as a full person instead of the happy outcomes of our adoptive parents or the relieved burdens of our poor birthparents? Imagine what it would be like to listen to people insinuating that the mere knowledge of your existence on this earth might cause violence to your own parent by a third party, so therefore you must be subject to codified laws that restrict self-knowledge. Can you not see how THAT is the act of violence? An act of ongoing legal

violence against a group of human beings because of the immutable circumstances of their existence. ANYone advocating for the restriction of our rights is solidly on the wrong side of history.

This kind of antiquated thinking about the expediency of making the adoptee the scapegoat for an act of violence that hasn't even happened is reminiscent of the history of anti-LGBTQ policies of the US military. In 1982 the Department of Defense issued a statement regarding their rationale for their policy excluding LGBTQ people from military service, "Homosexuality is incompatible with military service." It cited the military's need "to maintain discipline, good order, and morale" and "to prevent breaches of security".^[20] This policy was still active in 1994 when "don't ask don't tell" was enacted, This fear of a theoretical "breach of security" resulting from an LGBTQ person being allowed to serve in the military and being allowed to divulge their sexual orientation, is similar to this ridiculous claim that there is a "safety risk" in allowing adopted persons full personhood and complete unfettered access to their own original birth certificate. Just like our country has moved away from these bigoted and marginalizing assumptions about LGBTQ serving in the military, it is now time for us to move away from this incredibly bigoted, scapegoating, infantilizing, and marginalizing treatment of adopted persons.

I can't say this strongly enough. If you support the ability of birthparents to prevent an adopted person access to their own documentation and original birth certificate, you are absolutely on the wrong side of history. Not only are you on the wrong side of history, you don't really care about the safety of birthparents. If you truly understood DNA testing, you would know that denying the adoptee their OBC will increase risk of "secrets getting out", which under your rationale, will increase risk of harm. Under this rationale, you should make legislating preventing the disclosure of all kinds of information that might make a potentially violent person angry and then act on that anger. Like calls from creditors, which might reveal the information that a credit card was overspent. Or mail showing subscriptions to services or bills owed. Violent people are violent. They don't need a rational reason. It is not our responsibility to live without equality and full access to prevent harm to others.