Going Back to Our Roots
Your First Mother Will Never Forget You
One birthmother’s hopes and fears.
by Piedad Tamile Agudelo Correa

Before I received the first letter with news of my child I asked myself many times what would be the life of my child. My maternal instinct told me that he was well; but the conscience accuses you and betrays you, causing you to think the worse. I thought of him and I cried for him during the two long years until I received the first letter from his parents, and to learn he did not suffer.

Many times I thought about what my son looked like, if he was healthy and happy… but as God is good, He consoled me telling me that he was more than healthy and happy. He was blessed and protected by Him and I felt it. Yet I was also disturbed by my fears of thoughts that maybe he was not adopted and still at the orphanage…and never found a family, or brothers or sisters or parents to love him. I often wondered if he already knew he was adopted, would he want to know me or about me. I also worried that he would hate me and have a thousand questions about why I had to give him away. I worried about how I would answer those questions.

I think of my child often. I think of him at night, in the morning, and in the day. I will think of him during my tomorrows. In my prayers he is always with me and still more, when my other children cry or they laugh or they are happy. I think of what he might be doing at these moments and especially when his brother Andres Felipe does something good or bad; I wonder if Tristan carries himself the same way. Andres Felipe bears a striking resemblance to Tristan, for me they resemble each other a lot physically and in some things in their behavior.

Only once did I think of reclaiming my child. I would have reclaimed him if he were to stay in the orphanage. I went back to the orphanage. I was told that he was adopted and taken far away. Would I want to reclaim him today? To take him back, away from his family? No. I would never want to hurt my child nor his family.

What pains me in my soul is the pain of giving one child in adoption yet parenting other children. I feel sometimes that I do not have valid justification. I know a pain combined with a sense of peace and tranquility because it is so special a family that my son has, because they love him and give him a better life.

I often suffer guilt and remorse. I am alone to think that he is growing up and he understands the situation. My hope is that my child understands. I did not receive any understanding or support from my family and I did not count on them when making the decision. I was alone and I know that my mom and siblings did not want a heavier load as more children for such a poor family and home. They questioned me a lot and they caused me a lot of suffering when I was pregnant again. I felt so much alone and my life changed a lot since the moment I decided to relinquish my child for adoption. I was no longer the happy girl and I cried my grief in silence and I still do.

After relinquishment I prayed so to hear the voice of God answering me that my child
was well. My pregnancy and relinquishment was not a secret. My family was embarrassed. They often spoke badly of me yet they also told me not to bring another child home to them. They asked me what I was to do with the child then did not support me.

I suffered so much! My mother, family and the father made me suffer and I felt they wanted to punish me. This was before I had contact and reunion with my child. Today we are all happy.

I worried a lot about my child. I think all birthmother’s do. I worried about the difficulties he might face. I worried that someone would make him suffer and maybe touch him inappropriately or violate him the way some bad people do. I also worried that he would be killed and someone would steal his vital organs like it happens in many parts of the world. This practice can be found in the big cities and it is often mentioned on the news. This was one of my many worries. I did not want my child to suffer.

Sometimes people try to make me feel badly about my decision then I wonder if my child will love me or hate me. When I think of this and feel badly I wish I could speak my child’s language, to be able to speak directly to him, look him in his eyes and really understand his feelings towards me. I want to understand his love or disaffection towards me. In my heart I know that I deserve the good and the bad. I am a realist.

The most difficult parts of the whole birthmother experience was if to be pregnant at my house and to endure the fights with my mom then the decision to give my child in adoption. The hardest by far was the third day after birth to have my child feed from my breast then sign the paperwork and to leave him there. I thought I would die. I so wanted to have him with me and my opponents impeded me.

More than 11 years after the adoption of my child my feelings are like that of any good mother, and I consider myself a good mother. I am full of love and have the best wishes and prayers for my son and my blessing and prayers are directed all to God, asking his protection and the guidance for the best road and my son obtains everything that he desires in life. My hopes were that in that time my child would be adopted by a good family that would give him a good education, to understand when he did a mischief, and did not mistreat him. I hoped they would give him medicine when was sick and a lot of love.

Today I feel very well, since I know that my son is with people that have truly accepted my child as their own and they give all the love that parents can give their children. I think that they are excellent people and of assurance my son will always be in good hands and he will be the same as born to them. For birthmothers who were young or single and can not have their children with them they can consider adoption. Adoption is a good option. Adoption is a better choice than abandonment or abortion. I want my boy to know that I love him and always wanted what was best for him and that is why I chose adoption and not to kill him in my womb or to throw him away. To me this is the decision of a good mother. I am here if and when he needs me.

Your first mother will never forget you.

~Piedad Yamille Agudelo Correa is a Birthmother from Carolina del Principe, Antioquia, Colombia who has been reunited.
Our Mutual Son
Building an international relationship with a birthmother

An open adoption relationship should be built on respect and an understanding of the complex feelings of all involved. As adoptive parents, I think that we need to do a lot of work ourselves, coming to grip with the realities. Our children, as much as we adore them, were not born to us. They have a first family. Our kids know this too. They too must understand the truths of adoption. The birthfamily must also deal with their grief, sorrow, regrets, loss and most times guilt. As parents we must be comfortable in our role as parents and work on our fears of our children's biological families.

There is a lot of fear! A lot of ‘what if’s’. My son’s birthmother, Piedad, wrote recently that as she prepares for our trip to Colombia, she is working on coming to terms with the fact that Tristan is from her, part of her, but not ‘hers’. She is also working on the fact that as much as she can not wait to see him and touch him, she will have to once again let him go. That is so honest....

From my very first letter to Piedad, I was clear and truthful. I wrote from my heart, and I didn’t ask questions. I told her why I thought opening the adoption, and contact, would be beneficial to all of us and especially to our mutual son. I told her that it was not my intention to cause her further pain but that I wanted her to know that Tristan was loved, happy, healthy, and alive.

My first letter was short, but I did understand the importance of photos. I provided Piedad with our full names and home mailing address. I already knew so much about her and her family from the written social history report, and I wanted her to know us...to trust us. Piedad wrote back immediately, saying that she welcomed the contact and that I caused her no pain:

“On the contrary...you have given me peace. A peace I never thought possible.”

In the first letter she told me a little about her family and life. It was reassuring as it matched perfectly the social workers report. No lies! In my second letter I asked Piedad if she had
any questions. She wrote back telling me that the photos said it all, and her only request was a photo of Tristan’s daddy and me holding him. Piedad taught me that it was very important to her to see Tristan in our loving arms...not just alone.

Piedad and I nurtured our relationship. Our trust grew. I am glad that we did not jump on the first plane to Colombia after making contact! It would have been awkward. There would have been too many questions to be answered on both sides and it would have been rushed. Over time I’ve learned more and more about this remarkable woman. I now know her heart, her hopes and dreams and her everyday struggles. I now know "why adoption".

Piedad, remarkable woman that she is, helped me grieve my mother’s death. This was an unexpected support! She was ‘there’ for me! Who would have thought this? I also helped her come to terms with the birth of a new baby six years almost to the day after Tristan was born and relinquished. She was overcome with grief and guilt over Tristan, felt unworthy of contact, and feared he would hate her. I told her that we celebrated the birth of a new soul into our extended family and that Tristan was very happy with the news.

He wanted to know more! What was her name? Could they send photos? I tried to help Piedad understand that the grief over losing one child was normal with the birth of a new baby. Many, many birthmothers had told me this and Piedad was no different.

I think that Piedad and I both took steps, from the very beginning to make this a positive relationship. We moved slowly, and did not rush each other. We both wanted this to be a long term relationship, one that brought both of our families together because of one child, yet also for the benefit of all touched by him. It has benefited my son, his sister by adoption, his siblings by birth, his birthparents and their extended families, and my husband and I and our extended families. As the years pass the significance has become clearer. This is right for our family...not just my child.

~ Leceta Chisholm Guibault

In Front of the Mirror

The next time your young child asks you what his birthparents look like, show him pictures of people in your family who bear a distinct family resemblance to you (do you or your husband look a lot like one of your parents, siblings or cousins?). Have a discussion about inherited traits, then stand your child in front of a mirror and say that the next time he wants to see his birthparents, he can look in the mirror, because he has pieces of both of them in his own face, hair, eye-color, and body build.

- Cheryl Leppert
adoptive mom of two daughters from India
A Journey to Homeland

Meeting Reality

It was important for my children (ages 13 and 10) to see all the realities (age appropriately) of their birth countries, and the people in those countries who were connected to them. That is why we visited their orphanages, foster families, birth family, rich friends and their homes, poor friends and their homes, medical centers, nutrition centers, and humanitarian organizations. We experienced the natural beauties of their birth countries and the harsh realities. Only then did their stories actually make sense to them, more effectively than mere words from Mom.

I also feel that all children are different and have unique backgrounds. As parents we must trust ourselves to know our children and what their birthcountry visit needs are. For example: After eight years of open contact with my son’s birthfamily in Colombia, it would not have made sense to him if we decided to NOT meet while in Colombia. Or NOT visit his orphanage after openly discussing it and viewing photos for years. My daughter was old enough to have a handle on the poverty in Guatemala, so to avoid it while visiting (which is impossible!) would not have made sense to her. Our children from Latin America mostly come from difficult and impoverished backgrounds. “Seeing was believing” in my children’s cases. They were at ages of reason and did not need a lot of protection from real-life, but did need open communication in order to process their realities.

Leceta Chisholm Guibault is the adoptive mother of two children adopted from Latin America as infants. She is a Board Member of the Adoption Council of Canada, and a Board Member of the Federation of Quebec Adoptive Parents. Leceta was awarded a NACAC Adoption Activist Award for her work towards openness in international adoption.