

## Book Review: Choice Moms' Guide to Adoption

By Bernadette Wright

"Choice Moms' Guide to Adoption," edited by Mikki Morrisette, founder of Choice Moms LLC, is written for the growing audience of single women who are contemplating adopting either domestically or internationally. The self-published book compiles articles by adoption industry professionals, posts culled from the Choice Moms discussion board, and other stories of people affected by adoption.

AtMP members will be pleased to find the inclusion of an excellent article by Nicky Grist explaining AtMP's opposition to adoption laws that discriminate against unmarried people. For the most part, however, the book omits any critique of adoption laws and practices. Readers should note that the book's production was financed with contributions from four adoption agencies and the content largely reflects the industry perspective.

The book indirectly reveals how the institution of adoption exploits choiceless mothers for the benefit of mothers who are privileged to be able to choose. As a Choice Moms flier explains, "Choice Moms often make the decision to single parent after establishing their careers. Many are financially strong... and own their homes."

ALTHOUGH SURRENDERING A CHILD IS ALSO OFTEN PORTRAYED AS A "CHOICE," the reality is that surrendering mothers typically lack any other viable options. As the book acknowledges, most mothers who surrender are forced to do so because of financial hardship and/or the stigma of single motherhood in many cultures. As Rickie Solinger wrote, "Adoption is rarely about mothers' choices; it is, instead, about the abject choicelessness of some resourceless women" ("Beggars and Choosers," 2001). I encourage readers to read Solinger and other books on adoption ethics for a fuller understanding of how the adoption system often preys on vulnerable choiceless women. A reading list is available at [www.origins-usa.org](http://www.origins-usa.org) under "Books, Movies, and Videos."

The book could have benefited from fact-checking, as some of the articles contain misleading information. For example, one piece confounds the system of unsealed and non-falsified birth certificates that existed prior to the 1940s with the "open adoption" system of today. Under the current system, some contact or information exchange may occur between natural and adoptive families, but the adoptee's original birth certificate becomes a state secret and is replaced with a falsified birth certificate naming the adopting couple as the parents who gave birth to the child.

Some of the pieces make unsubstantiated claims that sound like advertisements for adoption. One piece purports, "Research shows that adoptees are as well-adjusted as their non-adopted peers. There is virtually no difference in psychological functioning between them." This statement is contradicted later in the book, when an adoptee describes how being separated from her family created an identity crisis that rendered her unable to parent. Another author explains how many adoptees suffer from attachment disorders resulting from their separation from their original families.

ALTHOUGH MS. MORRISETTE ACKNOWLEDGES THAT SERIOUS ABUSES IN INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION have been documented in two countries (Guatemala and Vietnam), where kidnapped babies were adopted without their parents' consent, the book is silent on the well-documented abuses that exist in other nations, including the United States.

In conclusion, a stated goal of Choice Moms is to provide &ldquo;advocacy and aid to struggling single moms.&rdquo; Given this laudable goal, I was disappointed that so much of the book encouraged separating struggling mothers and their children, rather than helping them stay together.

Bernadette Wright is currently President of Origins-USA.org, advocating for mothers&rsquo; rights and keeping families together. She has also been a proud supporter of AtMP for many years.