

Additional Resources on Forced Adoptions

Additional Reading/Viewing:

Donovan, Cecilia E., Taking Matters Into Their Own Hands: Social Workers and Adoption Practices in United States Maternity Homes, (University of Colorado-Boulder, Department of History, 2019)-(https://www.colorado.edu/history/sites/default/files/attached-files/donovan_thesis.pdf)

Fessler, Ann, The Girls Who Went Away: The Hidden History of Women Who Surrendered Children for Adoption in the Decades Before Roe v. Wade, (New York: Penguin Press, 2006)-(https://www.amazon.com/Girls-Who-Went-Away-Surrendered/dp/0143038974/ref=sr_1_1)

Scheyen, Colin (Director) Film: "Mums the Word." Evenings and Weekends Productions, 2020. <https://mumsthewordthefilm.com/>

Solinger, Rickie, Wake Up Little Susie: Single Pregnancy and Race Before Roe v. Wade, (New York & London: Routledge, 1992)-(<https://www.amazon.com/Wake-Up-Little-Susie-Pregnancy/dp/0415926769>)

Wilson-Buterbaugh, Karen, The Baby Scoop Era: Unwed Mothers, Infant Adoption, and Forced Surrender, (Self Published, 2017)-(https://www.amazon.com/Baby-Scoop-Era-Adoption-Surrender/dp/0692345795/ref=pd_lpo_2?pd_rd_i=0692345795&psc=1)

The National Florence Crittenton Mission and its relation to The Episcopal Church:

The National Florence Crittenton Mission was established in 1893 by Charles Crittenton and Dr. Kate Waller Barrett. The Crittenton Foundation franchised its name to existing centers and offered seed money to communities willing to open a home. By the 1940s, there were over 70 independently owned homes across the United States (and in three foreign countries) using the Crittenton name. Although some of the homes received state funding all were reliant on donations from wealthy benefactors.

Of note to this resolution, Crittenton and Barrett were both Episcopalians (Barrett the wife of a priest). As a result, a large number of board members, at both the local and national level, were parishioners of The Episcopal Church, charitable arms of TEC, or clergy. These board members were responsible for implementing policies that exploited unwed mothers during the forced adoption era. Tens of thousands of expectant mothers, many of them Episcopalian, passed through the doors of a Crittenton maternity home.

A letter from Jeanette Pai-Espinosa, current president of National Crittenton addressed to the Social Justice & United States Policy Committee at The Episcopal Church testifies to the above:

March 28, 2022

Council National Crittenton and the Crittenton family of agencies was founded in 1883 based on the social justice principle that women deserved the same opportunity as men to change the trajectory of their lives regardless of their present situation. Women wanting to leave “prostitution”, violent marriages, those trafficked for sex or forced labor and those immigrant women abandoned by their “husbands” were welcomed in the early “refuge” homes. However, most people who recognize the Crittenton name associate it with the national network of affiliated but independent maternity homes.

Clearly, there is no doubt that the attitude of American society to single and young mothers and their children was and remains a complicated issue rooted in our views on race, gender and class. In the late 1940’s and fifties in response to: shifting social mores; a dramatic increase in middle class young women seeking admission to Crittenton homes; and changes in the field of social work the practices at homes began to change. Although adoption had not traditionally been part of the Crittenton care philosophy, in response to social and pressure from parents of young mothers, homes began to turn more and more to adoption. Prior to, and after this era, the priority was to ensure and provide support that enabled mothers and children to remain together.

National Crittenton and the Crittenton agencies that are still in operation today are aware of, saddened by, and regret the experience of mothers “forced or coerced” into placing their children in adoptive homes and the impact on their children many of whom continue to search for their birth parents to this day. These practices were not required, supported or endorsed by any National Crittenton directive and as independent agencies or homes each had the ability to determine its own priorities and operating policies. Nevertheless, there is no denying that it did happen. Not a month goes by that we don’t hear from someone searching for a family member and we are acutely aware of the pain and damage done by the past practices. I urge you to react not out of defensiveness, but with compassion and empathy and open eyes to the reality of the consequences of the forced adoption era on generations of mothers and children.

The 25 Crittenton agencies of 2022 provide a comprehensive continuum of gender and culturally responsive, trauma informed and strength-based services in a variety of settings. Young mothers in Crittenton agencies receive a broad range of services including but not limited to mental health, life skills, education and career development. Times have changed but the way in which society views young motherhood is still influenced by the same complex mix of factors: race, gender and class.

Today, National Crittenton is proud to advocate with and for young mothers at the federal and state levels. Moreover, we are hosting the creation of IMPACT (Invincible Mammias Pushing for Action and Change Together) national advocacy network of young mothers guided by a Steering Committee of mammias from 8 states and three tribal nations.

*Jeannette Pai-Espinosa
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Partial list of entities which have or are working towards truth and reconciliation:

Australia

On March 21, 2013, Prime Minister Julia Gillard apologized on behalf of the Australian Government to all persons affected by forced relinquishments and adoptions.

Supporting Documents:

Australian Government National Apology for Forced Adoptions (<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/programs-services/forced-adoption-practices>)

Prime Minister's Speech (<https://www.ag.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Nationalapologyforforcedadoptions.PDF>)

Impact of Past Adoption Practices-Australian Government

(<https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/pastadoptionreport.pdf>)

Canada

Canada released their investigative report in July 2018 on post-war forced adoptions practices and recommended the federal government deliver a formal apology.

Supporting Document:

The Shame is Ours: Forced Adoptions in Post-war Canada

(https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/SOCI/reports/SOCI_27th_e.pdf)

- **United Church of Canada**

Appropriately, the United Church of Canada held an (online) service on Mother's Day, May 9, 2021, to apologize to those affected by forced adoptions.

Supporting Documents:

United Church of Canada Apology for Forced Adoptions (<https://united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/apology-forced-adoptions>)

The Adoption Apology (<https://united-church.ca/social-action/justice-initiatives/apology-forced-adoptions/adoption-apology>)

United Church Apology (<https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/2021-04/adoption-apology.pdf>)

- **Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Vancouver**

The second religious institution in Canada to issue a formal apology just happened on May 8, 2022.

Apology for the Church's Role in Coerced Adoption

(<https://rcav.org/announcements/apology-for-the-church-s-role-in-coerced-adoption>)

Ireland

After the release of an investigative report into the practices at Catholic run maternity homes, Prime Minister, Micheal Martin, formally apologized for the state's complicity "in a dark,

difficult and shameful chapter” and its “profound failure of empathy, understanding and basic humanity” to the women and their children.

Supporting Document:

Commission of Investigation of Mother and Baby Homes

(<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/873470-commission-of-investigation-into-mother-and-baby-homes-and-certain-r/>)

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom’s Parliament has begun an intensive investigation of forced adoptions during the Baby Scoop Era.

Supporting Documents:

The Right to FamilyLife (<https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1522/the-right-to-family-life-adoption-of-children-of-unmarried-women-19491976/>)

Practice of Forced Adoptions (<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2018-0174/CDP-2018-0174.pdf>)

Scotland

In September 2021, the Joint Committee of Human Rights began investigating adoption practices that occurred between 1949-1976.

Supporting Document:

Scotland -Movement for An Adoption Apology (<https://movementforanadoptionapology.org/>)