I met a foster kid recently who is seventeen. I am very grateful to him for giving me permission to write here about our conversation.

He’d been adopted out of the foster care system when he was ten. But a year or so ago, his adoptive parents had surrendered their parental rights and given this young man back to the system. His understanding of why? Because he was gay. I knew that that reason, by the definition of parenthood that I live by, was nonsense.

I asked the young man when he realized that he was gay. He told me he’d discovered such feelings inside him when he was ten. I asked him to remind me when he’d been adopted out of the system. He said: ten. I asked him if he was still gay at eleven. He said he was. I asked him if he was still adopted at eleven. He agreed that he was.

I asked him if he was still gay when he was twelve? Yes, he told me. I asked him if he was still adopted at twelve. He said he was. I asked him if he was gay at thirteen, fourteen, fifteen. He was. I asked if he was still adopted at thirteen, fourteen, fifteen. He agreed.

So I told him that the reason he’d been surrendered couldn’t have been because he was gay, because all those years that he was gay, he’d still been adopted. He then told me that his adoptive “parents” had found out that he was gay when he was fifteen and that’s what led to the termination of his adoption.

Exactly. The termination had nothing to do with him being gay. It had to do with his “parents” having to respond to their discovery of his sexuality. And they chose to respond to their interpretation of what being gay meant to them, by getting rid of him.

... continued on page 3
Going the Distance, Giving the Time

“Ben,” then twelve, was placed in an FFAS home for adoption in December ’07. At the end of a year, because of all of their misleading promises, Ben was understandably traumatized when the family threw him out. Ben, offered the choice of returning to foster care, or risking another pre-adoptive family, bravely chose the family, who lived in a very remote part of New York.

FFAS gave Ben the hope and the time each of our kids need and deserve, to heal. Moving at his own pace, Ben is only now ready to have his Adoption Covenant Ceremony.

Our team approach, our refusal to pressure kids, and our insistence on seeing children in person, cost us innumerable hours, but measurable miles: over the three years, we estimate an agency total of 22,894 miles traveled.

How far is that? The distance around the earth at the equator is 24,901 miles. FFAS has nearly gone around the world for Ben.

And we would do it again in a heartbeat.

Agency News: The Marketing Committee met on April 4th to begin planning our November fund-raising event. The names of many famous people we might honor at the event were discussed. We are excited to be using the same venue as last year - the Italian Academy at Columbia University, NYC. The event will take place Wednesday, November 16, 2011. Check our website or our next issue for more details.

Program Updates

There has been a small increase in inquiries for family studies, updates and post-placement reports. Last year from April 1-15 we had eight inquiries; this year, during the same period, we have had seventeen inquiries: from families adopting from Uganda, Nigeria, Pakistan, Brazil, Ghana and China.

Adoption from Foster Care: Several of our placements are coming to successful conclusions this season. Most notable is the upcoming Covenant Ceremony and pending finalization of a fifteen-year-old boy who needed - and was given - an unusually long amount of time (two years and three months) to get through his transition.

Infant Adoption: Since we made some improvements to our websites, including the addition of a direct way to contact our Family Coordinator, inquiries regarding our Direct Placement Program have increased substantially. In addition, we continue with our outreach, hoping that the personal relationships we are establishing lead to more placements.

Our Child Welfare Training Program continues to make a wide impact. In March we trained NYC adoption caseworkers, and Nassau County workers. In April we trained Louisiana foster care/adoption workers. In May we will be training Wendy's Wonderful Kids recruiters at an Ohio national Summit.
Adoption, I pointed out to this young guy, like all parenthood, is about an adult making an unconditional, irrevocable, permanent, and final decision to claim another person as their child. Unconditional means no conditions…..irrevocable means “no backsies”… permanent meant that he would not have been given back to the system... and final meant exactly that: final. Which is why the court adoption hearing is called the finalization of the adoption.

His “parents” were never his parents, I told him. They were, instead, what a younger child might call “phony baloney.” They had obviously withheld their full claiming of him as their child. And that is entirely, and solely, their responsibility, having nothing to do with him, straight or gay.

This blog is entitled “Perspectives” because it is my intention to offer exactly that: perspectives. I hope that reading it triggers some thinking on the part of the reader. It is dedicated to my aunt, the late Rita Faivre, who gave me – and lived her life with and from – a perspective of responsibility that I have never seen anywhere else. I am grateful to have it, and grateful to her, my second mother, every day of my life.

- Jack

YOU SHOULD KNOW: On March 24, 2011 the United States Department of State, Office of Children’s Issues, launched a new website adoption.state.gov to allow access to important intercountry adoption information and updates. There are new sections dedicated to describing the overall process as well as specific information on the Hague Convention process, country specific information, Immigrant Visas, and information geared towards the adoption community.

2 Finalizations:
John, age 20, April 22
Janice, age 11, April 7

Don’t Forget: NYSCCC Adoption Conference May 5-7 www.nysccc.org

Two Covenant Ceremonies coming in May! (one of them for 4 brothers!!)

Mark your calendar: Family Focus Fall Fundraising Event November 16

Don’t forget to check us out on Facebook!
Adopted from Foster Care?

If you were adopted through the foster care system after the age of 8 years we want to hear your story!

If you are between the ages of 18-25 we would like for you to consider being part of a research study designed to explore and gain insight into the journey from foster care to adoption.

• Participation is voluntary and involves the completion of surveys and possibly an in-depth interview. All information is confidential.

• Participants completing the surveys only will receive a $10 gift card to Wal-Mart or Target [your choice]. Participants who also complete the in-depth interview will receive an additional $15 gift card.

• If interested please visit our Facebook page to link to the survey: Foster/Adoptive Identity.

Please contact us at 303-642-6232 or via e-mail at faidu10@gmail.com for further information.

Michele D. Hanna, MSW, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator
mhanna3@du.edu

This flyer was approved by the University of Denver's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research on 02/09/2010.