

# Adoptee Rights

The classic movie "Blossoms in the Dust" showed Edna Gladney as an active advocate for adoptees. That positive image for adoption was firmly associated with the Gladney name until 12 years after her death when, in 1973, the Gladney Center led the legislative fight to deny birth records to adult adoptees in Texas. Then in 1980 the Gladney Center was the lead agency in founding of the National Council for Adoption to fight the Model State Adoption Act. That Act would have restored to Texas adoptees the rights removed in 1973.

Adult adoptee groups in Texas, their adoptive families and birth families, began efforts in 1991 for adult adoptees to regain access to their own original Texas birth certificates. The Gladney Center led the fight against these adoptees. In the years since then other adoption agencies have backed away from actively supporting the Gladney Center in their fight against equal rights for adoptees. **In the 2007 legislative year the Gladney Center was finally alone!** The Gladney Center was the only agency to send staff to testify against the growing numbers of adoptees, birth families and adoptive families working in Texas for equal rights for adoptees. The isolation of the Gladney Center in Texas was almost absolute! But the immense power the Gladney Center, built up in the Texas Legislature over a long history of placing children with the rich and powerful in Texas, makes the passage of adoptee rights legislation virtually impossible.

**The demonstration at which you received this flyer is not necessarily supported by the people and institutions named on the other side of this flyer. However, the people and institutions named strongly support the same goals of equal rights for adoptees.** Our demonstrations target the adoptee struggle directly at the agency leading national efforts to deny adoptee equal rights. **The Gladney Center efforts are not in keeping with the Edna Gladney seen in "Blossoms in the Dust."** If "Miss Edna" were alive today, she would be with us demanding an end to the theft of children's identities, and the immediate return of basic human rights to adoptees. Hopefully it will not be necessary to more widely spread these tragic facts of adoption history in Texas before adoptee rights are restored. **A more positive image for adoption alternatives is needed in Texas now! Lives depend on it!**

Many modern equivalents of Edna Gladney are fighting for adoptee rights. Some are among the staff of the Adoption Institute. On line at [http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/research/2007\\_11\\_for\\_records.php](http://www.adoptioninstitute.org/research/2007_11_for_records.php) you can see their research clearly documenting a true and detailed history of the struggle for adoptee rights.

(Over)

# Six Leading National U.S. Adoption Organizations that support adoptee access and the legislation still fought by the Gladney Adoption Center

## **Child Welfare League of America ([www.cwla.org](http://www.cwla.org) with 1100 member agencies)**

*Standards of Excellence for Adoption Services, 2000. Section 4.12, p. 60*

- The agency providing adoption services should support efforts to ensure that adults who were adopted have direct access to identifying information about themselves and their birth parents. The practice of sealing records has come under scrutiny as the benefits of openness in adoption for the adopted individual, birth parents, and adoptive parents have come to be understood. The interests of adopted adults in having information about their origins have come to be recognized as having critical psychological importance as well as importance in understanding their health and genetic status. Because such information is essential to adopted adults' identity and health needs, the agency should promote policies that provide adopted adults with direct access to identifying information.

## **North American Council on Adoptable Children ([www.nacac.org](http://www.nacac.org) - the largest adopting parent group affiliation network in the US)**

*Philosophy*

- Recognizing that many adult adoptees have a need for more complete information about their birth families, NACAC supports their right to this information and supports access to original birth certificates to any adult adoptee at age of majority.

## **National Adoption Center ([www.adopt.org](http://www.adopt.org))**

*Open Records Policy*

The National Adoption Center believes that it is an inalienable right of all citizens, including adopted adults, to have unencumbered access to their original birth certificates. In keeping with this position, we believe that copies of both the original and the amended birth certificate should be given to the adoptive family at the time of finalization unless specifically denied by the birthparents. In any case, the National Adoption Center advocates that the adoptee, at age 18, be granted access to his/her original birth certificate.

## **Spence-Chapin – One of the oldest and most highly respected adoption agencies in the U.S.**

*([www.spence-chapin.org](http://www.spence-chapin.org)) Position on Access to Records*

- The agency believes that access to identifying information is the adult adoptee's right and that this access furthers the interests of all the members of the triad adoptees, birth parents and adoptive parents. Adoptees age 18 and over are entitled to and should be able to choose **any or all** of the following methods for obtaining identifying information.....(Summarized) 1. Direct access to their original birth certificate; 2. Intermediary services; 3. Passive registry

## **Holt International Children's Services ([www.holtintl.org](http://www.holtintl.org))**

*Statement by R. David Cousineau, President and CEO*

- "We have placed more than 40,000 children with adoptive families. Our experience with three generations of adoptees have provided consistent evidence that adoptive families understand and believe in the necessity of adoptees to know their birth history. It is the fundamental right of all individuals to have access to information about themselves. For adoptees, that includes access to their own birth records with the same equity as other individuals are entitled."

## **The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute ([www.adoptioninstitute.org](http://www.adoptioninstitute.org))**

*Nov. 12, 2007: Ground-breaking Study Recommends Adoptees Get Access to their Birth Records*

Based on its research and an analysis of its findings, the Institute's recommendations include: Every state should amend its laws to restore unrestricted access for adult adopted persons to their original birth certificates - which, historically, had been their right nationwide.

This flyer, with active hyperlinks, is at [www.studentmotivation.org/gladney](http://www.studentmotivation.org/gladney).

(Compiled by Bill Betzen, [www.openadoption.org](http://www.openadoption.org))