

Adoption: The Long View Transcript

Season 5 Best Of

Season 5 Episode 11 | December 6, 2024

Lori Holden, Intro:

This is Adoption: The Long View, a podcast brought to you by Adopting.com. I'm your host, Lori Holden, author of [The Open-Hearted Way to Open Adoption](#) and [Adoption Unfiltered](#). Join me as we take a closer look at what happens *after* you adopt your child and begin parenting them. Your adoption journey isn't over then -- it's just beginning.

In this podcast, you'll hear from a variety of thought-provoking and influential guests as we help you make the most of your adoption journey. Like any trip worth taking, there will be ups and downs and challenges. Here's what you're going to wish you'd known from the start. Ready? Let's go.

Lori Holden, Greeting

Well, dear listeners, here we are at the end of this five season odyssey. I was so honored to be asked to host this monthly podcast—during the early days of the pandemic, by the way—especially when my sponsor, Adopting.com, agreed to let me cover any topic I wanted. I envisioned this podcast to be one that considers the whole of adoption, not just the shiny happy parts that are trotted out on feel-good websites and social media feeds. I've been an adoptive parent too long, and I have too much respect for everyone living in it, to cover only the “win” parts of adoption. That road is already well-worn. Instead, I wanted to bring nuance and complexity, which necessitates an exploration into the “loss” parts without diminishing the better known parts.

I didn't want to focus on how to get to the altar, to use the analogy of a wedding vs a marriage, but rather how to cultivate deep and enduring relationships within adoption, between adoptive and birth parents when possible, but mostly between parent and adoptee. So often, humans try to solve their interpersonal problems by trying to figure out how to change the other person (I'm raising my hand on this one), and I wanted to emphasize, which I've done over and over again through these episodes, that the work always originates within before we aim our energy out toward the others we are in relationship with.

I am grateful for the chance to pursue these goals over and over again through the years thanks to my amazingly brilliant and engaging guests. If you were to listen to the entire library of Adoption: The Long View, 52 episodes, you would hear 53 different people (some of them more than once). I am so pleased to say that almost half of them—25—have been adoptees, helping us all become more adoptee-influenced, adoptee-informed, and adoptee-centered. Ever since modern adoption practices were formed in the 1920s, beginning with the template laid by the nefarious Georgia Tann, it's questionable whether adoption has been done “in the best interest of the child.” Why do I say that? Because the system was not designed by adoptees. adoptees who have long been coming to consciousness about the fullness of the adoptee experience, who have been finding each other and raising their voices together to tell us something important. That adoption practices continue to actually be adoptive-parent and adoption industry focused. We should be listening to these scholars, these deep thinkers, these thought-leaders who are also adoptees.

It has also been important to me to elevate the lesser-heard voices of birth or first parents, as well. You have nearly a dozen of those wise people to learn from in the archives of [Adoption: The Long View](#).

Also in the mix are therapists, journalists, researchers, scholars, activists, thought leaders on interracial adoption, adoptive parents who have something enriching to say, and even a couple of people who ended up *not* adopting. I've had a blast over the last five years and I realize I am incredibly lucky to have had the chance to speak with these fabulous adoption thought-provokers. I trust that in listening, your thoughts have been provoked!

I *want* to say that I'm confident that these episodes will stand the test of time. But I know from looking back at nearly 18 years of writing on my blog, LavenderLuz.com, that not all of them will. Adoptee voices will continue to develop and promote more child-centered approaches, and adoption itself will continue to evolve. I intend to, as well. Someday in the future, some of my old content, either on my blog or here in the archives of Adoption: The Long View, some of the ideas will surely end up sounding outdated. That's the price of progress, of evolution, of knowing more, and of moving forward and treating each other ever more respectfully.

So let's get into this fifth Best Of episode. Like the others before it, the December episode is a bite-sized recap from each guest of the Best Advice given this season. For Season 5, the question that ended each interview was this: *What do you wish all adoptive parents knew from Day 1, or at least from today?*

Season 5 includes 8 adoptees, 2 birth/first parents, and 1 adoptive parent. Two guests are adoptees and scholars, and three are adoptees and therapists. All have a unique and fascinating perspective to share with adoptive parents who are open and curious. Each guest has brought a perspective that made me question what I once "knew," and cracked me open a bit so that I can show up in a different way for my daughter and son.

So now I offer you the brilliance of our Season 5 guests, distilled into this season's best advice. What you'll hear in the next half hour or so are brief clips from the end of each episode – guests giving you their very best advice for taking the long view of adoption. We have a transcript available so you can easily find any episode you'd like to refer back to and dive more deeply into.

After that, stay tuned for a special treat. We'll close Adoption: The Long View with one more very short interview with Rich Uhrlaub, whom I originally talked with in Season 1. During the pandemic, he was struck by a crazy-creative muse, conceiving and composing an entire musical about adoption. He'll share a song with us from his musical, one that gets to the heart of adoption's dilemma – for the mothers involved.

Instead of our usual outro music, you'll be in for a real treat from the upcoming musical, [For The Record\(s\)](#). So make sure to stick around til the very end.

Best Advice from Season 5 Guests

Episode 501 featured Jennifer Dyan Ghoston, who is an adoptee, a podcast host, and a former Chicago police detective. Here she is in [ep 501](#) on what we get wrong about same-race adoption.

[501: Jennifer Dyan Ghoston: What We Get Wrong on Same-Race Adoption](#)

Jennifer: I love that question. And what came up for me was an answer from one of my guests on my podcast, Sophie P. Jupillat Posey. And let me just give a little background: I asked her, “If you were in a room full of adoptive parents, let’s say 2000 of them, what would you say?” And these were her words.

“Being an adopter is an incredibly, almost sacred responsibility. It’s a mission you have to step into with your eyes wide open. You can’t adopt the challenge and expect it to be the solution to whatever problems you’re dealing with, especially if it’s in the relationship to infertility.

I get it. For some people, having a child is the most important, almost primordial thing. But if you haven’t taken a hard look at yourself, like, am I really fit to be a parent to any kid; bio, adopted whatever. Think of that child as a human being who will be a part of your family, but won’t (at the same time, for obvious reasons; it’s natural) be more enriched by it.”

I just loved her answer because it wasn’t it wasn’t negative. It was just; this is what you want to think about. Like, especially that line that *your child is a human being who will be a part of your family, but won’t at the same time*, I hope that that’s just, like, a statement to totally reflect on because, like you were saying earlier, and I’ve heard many adoptive parents say it, we just want to be, like, your only. Looking at it, like, we’re your real parents (and certainly adoptive parents are; let me be clear) but we’re not your only real parents.

Lori: Exactly. That is such a powerful statement that you shared from your guest. I’m thankful to you for that. What it brings up for me, when you say “sacred responsibility,” those words that really stuck out to me.

I think it’s normal. It happened to me, and it maybe happened to other adoptive parents that at first, the baby you adopt is in service of you. It’s to meet your needs. When you start to grasp the sacred responsibility, you also start to grasp that *you are in service to your child*. And you have that inner work to do to show up for your child in that space of sacred responsibility to them. So, thank you so much for sharing that.

Jennifer: Yeah, for sure. And what I would add to Sophie’s words, beautiful words, is that I think adopters have the opportunity, like this awesome opportunity, maybe the ultimate opportunity, to grow in compassion, empathy, and to continually extend grace to the adoptee.

Lori Holden, Host

Understand and be OK with the idea that you’re our real parents, but you’re not our only real parents. That was [Ep501](#), should you want to tune in for more wisdom from adoptee and former police detective Jennifer Dyan Ghoston.

Adoptee and music teacher Glenna Boggs joins adoptee and psychotherapist Lauren Fishbein in [Ep 502](#) to explore why adoptive parents do more harm than good when they fear adoptees’ “negative” emotions.

[502: Glenna Boggs & Lauren Fishbein on Allowing the Full Range of Adoptee Emotions](#)

Glenna: That not one story is the same. Everybody has a different journey, and everybody is at different places in their journey. And this goes for siblings too. My twin and I have been and I think will be at very different places with our adoption. And that's okay. And that it's a process and that there are ways to do the work in ways that are beautiful, in ways that are impactful. And while it's hard and while it's scary and while it's unknown, there's a lot of love in it too. So, enjoy the process.

Lori: I love that. Enjoy the process. And there's no right way and no wrong way. And that helps us suspend judgment of other people. And that brings us to compassion. So, I love that.

Lauren, how about you? What do you wish adoptive parents knew from Day 1 or from right now.

Lauren: I wish that they knew that it's okay that they can never understand truly, unless they were adopted, what adoption trauma feels like. That's okay. But you must not avoid talking about the loss that comes with adoption and adopting. And to get support for your kid ASAP; like 3, 4 years old before they can say no. Because kids know how to process their trauma. When I get a 3-year-old or a 4, 5, 6-year-old in my office, they work it so hard. I can see their loss. I can see their grief so clearly when they have no language for it at all. They don't even consciously know what they're doing, but I see it played out so clearly in the playroom. It's beautiful. And they just need a safe human to help unlock it with them so that they can be functioning humans later in life.

Lori Holden, Host

Everyone has their own journey of adoption, and be open to talking about the loss that comes with adoption and adopting. That was Glenna Boggs and Lauren Fishbein in [Ep502](#).

In [Ep 503](#), we heard from Amber Jimerson, a birth mom and preacher's wife, who has deeply examined what scripture says about adoption, what it meant in context, and ways harm can come from unexamined messages.

[503: Adoption & the Bible: A Deeper Look with Amber Jimerson](#)

Amber: So, there are so many answers that I could give here. But again, in the spirit of this whole conversation, I would rather leave parents with a seed to take and plant in their own time, in their own way.

So, I wish that all adoptive parents knew the irreplaceable value of curiosity, of wonder, of stepping aside, and perspective taking. If all adoptive parents could enter into this long game of adoption with that heart for curiosity and for listening and really trying to imagine experiences that are not their own, I think not only would there be obviously a tremendous benefit to the adoptees and birth parents in their lives, but honestly, I think that's how you treasure up an abundance of rich and complex knowing about life and humanity.

And so, to be able to do this requires a willingness and an ability to pause and ask questions where we would much rather give answers. It requires a belief that there is room for both you and for me and for the whole of our experiences. And it requires trust that facing and sitting in difficult emotions and

conversations would not be the death of us, but rather the birth of so much more depth within ourselves and between us and those who we love.

Lori Holden, Host

Pause to ask questions in those moments in which we'd much rather give answers. Develop within ourselves the urge to pause, and also cultivate curiosity, wonder, and space for the other person. That was [Ep503](#) with Amber Jimerson.

In [Ep504](#), we heard two moms in a 22-year and counting open adoption share about how they both aim to remain adoptee-oriented throughout. Here is advice from birth mom Katie Cowles and adoptive mom Amber Wooten, on how they centered their love and actions on the daughter they both claim.

[504: Lessons Learned from Two Moms in One Open Adoption for 22 Years](#)

Katie: You know, I do acknowledge that, or I can easily acknowledge, that what Amber and I have is unique. I know enough people in this space now to know that what we have is unique. So, I think that with that said, I think that I couldn't make it through the hour without not saying it. You know, I love to reference the fact that Daniel Tiger says you can have two things at the same time and two feelings at the same time.

I think going into this relationship, being able to say two things can be true at the same time, I can both watch and admire and love and respect you as a parent and watch you parent your child and also acknowledge there is this weight attached to that. I can acknowledge that there was a cost. There is a continued cost, and I choose to continue that; being involved.

I also think it takes humility on both sides. You know, even just to say, as we've all been talking, the thing that I hear both of you say or not say, but the theme behind it is that it takes humility to say, "I'm going to acknowledge that it's not about me. It's about this child who I have now the responsibility to protect and steward and foster these relationships and all of that." And there is an inherent humility in that to say, "I understand I can't be everything to them."

And I think that if both sides come at it with that humility, there is the space to both be real with how you feel about it and also show up for the other side of it. I think that – I don't know, it hit me today so clearly that that is just critical to it because I think, otherwise, you kinda come with your own agenda. And it's hard not to. Right? I mean, there's still times where that happens, but I think if you approach it in that way, it just makes a ton of difference.

And what I would say to adoptive parents from Day 1: I spoke with Chris and Amber one time at this event, and I'm representing, in front of a room of prospective adoptive parents, so I've got however many sets of eyeballs looking at me, like, "You have what – tell us the magic formula." And I remember thinking, "There isn't one." Like, there isn't a magic formula. There isn't some perfect – you can make the right profile book or you can do the right thing or you can do all the right things and still have complicated relationships or every story turns out differently.

But I think, for example, what matters to me may not matter to another birth mom. So, I there is no, like, "I speak for all birth moms," any more than anybody else can speak for any other area of this space, but to just be yourself. And I know that's scary. I understand how scary it is to do that. But the more that

Amber was true with who she was, I was able to let go in a way that had I kinda gotten the, like, “Oh, are you just giving me the best version of you?” “I probably wouldn't have been able to do that.

So, I think, while there's no magic formula, because everybody being themselves is a little different, I think being willing to take the risk to say, “This is who we are. And I know that we're not for everybody and that's okay,” is a hard piece of advice.

And, obviously, I've never sat in the other side of these shoes. Like, I don't know what it's like to submit myself to that kind of, not exposure, but, like, having somebody else dissect your life. But I think that when you're making a decision like that to have someone be truthful and open. It just takes off a little bit of the pressure.

Lori: That's also helpful, Katie. You really touched on some of the qualities that I've noticed as well that help promote healthy relationships, no matter where they are, if they're in adoption or not. But authenticity, keeping yourself healthy, addressing your own wounds, being trustworthy, humility, not needing to own more than you need to own and caretaking – I think that was one of Amber's words. And then, of course, I adore that you brought in Daniel Tiger and the BothAnd because if adoption isn't BothAnd with the bitter and the sweet and the joy and the tragedy, at all moments, I don't know what is. So, thank you for all of that.

Amber, let me ask you the same final double question. What do you think people need to know about entering into the sacred relationship and what do you wish that all adoptive parents knew from right this moment?

Amber: I think the best thing that we can do in pretty much any sort of situation is like to get ourselves emotionally healthy. So, I think that we need to do the emotional work. And the emotional work allows us to let other people feel their feelings, and we don't take them personally. Everybody in all sizes. I mean, I'll go all the way up to Katie's mom. I mean, if I feel in an emotionally safe place, I can respect and show grace to everybody in the situation and imagine what the birth mother's feeling, what the birth mother's feeling, and it's showing grace to all the people in the situation. I think that's my biggest thing. Do the emotional work to get yourself prepared for it, but I don't think you know it if you haven't been in this space. I've learned that because of the space.

The biggest thing I would want adoptive parents to know is to know that you may never be “enough” and you have to be okay with that. And to know that that's not a personal hit on you. I said before, “You don't go into adopting for you, for the feelings you get, for the glory you get, for anything you get.” That's not what you do, and you find out down the road, really, like I said, you're two or three seats back, if you're doing it well. You are not the one in the focus.

I would just say do the work to understand what's happening in the hearts and minds of your kids. Read about separation trauma. I mean, these things are so real. No one wants to hear it when their babies were in this beautiful little denial because we got this sweet little thing, but it's better to be prepared to understand them. It's better to be able to love them through their journey and support their efforts to connect with their birth families and just remembering it's not a rejection of you because they want something else. It's not about you.

And like Katie said, two things can be side by side. They can love you for who you are, but still have a great need to even understand or to have someone who looks like them or who has a biological connection with them or to know about their birth mother's and birth father's characteristics and traits and

qualities and habits and likes and, to know their history. And let them be willing to explore and never tell them, "You should be happy with what you've got," because they can be happy with they what they've got, but they have to be allowed to really feel, like I said earlier, feel the grief, feel the feelings, and to explore them.

Lori: That is also beautiful. And between the two of you, I can see why this has been such an enduring and strong relationship because you're both doing the work, you're both extending grace, you both come to this with humility and growth and adoptee centeredness. So, I really appreciate you coming here to share all of that today.

Katie, do you have any final thoughts?

Katie: You know, it's funny to think that it's I've been doing this longer than not, in like when you start young, that's what happens. But there are still days where it catches me off guard; today, even now, and I've done a ton of work on it in a way that has been super beneficial.

I would say letting that wave crash and then keep moving. It doesn't mean that it isn't this beautifully woven story together. And I think that that, again, is that holding that tension of how both of those things coexist, I don't know. And honestly, it's almost better to be behind the curtain where I don't know how it all works. But to just kind of sit in that reality of there are days where things feel different than other days, and that's okay. But that none of that changes how beautiful this can be. And that, Lori, as you've said, and I talk about, I mean, I would say that's exactly the word is that It is bittersweet. And the beauty of it being bittersweet is that there is the sweet. It's not just bitter. It's not just hard. And even if there are moments of hard, it doesn't mean there's not good and beautiful joy. And just this whole journey is if you're okay with that, then you can really roll with it versus, like, fighting against it.

Lori: Yeah. I have found it to be all of that; bitter and sweet at different times, sometimes at the same time. But what it has always been is rich. It's been always very rich in experience and causes for me to excavate myself and have an examined life, instead of an unexamined life. So, Amber, do you have any final thoughts?

Amber: I love what Katie said, and it does make me think about if you have to dig around and say that some other than the obvious good of, "I love my girls, and I love my Katie." I think it opens up people's minds in general to what love is, and it opens up people's minds to what family is. We have the fuzziest family boundaries you could ever see with all the different, you know, I don't even know what my title is for, like, my kids' siblings. I don't even know, but it's a big fuzzy boundary. But it shows our kids that love is – there's no formula for it. There's no certain way a family has to look. That love could just be extended and given to people in so many different ways. And it's the more generous you are with it; the better life can be.

Lori Holden, Host

That was [Ep504](#) with Katie Cowles and Amber Wooten, who built their open adoption relationships through authenticity, self-knowledge and care, trustworthiness, respect, grace, humility, and expansiveness.

In [Ep505](#) and [Ep506](#), doctoral student and biracial transracial adoptee Torie DiMartile shares what parents need to know about all the ways in which an adoptee is split, all the worlds they are required to straddle.

[505 & 506: Torie DeMartile on What Parents Must Know about Adoptee Math](#)

[Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)

Tori: Adopted people really need to know you're going to stay. They desperately need to know that there's nothing that they can do or feel or say that's going to make you leave. And I think so many adopted individuals keep their feelings to themselves. They don't reveal that they're struggling or they have questions because they're afraid that their adoptive parents will be hurt, defensive, prideful, and therefore reject them.

So, my biggest hope is that adoptive parents think about adoption like you think about biological parenting. No matter how your child feels about adoption, they need to know that you're going to stay. And, also, no matter how long it takes them to heal, they need to know you're going to stay. I think that's another thing that my mom and I encountered was this concept of when do you think you'll be over this? When do you think you'll be fully healed? And my immediate question was, "Well, what if I'm not? What if I'm dealing with this for the rest of my life? Will you still love me?"

So, I really believe that adopted individuals need from their adoptive parents the space to engage with adoption however they feel, to be angry about it, to be joyful about it, to be confused, to be resentful, to be regretful. They need to know that regardless of how they feel about this thing that happened to them, that the people that chose them at the beginning are going to keep choosing them.

Lori: I want to tie something into that that I've been thinking so much as you and I are talking, and that's in tandem of *seeing* the adoptee, who they actually are. I got this memo late, and so this is coming from my own learning curve, which needed to be pretty dramatic, of actually seeing my children for who they are and not who they thought I wanted them to be. Because adoptive parents can say all the right words, "We'll always be there for you, I love you just the way you are." But if there is any hint in us of wanting to change them or mold them or wish they were different in any other way, that will come across.

Tori: Yes. Yes. They will feel that. And because adoptees want to be loved and accepted, they oftentimes acquiesce or adapt to the desires and needs of adoptive parents in an attempt to maintain harmony and maintain acceptance and being loved.

I do think that's another important aspect is if you are giving your a child reason to believe that they need to potentially change, they may deny themselves in order to potentially please you. And that will ultimately create tension in the relationship as they are not true to themselves and begin to create distance between themselves and a parent. So, I think that's a really good point. You need to love them for where they're at and for who they are and to show that in action, not just words.

Lori Holden, Host

That was anthropologist and adoptee Torie DiMartile from [ep505](#) and [ep506](#) sharing about dualities, adoptees fitting in neither here nor there, and the juxtaposition of adoption's wreckage and wonder.

[Ep507](#) is a conversation with former therapist, current therapist coach, and bestselling author Robyn Gobbel about how to raise children who sometimes have big, baffling behaviors.

[507: Robyn Gobbel on Dealing with Big Baffling Behaviors](#)

Robyn: What I had planned to say was what you had talked about in the intro, which is that it is a trauma. And if we could all just be okay with that reality, we don't have to feel ashamed of it. I mean, we can absolutely use that information for adoption reform and to change practices in adoption that are causing more trauma than is needed. But when somebody loses their family and goes to another one, even if it's the moment they're born, it is traumatic. And if we can just honor that and be with that, again, just with honesty.

And since you kind of already said that, I will add to it in that adoptive parenting. We need to go into adoptive parenting assuming that we're going into special needs parenting. I mean, I don't say that in a pathologizing of adoptees way at all, but just of a recognition of this is a life that has been impacted. If you're not adopted, this is a life that's been impacted in a way that we can never even comprehend. My whole life is with adoptees. My whole life, I'm surrounded by adoptees. I will never ever be able to come close to feeling in my body the loss that's been experienced. And if we could go into adopted parenting as just honest recognition of this is special needs parenting. And that's not pejorative. That's not criticism. It's not pathologizing. It's just it's honest and just recognition of history and really seeing these kids.

Lori Holden, Host

Adoptive parenting *is* special needs parenting. So we need ways to provide felt safety, connection, and co-regulation. More about the owl brain, watchdog brain, possum brain in [Ep507](#) with Robyn Gobbel.

In [Ep508](#), interracial adoptee Lanise Antoine Shelley tells us how and why to support adoptees in being the hero of their own story, rather than a player in ours.

[508: Lanise Antoine Shelley on Centering the Adoptee as Hero](#)

Lanise: Well, I really loved what you said in the beginning of knowing your stuff and knowing what was their stuff and understanding their boundaries. And as I work through my adult stuff, I'm having these hard conversations with my mom and my godmother, and they're saying that they just were unprepared, did not know how to define their role in my life. Like my godmother did not know what kind of parental role she had, but I told her that my exposure to her, having lived with her, makes her a parental guide whether she wants it or not. Like children just surrender to who's in front of them and are very impressionable.

And so, I would say that families need to make a choice about the boundaries that they have around the child. They need to understand and distill what is the child's stuff? What is my stuff? As an adoptive parent, do you have abandonment issues? Do you have issues with your family that are unresolved? Like all of those things will condition your relationship with the child.

And I'm not saying that people need to be healed to do this or do that because none of us will ever be completely healed. There's always something that will activate us, trigger us, set us off. But I just loved how you put it knowing that this child in front of you, this is who they are and this is who you happen to be as a parent. How can you come together and compromise in collaboration to honor this guardianship contract that you have created with this child?

Lori: I feel like once we become a parent, by adoption or by whatever, we end up also parenting our inner child because that inner child is coming out, the one that didn't have a voice, the one that maybe

wasn't seen, and the one that doesn't have the capacity to hold space for the new child; the new actual child.

And so, a lot of, I think, what I have spent the last 20 some years doing is getting reacquainted with that inner child and filling her up, healing what she's showing me. And the more I do that, the more space and capacity I have with my own children. And I think that means that as I've been doing this work, I show up for them in a way that feels a little bit safer and safer to them. They would be the arbiters of saying that.

But I do think that, like, what you were saying, if you have a full grief bucket, you cannot hold your child's grief when they start to feel it about their original family or their losses in their adoptions. If you have a grief bucket full of admonishing, then when somebody in your family admonishes, you're not going to have the capacity to defend and protect your child. So, those are some of the things that you've made me think along the way, and I wanted to thank you for being with us, Lanise.

Lori Holden, Host

Be willing to own your stuff. That was [Ep508](#) with adoptee, actress, podcaster and adoptee activator Lanise Antoine Shelley.

Joining us for [Ep509](#) were Dr JaeRan Kim, adoptee and adoption scholar, and Patrick Armstrong, adoptee podcaster, talking about adoptees coming to consciousness about their own adoption, and the ways adoptive parents can help or hamper their efforts.

[509: JaeRan Kim, PhD, and Patrick Armstrong on the Adoptee Cnsciousness Model](#)

JaeRan: I think just kind of what I said is that this is an opportunity for you to build a lifelong relationship together. So, as tempting as it can be to just focus on the day to day of the next 10, 15 years, to be thinking about how you're going to have a relationship with your adopted child in the future.

Lori: Thank you for that. Patrick, what would you like to say about that?

Patrick: I would actually just echo the exact same thing and with a splash of accountability. Just to never be afraid or worried to take a look inwards first before delving into whatever it is that you might need to delve into. Always a good lesson for anybody, whoever that might be. But everything that JaeRan just said, and just don't be above accountability.

Lori: That is such an important point, and it's a piece that I'm bringing into this keynote that I'm preparing for. And that is that one of the things I never knew at the beginning of my journey, is that I would be held accountable to my adoptees for all of it. They don't stay young. I expected them to grow up in all the ways that kids grow up, but I didn't expect them to grow up into adoptee consciousness the way that they are doing.

Lori Holden, Host

Consider *now* how you'd like your relationship with your adoptee to be *in the future*. In other words, take the long view! Be accountable for yourself as things come up. That was [Ep509](#) with adoptee scholar JaeRan Kim, PhD, and adoptee and content creator Patrick Armstrong on the Adoptee Consciousness Model.

Kathy Mackechney, LCSW, adoptee and Internal Family Systems therapist tells us how “not all parts get adopted” in [Ep510](#), and what that means for adoptive parents.

[510: Kathy Mackechney: “Not All Parts Get Adopted”](#)

Kathy: This is not necessarily going to be easy for people to hear. From Day 1, I want adoptive parents to remember you are raising someone else's child. And that's going to feel to you like your child, and it's going to feel that way to you sooner than it does to the child. And your child needs to be able to go through their own process of claiming you as their parent. So, remember, you are raising someone else's child and that child does long for their parent, their original parent, no matter what. Even if there was abuse and neglect, that child longs for that parent to not act in abusive and neglectful ways and be able to be their parent.

Lori: I really appreciate you saying that because I think about 10 or 11 years ago, that thought dawned on me, and I wrote about it. And I forget what I said, but I'm going to put that link in our show notes as well, because I think that's a part. I'm raising my child because I am the mom, and I'm raising someone else's child because she is also the mom, and he is also the dad. So, those are two parts, and my work on this is to integrate those two parts and to allow both of those things to be true at the same time. I don't remember if that's what I said.

Kathy: And I believe that the more that an adoptive parent embraces that, the more that child will actually become your child.

Lori: Isn't that a paradox? Yeah.

Kathy: Right, exactly. Because if you can embrace that, that is going to be conveyed to your child, and that's going to be meaningful to them. Yes, your child needs you to be their parent and needs you to feel like you are their parent. But the more that you can hold what you described simultaneously; you can hold that truth along with your truth that you are their parent, the more you are going to become their parent to them.

Lori Holden, Host

That was [Ep510](#) with adoptee and therapist Kathy Mackechney. Accept that you are raising someone else's child. The better you can embrace the BothAnd of your adoptee's situation, the more your child will actually become your child.

And now, an intro to our last outro.

For The Record(s):

It's hard to follow all that insightful and adoptee-oriented advice with something equally dazzling, but hold on because we're gonna do just that.

Can you imagine what it would be like to have seen *Hamilton* or *Wicked* before they became a phenomenon? Well, let me tell you about *For The Record(s)*. In the first season of *Adoption: The Long View*, I [got to interview Rich Uhrlaub](#), who has quite an impressive resume as an [adoptee activist](#). During the pandemic, he indulged and honed a whole new side of himself by writing and composing an entire

musical. Reportedly, It came to him in a hot tub. Here are just a few questions with Rich before we wrap things up and hear one of his songs. Welcome Rich, for a mini-interview!

Rich Uhrlaub: Thank you so much for having me. What an honor to be part of this particular show.

Lori: Yeah, this is the last one. I guess I need to ask first, is it “For the Record” or “For the Records”?

Rich: It’s “For The Record(s)” – plural – but there are parentheses around the final “s.” Most people in Adoptionland get that; not everybody outside Adoptionland gets it. There’s a dual meaning.

The goal of the title is to be a chronicle of the culture and the dynamics of adoption during the Baby Scoop Era in the last half of the 20th century. But then the plural, the “s” applies to records, meaning original birth certificates in adoption records and the access that we have been fighting for for decades. So hopefully this will be something that catches people’s attention and is memorable.

Lori: Thank you for clarifying that. I guess I said it right. So what’s it about?

Rich: It’s a story on several levels. There’s an individual level. The main character is named Joshua Greenman. He is born of Mexican and Italian teenage parents, but adopted into a Jewish family. So there’s his story of growing up and self-discovery and working through therapy sessions and becoming an activist as a result of his search.

On another level is the big picture of the dynamics of adoption and the cultural thinking and some common themes, if you want to say tropes, in the world of agencies and adoptive families, and people who, in many ways, just didn’t know better.

The third level is the activism piece and really kind of a homage and a nod to the women who have really, in so many ways, led this movement.

Lori: You set *For The Record(s)* in the Baby Scoop Era, also called the Closed Adoption Era, when things were closed. We can see now how that ties in with the title of the show. But aren’t things different now with open adoption?

Rich: Yes and no. The good news is that birth mothers have found their voices and have more of a voice in terms of who adopts their baby in the world of open adoption. There are still a number of states who still operate under a closed adoption, sealed records system, like over half of them. So it’s an ongoing battle.

One of the struggles we hear from even new mothers who engage in open adoption is that they’re not enforceable. So sometimes once people get the baby, they disappear.

The flip side of that, sometimes I know that adoptive couples who are very open to having the mother in their life, but the mother, for whatever reason, can’t handle it. And she has to step away. Or has other kinds of struggles. Because it’s a hard thing, to see someone else raise your baby from the beginning. So it’s an emotionally complicated thing.

So, has there been progress? Yes. Are we where we need to be? Not at all.

Lori: What's the best way to support *For The Record(s)* and one day see it in a theater near you?

Rich: I love that question. Thank you! Best thing you can do is go to my website, which is www.ftrmusical.com. Share it, listen to the songs there, get excited. There is a place where you can make a little donation to help. It's the "[buy me a coffee](#)" page and that could be 5 bucks or more if you wanna do that. 'Cause it does cost money. Printing music costs money. Hiring actors costs money. Renting out space costs money. So far, it's pretty much been self-funded. I did get some great help at the conference this past spring, the Untangling Our Roots conference.

And then you can also follow and share. I'm on Instagram @iambicrich, as in iambic pentameter, like poetry. So that's @iambicrich on Instagram.

Lori: Thanks for sharing all that, Rich, and thanks for sharing your song, which we'll get to in just a moment.

I have had a chance to see and hear bits and pieces of this musical. It's soooo good! The songs are both catchy and poignant. The storyline is cohesive and engaging. The whole show makes you see things you may not have seen before in adoption – precisely because it's written from an adoptee's perspective.

I've chosen a song called *Real Mother* from *For The Record(s)* to bring this podcast to a close. It merits this special spot because the issue of feeling real enough, of being seen as legitimate, is one of the core issues for those living in adoption.

Listen especially for these lyrics in the chorus:

*Am I a real mother because there's another who gives him what I can not?
How will I explain this? That I will remain his true mother? I am...and I'm not.*

At last, goodbye, dear listeners. Thank you for making this 5-year run possible. I am grateful to each of you for tuning in over the years. THANK YOU, agencies for sharing with your clients. THANK YOU, adoption support groups, for discussing these topics together. THANK YOU, Adopting.com, for meeting people early in their adoptive parenting journey and helping them begin to see the long view right at the starting gate.

Thanks, everyone, for tuning in and investing in your adoption's Long View. May you continue to meet everything on your road ahead with confidence, curiosity, and compassion.

[Outro music: *Real Mother* from www.ftrmusical.com.]

Show Notes:

[501](#): **Jennifer Dyan Ghoston** on What We Get Wrong about Same-Race Adoption

[502](#): **Glenna Boggs & Lauren Fishbein** on Exploring the Full Range of Adoptee Emotions

[503](#): **Amber Jimerson** on Adoption & The Bible

[504](#): **Katie Cowles & Amber Wooten** on Lessons Learned from 22 Years in an Open Adoption

[505](#) & [506](#): **Torie DiMartile** on the Many Facets of Adoptee Math

[507](#): **Robyn Gobbel** on Dealing with Big Baffling Behaviors

[508](#): **Lanise Antoine Shelley** on Centering the Adoptee as the Hero of Their Own Story

[509](#): **Dr JaeRan Kim** and **Patrick Armstrong** on the Adoptee Consciousness Model

[510](#): **Kathy Mackechney** on “Not All Parts Get Adopted.” What!?

For The Record(s) musical: ftmusical.com

Rich Uhrlaub on Instagram: [@iambicrich](https://www.instagram.com/iambicrich)