

# BITS & PIECES

JIGSAW QLD INC | NEWSLETTER | 2018 AUTUMN EDITION

## 2018 Events

To keep an eye on Jigsaw's events for 2018 and beyond, visit [www.jigsawqueensland.com/events](http://www.jigsawqueensland.com/events).

## Upcoming Groups

Jigsaw's support groups have experienced an increase in numbers since late 2015. Meetings are held on the ground floor of SANDS House, 505 Bowen Terrace, New Farm from 1.30 - 3.30pm.

Participation at the groups is free for members (suggested \$5/head donation for non-members).

**Adoptee Support Group** - 12 May, 14 July, 8 Sept, 10 Nov

**Mother's Support Group** - 19 May, 21 July, 15 Sept, 17 Nov  
(For mothers who have experienced separation from their children by adoption).

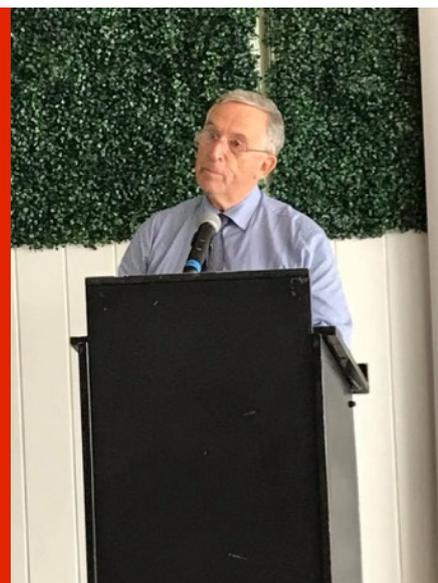
**Open Support Group** - 14 April, 9 June, 11 Aug, 13 Oct, 8 Dec.

**Interracial & Inter-country Group** - 21 April, 16 June, 18 Aug

**Sunshine Coast Adoptee Group** - Saturday, 21 April at Maroochy Neighbourhood Centre, 2 Fifth Ave, Cotton Tree.

## Jigsaw Queensland Inc.

Understanding, Support & Information for all those with adoption in their lives.



## 5th Anniversary of the National Forced Adoption Apology

**Commemoration marked with reflection by the Hon. Julia Gillard AC and a speech by Guest Speaker, Professor Nahum Mushin (pictured above).**

On Wednesday, 21 March we commemorated the 5th anniversary of the National Apology for Forced Adoptions at Riverside Reception Centre New Farm. The event was organised by Jigsaw Queensland, in association with ALAS, Association for Adoptees and Origins Qld.

It was a significant milestone and was marked by a taped reflection by Hon. Julia Gillard AC, and speeches by Trish Large (ALAS), Kerri Saint and Judy Glover (Association for Adoptees), Colleen Bernard (Origins Qld), Heather Herman and Trevor Jordan (Jigsaw Qld) and Guest Speaker, Professor Nahum Mushin (Former Chair of the Forced Adoption Implementation Group). Excerpts from Professor Mushin's speech, which revisited events leading up to the historic apology, the day itself and looking at what may lie ahead can be found at <https://www.jigsawqueensland.com/5th-anniversary-national-apology>.

The event also included a moving exhibition of objects from people affected by adoption, including artworks passed between family, clothing, jewellery, poetry, books, letters, crockery and more.

**'Butterfly'**  
by Vivienne Timmermans

Four years after losing my baby to adoption, I was sitting beside the river bawling my eyes out, grieving for my daughter.



A butterfly appears from nowhere and flutters around me. It lands on my head and sits sunning its wings for what seems like forever.

I feel myself calming down and think to myself, "I have to move on, stay positive or else I will die or get sick from my loss".

Butterflies, to me, mean NEW LIFE, A NEW BEGINNING. So now, whenever I see a butterfly, it encourages me to stay strong and know that I am on the right path.

**'Red Hat, Red Jumper, Red Socks, Red Mitts'** by Bernadette Wallman

I'd finished work early, starting my maternity leave with my whole year's annual leave so my bump was as small as possible. So I had plenty of time, but little money to prepare for my soon to arrive first-born child. I had sourced a good sized, bright red, hand knitted jumper at a jumble sale, and patiently unpicked all the seams, to unravel the original garment, producing a great harvest of yarn. Red seemed like a colour that would be good for either a girl or a boy. Back then we didn't know what we were having

until they popped out! I think they were the first garments I'd ever knitted, and perhaps sadly it was also my last. I'd got the pattern and knitting needles from my friend, Marie. She provided fairly basic instructions and I nibbled away and got on with it. I produced a rather fantastic little set, perfectly suited for an autumn



baby. When she was removed, at three weeks old, she was dressed in this outfit. Recently, one of my sons saw these photos, commenting that he'd never seen them before. Funny how I feel I want to share

them and the story that goes with them, with others within a certain circle, yet find it difficult with those who are close and precious to me.



(left) Trevor Jordan & Heather Herman (Jigsaw Qld), Prof Nahum Mushin, Colleen Bernard (Origins Qld), Trish Large (ALAS), Kerri Saint & Judy Glover (Assoc for Adoptees).





The Hon. Julia Gillard reflects on the 5th anniversary of the Federal Apology for Forced Adoption. This video can be viewed at [www.jigsawqueensland.com](http://www.jigsawqueensland.com).

## May the Force Be With Us

By Chris Mundy



When I was around 5 or 6 years old, my adoptive parents took me to see Star Wars in the George Street cinemas in the Brisbane CBD. It was the late 70's and like most kids of that generation we fell in love with the magical galaxy far, far away created by film maker George Lucas. Our childhoods were spent playing with Luke Skywalker and Princess Leia figures, the iconic heroes that allowed us to dream about being the saviours of the galaxy. The peak of the forced adoption era was in 1972, so for those of us growing up as adoptees during the 70's and 80's Star Wars was significant. Not only was Star Wars an exciting mythological science fiction drama, it was a story about a family impacted by adoption.

The connection between Star Wars and adoption is no coincidence. Creator George Lucas adopted a child in 1981 with wife Marcia Lou Griffin shortly after the second film *The Empire Strikes Back* was released. The couple divorced two years later as *Return of the Jedi*

hit cinemas. Lucas adopted two more children in 1988 and 1993 as a single parent. Three further "prequel" movies followed until George announced his retirement in 2012, selling Lucasfilm to Disney for a whopping \$4.06 billion. Marrying again in 2013, George Lucas has had one further child born to a surrogate mother with his wife Mellody Hobson.

Star Wars is the story of the Skywalker family. An unlawful union occurs between Anakin Skywalker (a Jedi) and Padme Amidala (a Senator) in a time of political and social turmoil. Their relationship is strained and breaks at the point that Padme gives birth to twins (Luke and Leia) and she dies in childbirth. Not knowing his children survived, Anakin goes on to become the saga's iconic villain Darth Vader. In secret, Leia is formally adopted by a royal family and Luke is informally adopted by relatives on a remote desert planet.

The story has a lot to resonate with people affected by adoption. As Luke grows up he enquires about his father which is met with an awkward silence or mistruths. Presumably Leia experiences the same as she becomes a prominent political figure totally oblivious that her birth father is the villain of the galaxy. Neither of them are aware they have a twin. Adopted people are familiar with the awkward silences, the uncomfortable conversations and even the secrecy that surrounds the ultimate question of where they come from. With these missing pieces in hand, they move forward on a hero's journey unlocking the mysteries about themselves along the way.



Later during a confrontation Luke hears those infamous words from Darth Vader, "I am your father". This is difficult for Luke who has always believed a certain narrative about his origins. But eventually he sees Darth Vader not as a villain but as his own flesh and blood needing redemption. But the Skywalker family,

separated by adoption is reunited in the midst of further turmoil. Luke and Leia discover they are brother and sister. Darth Vader is redeemed by Luke; however Vader never gets the opportunity to reunite with Leia before he dies. Like many adopted people, Leia and Luke find some missing pieces but not all, even after contact is made and a reunion occurs.



As Disney has progressed the Star Wars saga with The Force Awakens and The Last Jedi in recent years the same themes emerge. The hero Rey, left on a planet since she was a small child longs for the day her parents will come back and collect her. She embarks on a quest to find out who they are and who she is. And in her quest, she finds Luke who is troubled, alone and estranged from his sister Leia. Rey just wants to “find her place in all of this” and the identity of her parents is the key she thinks will unlock this. It all speaks again to the importance of adopted people to know who they are and where they come from. The importance of identity and belonging, of confronting feelings of abandonment and rejection. And the expectations around searching, contact and reunion.

Now in my 40's, I still look proudly on my vintage Star Wars collection in my home office and reflect on the significance that Star Wars has had on me and my adoption journey for over 4 decades. It may have

been a galaxy far, far away but the story has been much, much closer.

## Moving to Heal

By Edwina Kempe

**Because some mothers and adopted people who contact the Forced Adoption Support Service (FASS) at Jigsaw Qld are experiencing symptoms of trauma related to adoption, we are always seeking the latest research into methods of healing trauma. Andrea Lynch, Team leader of the FASS service, was interested in finding out more about Trauma Centre Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY) as she was aware that it had been developed and researched by Bessel van der Kolk a world expert in healing trauma. Andrea invited a local social worker, Edwina Kempe, who is trained in TCTSY to write an article for the Jigsaw newsletter on this topic.**

– Edwina Kempe

More and more, the body is being acknowledged as a pathway to support healing. Yoga is one body-based modality that has a research base demonstrating it can be useful for people living with the effects of trauma. Developed at the Trauma Center in Brookline, Massachusetts by Medical Director Dr Bessel van der Kolk and Director of Yoga Services David Emerson, Trauma Center Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY) is an empirically validated model of yoga used as an intervention for complex trauma or chronic post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In addition to yoga, TCTSY has foundations in Trauma Theory, Attachment Theory, and Neuroscience.

“With yoga, I reclaimed my body. That is a gift because



I so hated my body. Or I claimed it, not reclaimed it, because I was so young. It was a long process to consider myself not an outline...I think yoga helped

define me. Just inhabiting my own skin is a major step forward" - Participant in TCTSY Study, funded by the National Institutes of Health (USA)



The TCTSY methodology is based on central components of the hatha style of yoga, where participants engage in a series of physical forms and movements. Elements of traditional hatha yoga are modified to build trauma survivors' experiences of empowerment and cultivate a more positive relationship to one's body. Unlike many public yoga classes, TCTSY does not use physical, hands-on adjustments to influence a participant's physical form. Rather, TCTSY presents opportunities for participants to be in charge of themselves based on a felt sense of their own body.

Although TCTSY employs physical forms and movements, the emphasis is not on the external expression or appearance (i.e. doing it "right") or receiving the approval of the teacher. Rather, the focus is on the internal experience of the participants. This shift in orientation, from the external to the internal, is a key attribute of TCTSY as a complementary treatment for complex trauma. With this approach, the power resides within the individual, not the TCTSY facilitator. Further, by focusing on the felt sense of the body to inform choice-making, TCTSY enables participants to restore their connection of mind and body and cultivate a sense of agency that is compromised as a result of trauma. The aim of TCTSY is to offer a supported space for people to find the practice that is

useful for them and their body, from moment to moment.

Trauma Sensitive Yoga can help people to:

- Learn to be present
- Practice making choices
- Experience taking effective action
- Sense their environment
- Connect with their body through breath

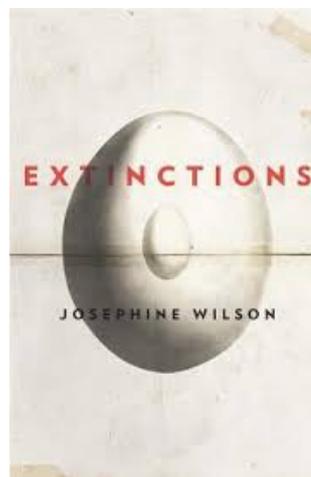
Edwina Kempe, Facilitator, Licenced Trainer and QLD Director of TCTSY Australia. Edwina offers group yoga classes and individual sessions. For more information head to: [www.tctsyaustralia.com](http://www.tctsyaustralia.com) or [www.edwinakempe.com](http://www.edwinakempe.com)

## BOOK REVIEW

### **Extinctions by Josephine Wilson**

by Andrea Lynch

**Through her characters and their interactions, Josephine Wilson explores themes of ageing, adoption, grief, loss and disability.**



Many books I have read to date have been memoirs or autobiographies by mothers who lost children or adopted people where the impacts of adoption has been the central theme. Such books do help to create a better understanding amongst the public of the impacts of adoption.

However, "Extinctions" is a work of fiction where the reader is invited into an understanding of what it means to be adopted through the character of

Caroline. Josephine Wilson is an adoptive mother which no doubt would have informed her writing.

I was excited that this book has the potential to influence people who may choose not to read an adoption memoir or have a specific interest in the topic of adoption. As well the audience numbers are likely to be increased by the award the book has received.

"Extinctions" starts slowly but builds into a powerful story. It is a book you could recommend to family or friends to give them some insight into the experience of being adopted while also exploring other important themes and being well written.

## Rising from Loss, I am Unwanted and Wanted

By Reshma McClintock (USA)

(<https://dearadoption.com/author/writtenbyresh>)



Unnamed, unwanted, and likely never seen by the woman whose body housed me for roughly seven months, I was abandoned at birth in Calcutta in 1980. I was the physical manifestation of my young Indian mother's shame. How could she even look at me? I spent three months in an orphanage where I was named, cared for, and placed for adoption. Upon arrival in the United States I was adopted and

welcomed into a sweet family, and afforded every opportunity one could ever hope to have.

The wide-reaching affects of being adopted dictated much of my life and have since the moment I was separated from my Indian mother. The majority of my life can easily be summed up as joy-filled, loving, and stable. Far from flawless, I've experienced a life full of goodness overall, which is why I understand the quick assumption that the goodness in my life stems from and should be credited to adoption. Truly, I get it.

There aren't many things I'd change about my childhood. I was raised with love, grace, and affection in abundance. We yelled, laughed, slammed doors, and openly discussed most things in our home on a regular basis. When I think about my parents and brothers, I'm overwhelmed by a physical feeling of love. We are a spirited, tightly-knit squad; impenetrable and fiercely protective of one another.

Apart from being the only person of color in an all-white family, I sincerely felt a sense of belonging deep within me when we were together. And although the sight of my family in public often incited questions about whether or not I actually belonged, I felt safe and secure with them.

Many are quick to categorize me as an adoption success story. However, the realities within adoption reveal irreparable brokenness, family decimation, and profound loss. Whether adopted or not, all humans experience loss, but often adoptees are expected to embrace gratitude for the things we were adopted into and forsake the grief for everything we left behind.



Growing up I rarely, if ever, spoke of being Indian. I didn't like talking about being adopted or about my heritage for two reasons. The first being I didn't feel Indian. I felt white. I've had a huge identity crisis regarding my race most of my life because I grew up in the grip of white privilege.

The second being I didn't want to bring up anything that separated me from my family; the only disconnect we had stemmed from just that, separation. I belonged to them, but not really. I felt like I was theirs, but I once belonged to a different family, so if I never spoke of it, my silence further cemented I was where I belonged.

I worked hard to bury my feelings so the deliberately crafted facade I created wouldn't crack; this started as a child and carried into adulthood. It wasn't that I was pretending to be happy. I was happy. I was just also burying my sadness over the other family to whom I used to belong; the other life I might have lived had I not been the embodiment of shame due to one being bound by decades of cultural mores.

When I allow my mind to settle on my Indian mother, I think of her with affection and sadness. We have both suffered a devastating loss. I've never been oppressed by culture or tradition the way she was so I cannot begin to understand her feelings surrounding me.

As the mother of my own daughter, I also cannot imagine she has never thought of me with similar affection and sadness, although I do wonder if she ever even allows her mind to settle on me. Did she bury me the way I buried her when I was a child?

My parents didn't adopt me to elevate themselves as saviours, solve infertility issues, or as a part of fulfilling

their good deed quota. I was adopted internationally for three reasons:

1. My Indian mother couldn't/didn't want to keep me.
2. India didn't have systems in place to care for and keep abandoned infants due to societal stigma or lack of resources.
3. My (adoptive) parents wanted to be a family for a child without one.

I am unwanted and wanted; I am disconnected and connected. I am Indian and not Indian; I am with and without a family. Being an adoptee is a part of who I am, at my core. It affects each aspect of my identity. Being unwanted dictates who I am; being wanted doesn't erase my initial abandonment and how it has impacted me.

I was adopted into the most loving family which has no bearing on the fact that I have been disconnected from my biological family; from the Indian woman who carried me inside her body, whose likeness I may or may not have, who either reserves space in her heart for me or doesn't.

Adoption is a two-part deal. A fracture and a bandage. I don't believe the fracture ever fully heals. When families are fractured it does irreparable damage. When children are adopted, their adoptive families

become the intended bandage. My bandage was crafted thoughtfully and beautifully. It restored a sense of family and belonging, but if you look close, you will see the fracture still exists. This kind of wound cannot be healed and it must be acknowledged as the broken foundation on which everything else is built.

Adoption begins with the severing of the most intimate relationship; mother and child. And this fracture is a devastating one. Adoption can give. Adoption can provide safety, security, and a sense of belonging, but even when that is the case (and it isn't much of the



time), the bandage is just that; a temporary covering for a massive, bleeding wound.

So often adoptees are asked to do the unthinkable: forget. Even those of us adopted as infants cannot ever forget the brokenness which led us to our second families. But, adoptees are resilient above all. We boldly share our stories because society has categorized us as either grateful or angry and both are far too narrow to describe even one aspect of being adopted.

We must share our own stories with our own voices, because if you are not adopted, you cannot imagine how we feel without listening to us speak for ourselves. Adoptees carry heavy grief; a grief so weighty it seeps into every part of who we are, how well we give and receive love, and leads to a lifelong identity crisis for many of us.

Our resilience is fruit bearing. Adoptees are one of the largest groups of people advocating for their peers; changing legislation, bringing attention to ethics in adoption, educating adoptive families, providing counselling resources, and sharing candidly in magazines, on websites and blogs, in art, and in book form.

There are two parts of me that simultaneously exist; one part fully encompassed in loss and the other partially encompassed in gain. I live well in the joy of my gains, but that joy doesn't heal the wounds my losses inflicted. I've faithfully been embraced by the family I was adopted into and no amount of love has ever been withheld. As it pertains to attempts to heal the wound, though, it isn't enough to provide safety and love.

Those are two crucial components to good family life, but for adoptees, so much more is missing, so much more has been cut from us. Attempts to heal the wound are futile which is why adoptees must be provided space to grieve. Any possibility of partial healing derives from acknowledging the loss before rejoicing in any gain.

Much has been taken from me; biological family, culture, and another life entirely. The things given to me don't nullify the things taken, and that's okay as long as the wound is acknowledged. In concurrence with my losses I have peace in my relationship with

God, in the wonderful family I do have, in friendships, and in adoptee advocacy. From my greatest source of loss and pain, I draw strength and purpose.

While my wound bleeds endlessly, my heart bursts with hope because I know adoptees are making an impact as we join forces and speak bravely and with fortitude.

*Reshma McClintock is an adoptee from Calcutta, India. Her first return to the city of her birth was documented in the film Calcutta is My Mother which is expected to premiere in 2018. In 2016, after seeing a need, Reshma created DearAdoption.com as a platform for adoptees, by adoptees; the site has been well and widely received. Reshma lives in Seattle, Washington with her husband and daughter.*

## Adoption Mother's Day Cards

Mother's Day can be a challenging time for people affected by adoption. Choosing an appropriate card can be fraught with conflicting emotions. Jigsaw Qld has been working on an adoption-appropriate Mother's Day card to provide an alternative to the norm. This card has been developed by people affected by adoption. It is available for purchase on the Jigsaw Qld website for \$5, including postage.

