

# Adopted

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returned to me. I was depressed. On the letter it stated that "Mrs. Hick" was no longer at that address and had left no forwarding address.

Where could I go from here? My adoptive mother's advice was to call the city's directory assistance. After doing that, I found that the number for "Desmonda Haynes," my biological mother, was unpublished. Another dead end — or maybe not. My next step was to call the operator and explain my situation. I decided to have her call the unpublished number and to give Desmonda a message to call me.

She called right away.

In the midst of our crying voices, my mother said, "I knew I would hear from you someday. How have you been, baby?"

It was the happiest day of my life. I was speaking to this woman, my mother, for the very first time. It was quite emotional. The feeling that came over me was a need to be able to touch, to hold, to hug the mother that I had never seen. We both vowed we would work to get the funds and to plan our reunion. Before hanging up the phone, I expressed my love to my mother. I didn't know, and it didn't matter, what events led us to not be together.

After hanging up the phone, I immediately phoned my adoptive family in Ord. My mom, as well as the rest of the family, was excited to hear about my accomplishment of finding my biological mother. My father asked if I had plans to visit my mother and offered to pay for the trip. A prayer was answered. Within two weeks, I was on a plane on the way to New York City.

"Please fasten your seat belts," said a flight attendant. The plane was getting ready to take off. My son and I were on a journey to New York City, a place where I hadn't been in 10 years. I was returning to the city of my birth. I explained that to my son, who was 2 at the time. I also had to explain that the people we were going to visit were relatives of ours whom I had never seen before.

The flight was spectacular! One could look at the large skyscrapers for which New York is so famous. This sight sticks in my mind even today. The beauty of the city from the sky seemed to be overwhelming for my son as well. Even now, whenever my son sees a plane, he questions, "Is that New York?"

The plane landed. I was full of excitement and I wondered, how would I know who she was? "Take it easy," I told myself. "Just look for someone like yourself." The walk to the waiting area to my family seemed liked an eternity. Every step was heavy with anticipation.

Finally, I reached the waiting area. From a distance, I spotted a dark-complexioned woman in a flowered dress. She had shoulder-length hair and a healthy body frame. I asked myself if this woman could possibly be my mother. But when our eyes met, I knew she was my mother. We ran for each other, wrapping ourselves around one another, our eyes filled with tears.

"Oh baby, it's so good to see ya!" she said. I replied, "Mommy, I love you!" At that point we drew away to look at one another. It was like



Travis Heying/DN

## Yolanda Avidano gives thanks to her adoptive parents who helped her to find her biological family roots.

looking in a mirror. I found myself amused. She had a very dark-toned complexion. I often had wondered why I was so dark, and now I knew it was passed to me from my mother and from her father. She could give me the answers to all my questions and all my concerns about my being! I was beginning to understand more about myself.

We pulled ourselves together enough to gather my luggage and prepare for our trip home. My mother introduced me to my brother George and my baby brother Quamel. I, in turn, introduced my mother to her grandson and my brothers to their nephew. We all hugged one another. My mother said my grandmother, her mother, was waiting in the car for us. I then met my grandmother and her husband. It was so overwhelming; I had never been so happy.

On the ride to the apartment, I began to feel right at home. As I looked out the car window, visions of the childhood that I spent in the city seemed to pass me by.

When we reached my mother's apartment, I became depressed with the close surroundings. I had forgotten what city life was like. The busy and noisy pace was a real culture shock, so different from Ord. I said goodbye to my grandmother after she dropped us off and promised to visit her before my visit's end. After entering my mother's apartment, I met my third brother, Darrelle.

After settling in, I began to ask my mother the questions that were important to me. My mother explained the circumstances of my adoption. She also mentioned that she had gotten in touch with my birth father's mother, and that I should call to make arrangements to have a reunion with my father as well. I hadn't given much thought to the opportunity of meeting both sides of the family.

My father's name is Willie Richburg, the name on my birth certificate. I was also a mirror of him. When I first saw him, I could tell that I took after him maybe more than my mother. He was a tall, slim man, dressed in a military uniform. He had a very inviting smile. We sat and talked for hours, and he explained what had been going on in his life when I was born. He explained what had kept us from being together. I explained to him, as I had to my mother, that it didn't matter to me. I was just happy to be able to meet my birth

family. The past behind me, I was only concerned with whatever happened from here.

I remained in New York for three weeks to visit my mother's and father's families, which included my brothers, my grandmothers, my great grandmother, my great aunt, my uncles, my sister. I talked on the phone to another uncle and his family.

When looking in the faces of the people in my family, I see myself. In some kind of way, that assures my wholeness — my roots. I now can pass this onto my son.

My visit with my family was truly memorable. At last I felt the empty space inside me filled. It is almost a feeling that I can't explain. If I never see my family again, I could go on with the confidence of having met them.

My life hasn't been the same since. I still keep in touch with my mother and father. We try to visit at least once a year. I now can say my name with a sense of pride and dignity, having had two families that each have given me a taste of what life and love is all about!

I truly love my adoptive family. They brought me to eventually meet my biological family, and they thought it was best to share the love of human life that was of their flesh and blood.

Valentine's Day will leave me with loving thoughts of my unique family, which I truly love. I will cross many milestones in the journey of getting to know my biological family, but it will be worth it.

Yolanda Avidano is a sophomore family science major and a Diversions contributor.

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