

Suzanne Nelson

*I [REDACTED] removed from [REDACTED] family in 1962
I just want you to know a few points of my life*

1981 I was married with two little children. The most important thing to me was that my children grew up with their parents. In 1981 my husband (non-Aboriginal) said that he did not want me to have my mother in the house and the reason being that she had left me in the home for all of those years. I stated to him that I had given up my family for years to please my foster family and now I was not going to give them up anymore. I asked him if I give up my family, he had to give up his. He could not do this. He asked me shift out of the family home and I moved and lived in Thornbury. Within 4 weeks my husband [REDACTED] can be known to me he had also [REDACTED] which I only found out after the funeral. His family did not want him to seek help as they wanted him to have custody of our babies. Our 2 little children were 2 years and the other 9 months and just like my history our history repeated itself with my girls having no father.

Does the government need to say SORRY! Of course! If we had known the truth in 1981 that I was one of thousands of children removed my husband would still be alive today. The government can make up as many excuses as they like. I wonder if Johnny Howard would like his children snatched from him and would like to have all their clothes taken off, no electricity, phones, no sun screen lotion and lie under the stars etc and then have them placed with a tribe whom he knew nothing about. That is what the government has done to us. We are resilient and for over 200 odd years we have had to do a 360 circle and now we have Indigenous people in every profession and others living in worse than 3rd world countries. But we still have our culture and sense of humor and the spirit that intertwines.

There is a number of us that were removed and placed in the homes. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] were fostered out but the [REDACTED] such as [REDACTED] and I were more difficult to find foster families as [REDACTED] were [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] years old. [REDACTED] and I were in the Lutheran children's home in Kew Victoria and there were only us and 2 other Koori boys. It does get disheartening for us that we were small in numbers. Most of the high number of Kooris removed and put in homes together have had their reunions and been able to support each other but the small in numbers just don't seem to get acknowledge and if anything, our pain is worse because we didn't have other koori's with us. Its like we were completely robbed of our identity.

And the last point I want to make is "What about the Children that were left behind"? [REDACTED] was [REDACTED] when all her little brothers and sisters were removed. Those that were left behind also have to be acknowledged as they had no family. Can you imagine what it must have been like for her? She also, never again had the bed filled with family or laughter and warmth. Our parents were so traumatized that the only thing to dull the pain was alcohol. The children that were left behind need to have their hurts and

sadness and trauma addressed. My returning to my family over the last 26 years has been too painful. I had to make the decision to walk away from my brothers and sisters this year. I am just worn out emotional, physical and spiritually. Our lives were dramatically destroyed in one day. I have had a life of severe clinical depression and other mental health issues. Do I think about my siblings? Yes, every day and the warm bed that I we will never have again.

In memory of our beautiful Mother
Gloria Nelson

Submission for my Poem “The Warm Bed” in the 10-year National Anniversary of the Royal Commission into the Removal of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Children from Their Families Which was successful. 2007