

OPERATION VANESSA

Operation Vanessa – FAQ

1. Was this a legal adoption?

Yes it was a 100 percent legal adoption. The reason the adoption has not yet been completed is because the birth father came forward at the hospital and then filed a custody action, which improperly halted the adoption proceedings.

2. If the adoption is legal, why is this happening now?

Shortly after Vanessa was released into my care, the birth father filed a custody motion in court in Ohio. This had the effect of preventing the adoption from going forward.

3. Where was Vanessa born?

In Dayton, Ohio, but the adoption was processed under California law because it was a California adoption by a California adoptive parent.

4. Who has jurisdiction over the case?

Despite the California case being first filed, since 2008, California and Ohio courts have debated over which state will have final jurisdiction while Baby Vanessa's fate hangs in the balance. On Friday, July 2, the California Court ceded jurisdiction to the Ohio Court. Following the court's decision I made the following statement:

The California court has passed the buck and given the entire case to Ohio. The Ohio judge has decided that they will put Vanessa into foster care. The birth father will have night visits with Vanessa.

Vanessa will likely be placed with the birth father's mother. The California court is vacating its order to keep Vanessa with me as of July 16, 2010. The court chose July 16th to give us time to file with the Court of Appeals in California. I only have until July 16th to save my daughter.

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5. How did the birth father not know about the child before she was born?

He knew the birth mother was pregnant throughout her pregnancy. He never supported her emotionally or financially during that time. Under California law, this prevents him from being able to block the adoption. Under current Ohio law, he apparently has rights to stop the adoption irrespective of his behavior or lack of commitment.

Interestingly, under Ohio law, if the birth mother had decided to have an abortion, she would be under no legal obligation to research and seek out the approval of the birth father.

6. How is the birth father affording all of this?

He has no discernible source of income and so he is receiving free legal counsel in Ohio and California through legal aid. His trips to California are paid for by Ohio taxpayers via Ohio social services.

While in California he made clear his desire to see Los Angeles, the Lakers and the beach . . . as if it were a sightseeing visit.

I have fought tirelessly over the past two years to the point of almost foreclosing on my home twice while trying to successfully fight this case and win final custody of my daughter.

7. Is the birth father a fit, responsible parent?

That is for the courts to decide. He has, however, been in prison several times for domestic violence, and does have a child endangerment charge on his record.

He once pulled the birth mother around the house so hard by the hair that the police found bloody clumps of hair all over the floor when they arrived. The birth mother was holding one of Vanessa's sisters

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at the time of the incident.

8. Is there a chance the birth father has been reformed?

I think that's up for the courts to decide. All I know is that he has served time in prison for domestic violence, and the reports I have read are pretty horrific including a child endangerment charge.

At least two of his four other children do not live with him, but are in the custody of his elderly mother pursuant to an Ohio court order. I know how he treated Vanessa when he saw her; I observed it and it is well documented by my social worker. I have met him. That told me everything I needed to know.

9. Has the birth father ever acknowledged Vanessa's birthday or Christmas? Has he ever sent her a card or gift?

No, never. Not once in two years.

10. What about the birth father's rights?

There are four people's rights at stake here, not just the birth father's. First and most importantly are Vanessa's civil and human rights. The birth mother has rights too, and she gave her baby to me which was 100 percent her choice and her right to do so. My civil and human rights are also at stake. The birth father may have rights, but they should NOT be at the expense of an innocent child. This case is not about me or the birth father it is about what is best for *Vanessa*.

11. Does Vanessa have any biological siblings? Where are they?

Vanessa has two biological sisters who live with the birth father's mother.

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12. Why have you waited so long to put this story out there?

I kept hoping it would get better and that the courts would come to a common-sense resolution. But the decisions in the past few weeks have seemed to consider Vanessa's welfare less and less. I got scared enough to be willing to suffer the repercussions of going public, because I am extremely worried about Ohio social services actually coming to take her away.

13. How could this take so long?

Anyone who hears my story asks the same question. I had no idea the courts could take this long to decide on the fate of a child. It seems absolutely ridiculous, a waste of taxpayer's money in both states, and cruel to the parties involved.

14. What should people do to support you?

Write to the courts in Ohio and California and express outrage. Donate to Operation Vanessa to help cover mounting legal bills. Organize and appear at the next court date in either state. Ask the courts to take responsibility for trying to ruin my daughter's life. Please help by visiting: www.operationvanessa.com