

Reading Group Guide

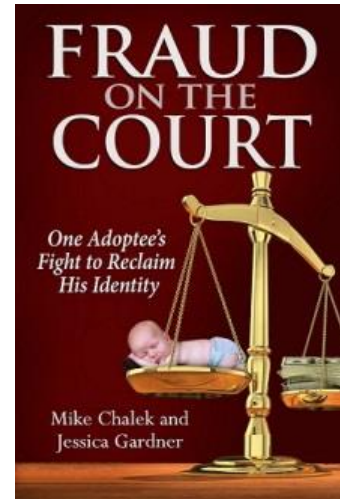
Fraud on the Court: One Adoptee's Fight to Reclaim His Identity by Mike Chalek and Jessica Gardner

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About this Book

“Fraud on the Court will grip the heart of any reader, whether you have been touched by adoption or simply understand the universal longing for a deep sense of connection. This book speaks to the core of what makes us human.”

~ **Major King**, Denver TV Broadcaster

Description

In the complicated world of adoption reform, highly charged terms like "open adoption," and "sealed records" and "search and reunion" create passionate debate on both sides.

In his new book, Mike Chalek tells a compelling story from the point of view of a former adoptee who discovered the truth of his black market adoption late in adulthood. He fought back against the courts that covered up the fraud--and against his abusive adoptive family--by finding his birth family and with their blessing having the fraudulent adoption annulled and his rightful identity restored.

Discussion Questions

1. Mike starts the book out with a discussion of adoption terminology by saying, "Language is a powerful tool for framing our perception of ourselves and our world." What other groups have fought back against the labels applied by society to describe them or their culture? How do you feel about the historical adoption labels such as *birth mother* and *giving up a baby for adoption*?

2. One reviewer described Mike's narrative tone throughout the book as being remarkably detached, especially when describing the traumatic events of his childhood. Does this emotional detachment make his story harder or easier to read through?
3. Mike pursued his birth records for several decades, running into repeated dead ends and false information along the way. What do you believe motivated his search in the face of such enormous odds (and the searches of other adoptees who choose to do so)?
4. Adoption is said to have personally touched six out of every ten Americans, either as members of an adoption triad or as close friends and relatives of someone in the triad. How does this play out in your own life? Consider taking an anonymous poll among your book group members to compare your percentage to the country as a whole.
5. Winnie Faye was fortunate enough not to have become a "guest" in the adoption broker's home, but the story of Rebecca Cobb and the shocking treatment she endured in her time at the maternity home is compared to similar horror stories that Mike has heard from other birth mothers from the same era. How were these indignities allowed to proliferate, and what impact did the culture of the time have on the situation that young single pregnant women faced?
6. Mike's distrust of the southern culture is a repeated theme throughout the book. Is his strong negative reaction fair? What were the primary influences on the formation of his opinion? Many of the black market adoption rings did operate primarily in that region, but is it possible this is purely coincidence and not a cultural phenomenon?
7. How much of Mike's eventual victory (in his quests to open his records, find his family and annul the adoption) was attributable to luck/serendipity/divine intervention? If at any point just one person had chosen not to help him, might the whole thing have unraveled? What does this say for the role that human kindness and compassion has to play in each of our lives?
8. The end of Mike's story is not necessarily happy. Despite his legal successes he remains isolated from both of his families. Yet he says that the journey was well worth it. Why do you think this is?