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Today we went to L.A. County Superior Court because we filed a petition on behalf of Jehri Coleman, age 71, the biological mother of Ronique Smith a.k.a. “Pepper”. Ms. Coleman was seeking to legally adopt her daughter Pepper, age 41, who was abducted from her approximately 40 years ago.

Ms. Coleman was a waitress in Hollywood when Pepper was born. She had a babysitter named Shirley.

Shirley abducted Pepper and then gave Pepper to Barbara Christie, who legally adopted her. My investigation of this case and the court file revealed that no notice of that adoption was ever given to Ms. Coleman who was trying to find her missing child.

After Barbara adopted Pepper, Shirley kidnapped Pepper again when Pepper was approximately four years old. Shirley took Pepper and Pepper's sister Renee (whom Shirley had also taken) on the road and they lived a transient life in motels in many states. Pepper always knew that Shirley was not her real mother and Pepper was determined to find her real mom.

Shirley took that secret to her grave and when Pepper became an adult she was finally able to find her adoptive mom, Barbara in 2010 and was reunited with her. However, Pepper still longed to find her biological mother and that is why she originally came to me and asked for my assistance.

I contacted Dateline NBC and asked them to tell Pepper's story in hopes that we could find Pepper's biological mother.

Dateline did a very compelling hour about Pepper on Friday,

March 25, 2011 and on Monday, March 28, 2011, I was contacted by Ms. Coleman, Pepper's biological mom who had seen the Dateline story. I then asked Ms. Coleman if she was willing to meet with me, provide evidence that she was Pepper's mom and take a DNA test. She agreed and the tests revealed that in fact she was the biological mother of both Pepper and Renee.

Barbara Christie, who had adopted Pepper recently passed away, but even before she died, Pepper knew that she wanted her biological mom, Jehri, to be recognized legally as her mother again.

Today, the court has approved our petition for an adult adoption, therefore, Jehri is now legally Pepper's mom and Pepper is her legal daughter.

It has been a long and painful journey for both Pepper and Jehri, but I am so happy that they have finally been able to find each other and

establish their legal identity as mother and child.

The system failed both of them for so many years, but today it has taken a step to finally do the right thing for both Jehri and Pepper.

We look forward to both of them enjoying the newly established relationship which they were wrongfully denied for so many years and to their being a family again.

Gloria Allred
Attorney at Law
representing “Pepper”
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