

The woman who decided to give her child away to a gay couple

Mariah MacCarthy talks to GSN about her real-life performance tale, *Baby Mama: One Woman's Quest to Give Her Child to Gay People*

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Courtesy Mariah MacCarthy

Most women will reflect on the day that they gave birth to their first child as one of the best and most amazing of their lives. Playwright and performer [Mariah MacCarthy](#) experienced more mixed feelings when she was taken into hospital to have her labor induced: primarily because she wasn't planning on taking her baby home with her.

'I knew right away that I was going to choose adoption', she says of the day in January 2012 when she discovered, unexpectedly, that she was pregnant.

The baby's father had made it clear that he had not interest in either he or Mariah acting as parents, and MacCarthy herself ruled out a termination. Instead, she carried her child and, upon her son's birth, handed him over to a gay male couple that she had previously arranged to adopt him.

She recounts this hugely emotional period of her life in a new performance piece, simply entitled *Baby Mama: One Woman's Quest to Give Her Child to Gay People*.

Born and raised in San Diego, MacCarthy relocated to New York in 2007. Since that time, she has worked in the performing arts: rapper, storyteller, burlesque artist, executive artistic director of [Caps Lock Theatre](#) and The Brick.

Describing her own sexuality as 'pan-sexual, queer', her playwriting credits include *The All-American Genderf*ck Cabaret*. This latest show is her most personal work yet, describing her unplanned journey into motherhood and adoption.

She says that the reasons she opted to give away her child are 'complicated', but talks about them in the show, which will have its full-length world premiere on Monday night (18 August 2014) at NYC's Dixon Place venue. In summary, she believed adoption offered her child the best opportunity of a stable start to his life.

'Maybe it could have been feasible for me to raise my child, but it wouldn't have been with any financial stability, or in a way where I could have been the best mother to him that I would want to be. If I had decided to raise him, I could have made that happen, but adoption seemed to me the better idea.

'I saw a home that would be much more stable. I saw a two-parent home. A lot of single mothers are absolutely amazing but I can say that there is a lot to be said for having two people to look to when you're growing up.

'What it came down to was that all I had to offer him was my love, but because it's an open adoption, I still get to give him my love.'

MacCarthy arranged the adoption through the agency, and stipulated that she wanted a gay couple.

'I was open to straight couples but I was keeping my eye out for a gay or lesbian couple. Because, since I'm also a queer woman, I thought it would be a beautiful thing to do, and that they might have had a harder time getting or having a child.'

As an 'open adoption', MacCarthy was able to negotiate with the same-sex couple adopting her child that she could visit every couple of months. They are an actor and surgeon who live in the Jackson Heights area of Queens, NYC.

Mariah has met their extended family, and her own parents have also been able to visit the boy – which has helped to convince them, after an initial period of disapproval – that the arrangement works.

Mariah's son is just shy of his second birthday so is too young to fully understand the circumstances around his birth, but she is hopeful that their relationship will forge its own path. She says that she hopes one day to have more children and be a full-time parent to them. Does she see herself as having more of an aunty role in her first child's life?

'A lot of people have made the aunt comparison and I think there is that, a little bit, but it is its own unique and singular beast.

'I imagine myself as being another adult in his life and a connection to where he came from, and another person in his life who loves him and cares about him. How that relationship will develop and express itself, only time will tell.'

She admits that she feels both nervous and excited about telling her story on stage, but also hopes that the performance may help to prompt debate around adoption as a choice.

'I absolutely think that adoption is not given enough consideration or voice. I think that, on the one side, from a more conservative standpoint, people might say that if you're pregnant, you should just have and raise the child. If you're coming from a more liberal standpoint, they maybe have the attitude that abortion is an option.

'I feel that adoption is still seen as something shameful, even though it's also something that brings joy to people, and part of the reason I'm doing this show is so that people will consider more that this is an option. Yes, it was incredibly difficult for me, but I am so glad that I did it, and it turned into something beautiful, and now this beautiful little boy exists.'

For more details about *Baby Mama: One Woman's Quest to Give Her Child to Gay People* go to DixonPlace.org