

Adoptee Reactions: China and South Korea 2024

September 2024 | IAMAdoptee

Kathy Sacco

Hello. Welcome to our episode called Adoptee Reactions: China and South Korea 2024.

In light of the recent PBS Frontline episode and Associated Press articles about Korean adoptions and China's recent decision to stop most intercountry adoptions, which are two of the largest numbers of intercountry adoptee adoptees represented in the US. IAMAdoptee convened a group of thought leaders today to discuss these major developments.

I'm Kathy Sacco. I am a board member here at IAMAdoptee. I currently work as the Vice President of International Children's Policy at First Focus on Children, which is a bipartisan advocacy organization here in Washington, DC. Prior to First Focus, I worked for nearly eight years at the US Department of State Office of Children's Issues, where we shaped and led policies related to child protection, intercountry adoption, and international parental child abduction. And as an aside, Susan Jacobs, Ambassador Susan Jacobs, who is in the documentary of PBS Frontline, was actually my boss at the time that I worked at the State Department. I previously facilitated foster care and intercountry adoptions. And, and most importantly, I myself was adopted from Korea at the age of five and a half, along with my biological sister.

So just as a little background, IAMAdoptee is an organization that seeks to curate mental health and wellness resources to help intercountry adoptees. So supporters such as, Side by Side Project, Seo Choi, And Joanna Sargeant, help enable our work at IAMAdoptee to provide things like therapeutic and wellness subsidies and to help facilitate conversations like we're having today. So with that, I would like to turn it over to our guests. And I again, thank you so much to the both of you for dropping your schedules on short notice to join us for our conversation today. So I think what I thought I would do is to give yourselves a chance to introduce yourselves and why you're interested in our conversation today, and then we'll open it up for discussion. Let me turn it over first to Grace Newton. And, if you want to introduce yourself, Grace. And for those watching, their bios will be linked to the video of our discussion.

Grace Newton

All right. Hi, everyone. My name is Grace Newton. And I am currently a PhD student at the Crown Family School of Social Work Policy and Practice at the University of Chicago. And my area of research is transracial and transnational adoption. And I'm really interested in questions of identity, belonging, and the meaning of family, especially for us who, have been a part of multiple families in our lives.

And so, prior to my work, prior to starting my PhD program, I worked as a public adoption social worker in the state of Wisconsin, mostly with foster youth, and their foster families as they were transitioning, placement from a foster home to an adoptive placement. And then I think, I am perhaps most known for my blog, *Red Thread Broken*, which I've authored for more than a decade. And it's just the space to think critically about international adoption. I talk about a lot of

Adoptee Reactions: China and South Korea 2024

September 2024 | IAMAdoptee

my experiences, relevant things in the media. And then, I'm also really lucky to collaborate with Dr. JaeRan Kim and Susan Branco on the adoptee consciousness model. And so that's a little bit about who I am and the work that I do.

Kathy Sacco

Thank you so much, Grace. And then I'll turn it over to Kim, to introduce herself.

Kim Warner-Hudy

Thanks, Kathy. I'm Kim Warner-Huddy. I'm a licensed clinical social worker, here in the state of Tennessee, which is where I currently reside. And I'm also licensed in the state of Michigan. I've worked in the field of child welfare, as a professional since 1996. And during that time, I have worked in different aspects of the adoption or foster care system, whether it was domestic adoptions, private infant, private domestic adoptions, with the state foster care, and also international adoptions, working out, in the Pacific Northwest, with some larger agencies. actually large, medium and small. At the time, over the course of my career, been involved in very different aspects of that process, whether it was, everything from home study to post adoption services. And where my heart really lied was in that educational piece, you know, with, with families. I have also been involved with what was formerly known as a Council on Accreditation as a reviewer, and peer reviewer as well, volunteered my time for that. And since 2019, I have worked in private practice, mainly doing therapy. I typically work with adoptees. I also work with attachment, racial identity issues and many different parts of the adoption constellation. So, so that's my background. Happy to be here.

Kathy Sacco

Thanks so much to both Grace and Kim. To me, it is amazing to hear the wealth of perspective and experience that you bring and expertise to our conversation today. So I'm really looking forward to having this conversation. So let's get to it. So, Grace, let me start with you.

Can you give us a pulse of what you've been witnessing in the Chinese adoptee community? I know I've been reading some of the recent reactions, you know, from different members of the community, a lot of it of course has been focused on the adoptive parents that have been caught, that are in the process of adopting from China and there's been a lot of consternation about what's going to happen to these parents. But I'm also really wanting to hear about how you are processing? And, for the 160,000 plus Chinese adoptees, who are currently adopted. What are you hearing?

Grace Newton

I guess I would say that there's just a myriad of feelings and reactions, and I think that this was a decision that a lot of Chinese adoptees were not anticipating coming out. So I think, you know, one of the first reactions, of course, was just shock or surprise, but I think that, for a lot of Chinese adoptees, there is a sense of relief that more children within China will be able to stay in China and be raised in their homeland with the familiarity of language and consistent caregivers, potentially. I think that at the same time, there's a pretty big anxiety about what is going to happen potentially to birth records, adoption records. And I think that my personal

Adoptee Reactions: China and South Korea 2024

September 2024 | IAMAdoptee

opinion is I don't think that if Chinese adoption had continued that records would necessarily be any safer or suddenly made more accurate. We know that around the globe adoption records have been falsified to create paper orphans. And a lot of times when records do exist, they're pretty sparse. And so I think that what the documents represent more than just be the physical pieces of paper themselves is a record within China of our individual and collective existence there.

And I think that some of this anxiety is also about, will our just acknowledgment of our existence in China go away and like disappear. China has a pretty lengthy history of trying to shove less desirable parts of their history away. And so I think that Chinese adoptees, you know, we want to be more than just a footnote in history. If we're even present at all, we want our stories to be known.

In terms of what Chinese adoptees are feeling, too, I think that there is a genuine sense of empathy for the families who thought that they were going to adopting children soon. You know, that is a huge disruption to their lives. There's also some concern about what will happen to the children who are in welfare institutes currently predominantly older and disabled children. Will resources be made available to better support their lives there? And I think I've even heard from some Chinese adoptees that they had thought that they might adopt from China. And so this is a loss for them, too. And so I think that there is no single emotion. It's just a swarm of emotions. And I think that it's really important for Chinese adoptees, no matter what they feel about this current decision, whether they feel it's too politically motivated or they agree with it. No matter what side you fall on, it's really complicated. We're all figuring out what it means. I think another thing that's really poignant is that, with the end of Chinese international adoption, you know, we are a group that is going to go extinct. There will be no more of us. I think it feels even more important that we find each other and find places to be in community, with this less shared identity that is marked by just existing in this tiny little blip of time in Chinese history.

Kathy Sacco

Thank you so much, Grace. I think I see so many parallels in hearing what you're talking about, what Chinese adoptees are going through, and the parallels being a Korean adoptee. So I think in the Korean adoption field for myself, you know, so I hear that. I want to turn it over to Kim. I don't know what you thought listening to what Grace was saying. Kim, but also because as a Korean adoptee and that you have worked in and among the adoption world for over two decades. What is your reaction to what Grace was saying about China's decision, but also looking at the idea of the South Korean government looking inward on this system. There's been a global challenge on the international stages, whether like the Olympics or on the grassroots level, that adoptee led organizations have been advocating for change and transparency. Was there new or surprising information that you found in the PBS documentary?

Kim Warner-Hudy

I would definitely echo what Grace has highlighted about adoptions from China and just all the layers that are there. It's so multifaceted. It doesn't do it justice to say, to give a simple answer because I think it is so complicated. So, all of the pieces and the parts of it, all the feelings, all

Adoptee Reactions: China and South Korea 2024

September 2024 | IAMAdoptee

the questions that come with it, for the past, for the present and for the future. I think they're all very valid.

As far as the Frontline documentary, I think it speaks volumes to how the Korean government has viewed adoption, and in particular, just adoptees as well. If we look at it decade by decade, you know, really, because Korea has such a long history, what was happening at the time. I thought that the documentary did a nice job putting these pieces together of that timeline of what really was happening within the government to be able to zoom out a little bit so that you can see the puzzle as a whole as to what contributed where and how certain things got, perhaps exacerbated, other things maybe flew under the radar. The sad thing in all of this is that, no, there was nothing in that documentary that was news. I think for those of us in the community that are just coming into awareness of what that is, that's a hard pill to swallow.

For the adoption dinosaurs, I'll put myself in that category as well. I think the shocking part for me was that we'd always heard of certain rumblings within adoption and specific to Korea and everywhere. I know personally like where I could look, I couldn't find any proof. And now it seems like, oh, wait, there is proof. There are documents for whatever reason, the general public has not been privy to that. And, I think it also speaks to the sadness in terms of the government - we have started a system where we had seen benefits from it, the westernized country and I'll just focus on the US. It benefited both of them in that manner, which is really crass. But if you look at adoption as an industry and as a whole, it's really what was happening. And yet nobody did anything to change it until it appears that things got elevated to an international level. So the Olympics, for example, or when you see now, in the 2000s, when you hear of an adoptee who is suing the government or an organization who was making waves for something that they were able to document and find fault in, and only then do we see this big eruption of, oh, well, maybe we need to look at this again. Which again, I feel like is it ethically and morally...How do you wait that long? Why are we not questioning things? And if we had questioned things, why were we shut down? Or why were we given the blanket answer of it's because of the culture and you can't do anything about that culture, the hundreds of years of history that go behind it. And so you were dismissed.

Kathy Sacco

When you're saying we, Kim, are you referring to the advocacy that adoptees were or that adoptees were seeking? I guess I'm just looking for clarification.

Kim Warner-Hudy

Yeah. The advocacy that I think adoptees continue to seek, and were seeking, because if it had come on a higher level, whether it was with our government or with a strong agency support, like strong agency, not just one, you know, many/collective, you know, I wonder would that look, sorry, would that have looked any different? And if that had happened, what happened to it? So I'm really curious about that piece. I think the other thing that really surprised me was the highlight of the the boom in the the 80s with Korean adoption and what I would say appears to be common practice of coercion when it comes to working with maternity homes, working with

Adoptee Reactions: China and South Korea 2024

September 2024 | IAMAdoptee

hospitals and the frustration of what comes now when we know that those hospitals and those maternity homes and those files don't exist anymore. So we've lost this paper trail.

Kathy Sacco

And I think Grace was also touching on that, too. The importance of the records and what will happen to the records, what is currently happening to the records or lack of records and documentation. I know that it's really been something, listening to adoptees, hearing that perspective that it is so important to us because those are direct links to our past, to our origins. And I think particularly at one time, people didn't realize how important that (documentation) was to have those connections. So, I think that's understandable to have that fear and wondering what's going to happen.

Grace, on your blog, *Red Thread Broken*, you had even mentioned it earlier, was when the news broke about China's decision that there was relief, from adoptees and actually, we have two adoptees who volunteer for IAMAdoptee, Katie and Darci. Can you speak more to that feeling of relief and to the reality of, as you said, that a group that may very well become extinct, that there will be no more adoptees behind you? But yet still within this community of 160,000, you know, plus Chinese adoptees.

Grace Newton

Yeah. I think that there is this sense of relief that these children will be able to be raised in their home culture and that it's a loss that they won't necessarily have to experience the way we did. And I think that, part of the relief, too, is that through adoption, the general assumption is that children from developing countries come to this great nation, and our lives are made so much better. I think that our lives are altered and they're changed forever. And there are things that are definite privileges through adoption. But there are also so many losses. And those privileges come at such high expense. As social workers, mental health practitioners, we know that mental health is one of those costs, family ties are one of those costs, language, culture, all of those things. And so, that's where some of this relief is, and I think that also some of the relief is just tied to, as you said about like the *Frontline* piece, like none of the revelations in that documentary are new. They might be new to the wider audience who's watching it. But if you've been paying attention to Korean adoptee advocates over the last several decades, they have been saying that there was fraud, there was corruption, my identity was switched. All of these things that continued and happen in China. I think that some of the relief also is that, as Chinese adoptees are coming of age and stepping into these more like advocacy positions, is that maybe there is some recognition of what adoptees have been vocalizing for a long time that this is a natural part of that progress. I think that's the first part. And then the second part is kind of processing this new reality that we are this kind of fixed cohort.

You know, one of the questions I've thought about for a while is, more than just addressing the inherent traumas in adoption, is how do we find these joys for our community? What does liberation look like? And, particularly for this community, a large part of us self-identify as wanting to be extinct. With the news of China ending its adoption program, it really finalizes that reality that we are going to be extinct. And so, I think that, one of one of the things that I'm

Adoptee Reactions: China and South Korea 2024

September 2024 | IAMAdoptee

hoping comes out of this also is that as it becomes more rare for families to be created through international adoption because, you know, the reality is that Korean adoption, international adoption is just at a trickle these days and Chinese adoption has now ended. These have been the two largest sending countries for international adoption. Within the last 30 years, China was the largest. And so, I think that this signifies a huge shift in international adoption in general. And as international, adoptive families that are created this way become more rare. I think that families of all types should definitely be accepted and welcomed and embraced. I think that adoptive families, there is a stigma that should be detangled, and that, adoptive families should be viewed as just as legitimate. But I also think that, over the last 60, 70 years, adoption has been so normalized and so promoted in our society. That it shouldn't be normalized in the ways that it has been. I think that maybe with this drastic decline, maybe that is one change that will happen.

Kathy Sacco

Yeah. I mean, it really does open, I think both of you had talked about it being complicated. This is so complicated. And there aren't easy answers. And there are multifaceted impacts. And I think you're just going down, all the possibilities, Grace. And just really highlighting exactly how complicated it is and the different things to think about.

So, Kim, when you're taking in Grace's talking about their community, the community of Chinese adoptees going extinct and the numbers going down, Korean adoptions have been going on for over 60 years now. I think even in the *Frontline* episode, it was, looking at adoptions primarily from the 70s and 80s, we've had adult adoptees from Korea who are in their 40s, 50s, 60, who had their narrative of their origins, how does an investigation like this one impact an adoptee who has lived one version of their story, for so many decades? And how does that impact? Because I will say just on a brief cursory look at the Facebook groups and things, I am seeing Korean adoptees who, even the ones who haven't been adopted from this time period, even recent ones are, now questioning their stories, and saying "was I trafficked, was what's in the paperwork, or the picture of this baby, does that really look like us? They've been switched? What are your thoughts on that?

Kim Warner-Hudy

It's hard to put into words. It's unsettling. You know, at minimum, it's almost like the rug has been pulled out from under you, right? Or you go to sit down in a chair that someone has taken and you land on the ground and somebody says, "well, I thought it would be better if you sat on the ground, so I didn't tell you I was going to take the chair." And now I'm left here to try to figure it out. And just like with the Facebook groups, the documentary calls into question what is the truth? Do I have the truth in my documentation? Do I have half truth? Is it a complete lie? And how am I ever supposed to know, given what I know? And again, highlighting like the 70s and the 80s in that particular documentary...But how am I supposed to know what is the truth and the narrative that I have been fed for so long potentially could change and I question that. And so, yes, we see like it was almost this collective grief and reckoning and panic of, "well, what about me? And what about this?" And, not slowing down to zoom out and look at, okay, so what decade were you from and this is why you don't have an orphanage, and this is why you weren't

Adoptee Reactions: China and South Korea 2024

September 2024 | IAMAdoptee

kept for six months within the system and not understanding those pieces of it. It also reminded me of what happened at the height of COVID, where I think a lot of us, when there were all of these things about Stop Asian Hate, having to look at ourselves.

For those of us that maybe have kind of wondered about a birth search now feeling like, I just have to do it or I'm not going to know the truth. It doesn't matter if I'm ready or not. I just have to know the truth because I don't know what it is. And if I go down that search of the truth, how do I know that what they're going to give me is everything, what have I lost over the years?

Depending on what decade I was adopted from, how much grief comes up. It's like we're reexamining everything with a fine tooth comb under a microscope, because that's all we have. And if this is what I had and it's not accurate, then who am I? And where does that leave me?

Kathy Sacco

Yeah, I think some really tough questions. And I think, at least for me and listening to or kind of reading some of the feedback and things, it reminded me of how I found my birth family back in 2004, and when I first found that information and had, of course, I ended up having a lot more questions than answers that I got from finding my birth family. But I was in a complete panic. I related to seeing some of these adoptees' reactions to this documentary because I think there are some Korean adoptees who maybe hadn't really thought of search or thought about their story, or had always had whatever their 30 years of what they thought their narrative was. And then all of a sudden, here's this information that's saying that the narrative is wrong. And that's in some ways the way I felt when I found my birth family, that I had kind of a narrative of what I thought was my story. And then I got all this information and I was completely overwhelmed and kind of frozen and panicked and, and a friend, when I was speaking to her, she said, "Kathy," she said, "just take a step back." She said, "you had 33 years of the story that you had in your mind." And she said, "and you've had this new information for just two weeks. Just give yourself some time to let it absorb." And that's one of the things that I would say for Korean and Chinese adoptees, this is all new information and that it's okay to give yourself some grace and to just step back a little bit and let it absorb and just let it kind of sink in that you don't have to have the answers tomorrow or to figure it out right now that you can give yourself some time and so that's my words of advice as from an experienced dinosaur, etc. and as I said, in looking at Facebook and reading through the comments, I myself personally have chosen not to engage because I think it's hard to try to encapsulate everything you want to say on Facebook.

But Grace, what do you feel are some of the salient issues that we need to think about as we engage in conversations with each other as Chinese adoptees? You know, in particular, in discussing this or thinking about this.

Grace Newton

Kim, I think you really said it, that this is a moment of collective grief for so many. I think Asian adoptees, especially right now, for some, the PBS Frontline documentary, that was old news or just maybe a public recognition of things that have been said. But like you were saying, for some people, it's brand new information that is totally overwhelming. I think similarly with the information, or the news about China ending its adoption program, I think that, for some it's what

Adoptee Reactions: China and South Korea 2024

September 2024 | IAMAdoptee

we've wanted, and then for others it's maybe something that, one of the Chinese officials cites, this is kind of in line with recent global conventions.

This decision to end Chinese adoptions led some people to discover the Hague Convention and the Resolution on the Rights of the Child for the first time. Oh, if there are these international conventions that exist that are questioning the ethics of international adoption, what does that mean? I think that this decision to end Chinese adoption is similarly creating this huge political awareness in some Chinese adoptees that this whole adoption thing is much more complicated than what we're told growing up.

You know, the adoptee consciousness model project that I've been working on, we call this kind of information that runs counter to what society has told the narrative that society likes, This is a rupture or a disruption to the status quo that causes adoptees to rethink certain aspects of adoption and ultimately even who they are. For adoptees or adoptive family members for whom this information is new, I recommend reading our paper on the adoptee consciousness model.

On a similar topic, I published a paper a couple of years ago called "The Trauma and Healing of Consciousness" and it's an auto ethnography based on my experiences of when I first kind of came into my consciousness around adoption. For me, when I was writing that paper and what I hope it provides to adoptees is really this validation that coming into a consciousness in this way, particularly when it's kind of a sudden, jarring external thing that's like shoved it in your face, it truly is a traumatic experience for some people. I think also what's really important right now is just having respect for all of our community members, no matter where we fall on this. Because like I said earlier, it's complicated for us all. In terms of what's salient in, regarding conversations on Chinese adoptees in particular right now, Chinese adoptees are a lot more diverse than how I think people think of us and how potentially we've been described. I think a lot of people think of when we think of Chinese adoptees, they think of the healthy girls who were adopted in the 1990s into affluent, like highly educated families. But, in 2009, China switched to a special needs program. So the Chinese adoptee population is significantly disabled. The Chinese adoptee wave also coincided with the evangelical Christian movement in adoption. So, you've got some Chinese adoptees who are an only child or raised with one other sibling in these affluent, educated homes. And then you've Chinese adoptees who've been raised in a household with ten other adoptees. So we're a diverse group, despite having a kind of short adoption window.

Then I think that there's also a lot of misconceptions about China that have been propagated by the media, particularly around China, not wanting or not liking daughters. I think that also, Chinese adoption really relied heavily on this misconception that Chinese people don't adopt. So I think that'll be interesting to see, as it shuts down completely internationally, there has been an increase in Chinese domestic adoption. Once China relaxed the adoption law that made it more feasible for people domestically to adopt. Then I think one other thing that is important to consider is in connection with this Frontline documentary is that China looked to Korea when they were setting up their adoption program because when Korean adoptions started declining rapidly after the 1988 Olympics, American families flocked to China after that to adopt in mass

Adoptee Reactions: China and South Korea 2024

September 2024 | IAMAdoptee

numbers. There's a lot of feelings about Holt as an adoption agency, active in Korean adoptions, and they were active in Chinese adoptions. So as we're all connected.

Kathy Sacco

Absolutely. As we go further, I'm hoping that this is kind of a first conversation that we have because I think some of these issues that have been brought up in both Korean and Chinese adoptions, we're hearing those same issues having worked in the field. I can speak probably for both of you as well, too, having worked in the field that some of these same issues are present, are more present in other countries, whether that be, Colombia, Guatemala, Vietnam, Ethiopia, Russia, Romania, we can go down the line. Those are conversations that we can have in trying to learn and, frankly, have a reckoning on the adoption practice.

So, Kim, I'd like to turn it over to you and just give the opportunity for you to talk about the Korean adoptee community. What kind of things does this bring up?

Kim Warner-Hudy

Well, I think, like what we said before, for some it is a new awareness for others, I think it's, reexamining and opening up of old wounds. A lot of people talk about, "you have to listen to the voice of the adoptee." We've been talking for decades, and we're still talking, and we have talked as individuals. We have talked as groups. And now is the time to I hope shed again additional light on us so that we are not dismissed as an exception to the rule and that we are seeing more, Grace, I think you said it like as a collective, right? Because, we are a period of time. And when I look at Korean adoption, it's hard not to separate out the decades because there were unique things happening that contributed at each decade of what was happening.

But it is so important to understand the context of it. I really I would hope that as a country that continues to look to adoption, whether it's domestic, international, whatever, I would really hope we could look at it with openness instead of defensiveness to explore with curiosity what is actually there, all facets of the system and not be afraid to be transparent and admit to things - mistakes that were made and to not only admit to it, but to take it a step further and to do something about it. We can listen to our voices all day long, and if all you do is listen, it's one thing. It's time for action, and we need other people to join in the action with us, because we have been here for decades and we're not going away. I think if anything, it's very clear through social media, Instagram, TikTok, we're not going away. It has caused us, over the years, to become louder and more boisterous. And you feed into that stereotype of "oh, well, you must be angry or you must not be grateful." But if you're still not listening, how else am I supposed to get your attention? If you think of it developmentally like children, when we can't get through, it's behaviorally because we have to do something. Negative attention is still attention. And I just want you to listen. And as adults and some of us as grandparents, now, we still want you to listen. And we want you to look with discernment and not defensiveness.

Kathy Sacco

As adoptees are trying to get this message through and sharing experiences and things, and with the relative newness of all this information that's come out, for both of you, because of all

Adoptee Reactions: China and South Korea 2024

September 2024 | IAMAdoptee

the different feelings, anxiety, confusion, anger, some people being nonplused, some people not believing it, whatever it might be, any thoughts or tools that you found to be helpful, or supportive as you're grappling with this or speaking with others who are grappling with these issues?

Grace Newton

I can go first, I guess. I think that for me, one of the things that's been helpful is being able to be in dialogue with other Chinese adoptees and Asian adoptees who are also thinking about, both this documentary and the end of Chinese adoption. There were a couple of online Zoom spaces, held in the past couple of weeks, that's been a really great resource. I encourage that kind of community building, as we continue to process what all of this means going forward. I think that zoom and online spaces are great. I think that in-person spaces are even better. But if you don't have in-person adoptees go find the online spaces.

For me, I think that it's been a boost of encouragement to read some of the Chinese adoption books that have been on my bookshelf for a while just to kind of have a fuller picture of what exactly is ending right now in China. So my current read is *Outsourced Children* by Leslie Wang. I think this is a really good book. I recommend it. She's talking more about, the special needs adoptions out of China in the last decade or so. That's been helpful.

Then, another thing that I think about is, as adoptees, there are a lot of things that we did not have control of in our lives. We also didn't have control over the way that these news pieces came out and the public's reaction to that, how journalists and other people, what their spin is on it. And so, I think about what are the things that I do have control of in my life, what are the things I can take control of for me? For example, like reading that book is a way that I can control, have more knowledge on this thing that's important to me. Or I think even like outside of adoption related things, I'm going to make myself a really yummy meal tonight. So, just figuring out all those things too.

And I guess one more resource like I mentioned before, I do really think that, our adoptee consciousness model paper is helpful. I'm not saying that just because I wrote it. I genuinely think, and I've heard from people that they find it's helpful. If this whole time period is really a confusing one, that paper might help explain some of those feelings and what's going on internally.

Kathy Sacco

Great. Thanks, Grace. We'll make sure to link that to this conversation so that people have it. Kim, do you have things to add?

Kim Warner-Hudy

Yeah. I would echo everything that Grace is saying. I know within the Korean adoption community, we've also had Zoom calls for people to find some online support.

Adoptee Reactions: China and South Korea 2024

September 2024 | IAMAdoptee

I really hope that we can all individually and collectively pause and give us, give ourselves permission to digest all of this in however big or small of chunks that you need and whether that's through looking at online support, through individual therapy, through social spaces of other adoptees or through support groups of other adoptees, they're wonderful resources out there. I mean, we don't have to reinvent the wheel, the blessing and the burden of being an older Korean adoptee is that there's lots of resources out there. So utilize those websites, the books, the knowledge, the papers, the consciousness model is a wonderful resource as well. And really give ourselves permission to just sit with all of these layers and at the end of the day, to take really good care of ourselves.

Kathy Sacco

I think those are great messages. I'll just say being completely transparent, that when this documentary came out, it took me a while to watch it. It had been out for a while and my phone was blowing up with people saying, have you seen it? Have you seen it? And it took me a while. So then when I first started watching it, it took me two sessions to watch it. I couldn't get through it all. I think there's multiple reasons for that, having to hear those really heart wrenching, difficult stories that I knew were on there. I think it's also having worked in the adoption field and thinking about for myself, was I complicit in this, in working in it. I had reasons for going into the adoption field and wanting to make changes from within. I think I was grappling with those kinds of questions. But I think I hear from both of you, it's okay to just take some time to digest, step away from it. I think it's remembering who we are. And regardless of whatever information came out, through the documentary, through ending Chinese adoptions, we are still more than just having been adopted.

You know, we're full, complete humans before and after. Aside from adoption status, I heard you, Grace, and Kim too, talking about self-care and taking care of yourselves in whatever that may be. And I think earlier, Grace had mentioned something about finding little joys to keep you kind of grounded and things, whether that might be, we just got a new puppy, so it's taking the dog out for a walk. And, you know, and the other thing, too, is you don't have to be anything. So if you want to be pissed and angry, that's okay, too. You can hold multiple feelings. I think about this, and that's okay too. But I think as you start digesting and thinking, they are multifaceted, it's complicated.

Any other ending thoughts that we didn't touch on or that you would definitely like to hit both for Kim and Grace? Anything that you want to add?

Kim Warner-Hudy

Kathy, I'll just piggyback off you for just a second. I actually watched the documentary twice. I watched it when it initially came out, and then I took some time after seeing all of the Facebook posts and watched it again. It hit me differently a second time. Just as you were saying, being in the adoption field, questioning, was I complicit in any of this, questioning, why didn't I know? Why didn't I ask? Like, what was I fed? What did I believe? Why didn't I question more or did I question why? And just second guessing myself completely, and realizing that as we, as we get older, things hit differently in our 20s and our 30s and our 40s and now my 50s and, and that's

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September 2024 | IAMAdoptee

okay. And as you said, it's okay to have any kind of feeling that you want about the end of Chinese adoptions, about this documentary about, just corruption in general. And it's okay to have all the feelings at the same time because they can coexist, which is completely normal and okay.

Kathy Sacco

Any other thoughts? Grace?

Grace Newton

I really appreciate having this conversation, and the continued conversations this will spark and will be happening in our community. And so, I feel yeah, I feel very honored to be a part of this. I'm just I'm just, looking forward to seeing the ways that we will continue holding space for each other.

Kathy Sacco

Great. Thank you so much. I want to thank you, Grace and Kim, for taking the time and for sharing your insights and thoughts. For having this conversation and having this to start the conversation. This is part of the reason that I'm part of IAMAdoptee and being on the board because this is what I want to see within our community, within the intercountry adoptee community. We have community, we have the expertise, we have the experience, we can lead our own community. So to both of you as leaders, participating in this conversation, it's, it seems cliche, but really heartwarming and gives me hope that we can help ourselves.

So, as we close out, just want to remind people if you have any questions about this conversation, please, you can email connect@iamadoptee.org. Find IAMAdoptee on Facebook and Instagram or our website, iamadoptee.org. And we will also put down under the video conversation links for the adoptee consciousness model and links for Kim and Grace to get ahold of them, their Instagram and Grace's blog *Red Thread Broken*.

Again, I want to thank all of you. Take care of yourselves. And each other. And thanks again for joining us. And thanks again to Kim and Grace.