

*The Korean Adoptee Homeland: Why Minnesota?* by Kim Park Nelson ... page 16

*I Believe Adoptee Voices Are Needed* by Nicole Chung ... page 26

*Matthew Salesses' Loving into the Void...* page 30

**Conference details begin on page 35**



# meeting place

A MAGAZINE BY THE COMMUNITY, FOR THE COMMUNITY .. CONFERENCE 2018 EDITION



*Photo mosaic of conference members in celebration of our 20 years of community service*

## CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITY: Mental Health, Self-Care, & Advocacy



———— 1998 - 2018 ————  
**20 YEARS**  
*of connecting the*  
———— **COMMUNITY** ————

*Much thanks*

to everyone who's been a part of this  
journey and this organization.

We have so much more  
to accomplish together.

Get involved!

Visit our new website:

**WeAreKAAN.org**





Photo credit: Gift of Frederick R. Weisman in honor of his parents, William and Mary Weisman, 1988. Copyright Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen; Photo by Mike Krivit Photography, Courtesy of Meet Minneapolis

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/ PRESIDENT**  
Stacy Schroeder

**TREASURER**  
Michael Stanley

**ADVISORY COUNCIL 2018**  
Aeriel A. Ashlee, Kyle C. Ashlee, Michael Burlbaugh, Erica Gehringer, Mark Hagland, Stephen Johnson, Katie Jae Naftzger, Grace Newton, Kimberly McKee, Rachel Hye Youn Rupright, Stacy Schroeder, Michael Stanley

**WEBMASTER**  
Carolyn Hathaway

**NEW WEBSITE TEAM**  
Stephanie M. Casey (LOVAGE), Chris Shepard, Amy Partain, Carolyn Hathaway, Stacy Schroeder

**BOOKSTORE COORDINATORS**  
Suzanne Switzer, Brenda Burlbaugh

**SESSION PROPOSAL REVIEW TEAM**  
Ellen Heitzig, Stephen Johnson, Kimberly McKee, Katie Jae Naftzger, Rachel Hye Youn Rupright, Stacy Schroeder

**YOUTH TEAM** (coordinated by Sejong Cultural Educ, Inc.) Benjamin Kim Oser, Joe Meyer, Grace Nicodemus, Michael Pulliam, James Rinearson, Noah Sinangil, Kat Tulimieri

**AUDIO-VISUAL COORDINATORS**  
Carolyn Hathaway, Eric Hathaway

**WELLNESS COORDINATORS**  
Katie Naftzger, Stephen Johnson

**EXHIBITOR/VENDOR GREETER**  
Michael Stanley

**MAGAZINE EDITOR**  
Stacy Schroeder

**ASL INTERPRETERS**  
Scottie Allen (coordinator), Sarah Erickson, David Evans, Jenae Farnham

**MEDIA**  
Allen Majors (photo), Patrick Amunson (video)

**ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/ SECRETARY**  
Kimberly McKee

**SPEAKER COORDINATOR/REGISTRARS**  
Rachel Hye Youn Rupright, Ellen Heitzig

**SPONSORSHIP TEAM**  
Michael Burlbaugh, Stephen Johnson

**MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR**  
Amy Partain

+++++

**MISSION**

*To improve the lives of Korean-born adoptees by connecting the community and providing opportunities for dialogue, education, and support.*

**VISION**

- ◆ To provide annual conferences that renew and connect individuals and organizational leaders, especially Korean-born adoptees and also including other Koreans and Korean-Americans as well as family members through birth, adoption, marriage, or parenthood. We also welcome members of other international or interethnic adoptive communities.
- ◆ To offer an ongoing source of community information and conversation through our website, e-newsletter, blog, and social media options;
- ◆ To serve the community with a spirit of collaboration and respect.

**CONTACT**

PO Box 714, Camp Hill, PA 17001  
717.574.3629  
www.KAANet.org; info@KAANet.org  
Facebook.com/kaanet  
Twitter: @KAAN\_Community

*KAAN is a project of The Foundation for Enhancing Communities (www.tfec.org), fiscal sponsor. TFEC is a 501(c)3 charitable organization and all donations are tax-deductible. The official registration and financial information of The Foundation for Enhancing Communities may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1.800.732.0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.*



# contents

## CONFERENCE DETAILS

- 06 ... Welcome
- 10 ... On the Main Stage
- 35 ... Hotel Map
- 36 ... Schedule Overview (*centerfold*)
- 38 ... Youth Program Information
- 39 ... Session Notes
- 47 ... Speaker Bios
- 64 ... Blank Pages for Notes
- 70 ... With Gratitude

### IMPORTANT

*Refer to the magazine insert/ session matrix for the most up-to-date schedule and for locations for each session and event. This insert contains details not available at press time.*

## ADOPTEE VOICES

- 16 ... The Korean Adoptee Homeland: Why Minnesota? *by Kim Park Nelson*
- 18 ... Generational Trauma and the Korean Adoptee *by Julie Jong Koch*
- 21 ... Advocating for Unwed Mothers *by Shannon Bae*
- 22 ... Put Your Oxygen Mask On First *by Katie Naftzger*
- 24 ... Celebration *by Stephen David Johnson*
- 25 ... Bits and Pieces *by Taneka Hye Wol Jennings*
- 26 ... I Believe Adoptee Voices Are Needed *by Nicole Chung*
- 29 ... Being at KAAN *by Katie Naftzger*
- 30 ... Loving into the Void *by Matthew Salesses*
- 54 ... On the Freedom of the Borderlands *by Shannon Gibney*
- 56 ... The Fight for Adoptee Rights
- 61 ... Return to Sender *by Julayne Lee*
- 62 ... Notes from a Missing Person *by Jennifer Kwon Dobbs*

# Welcome



*Stacy Schroeder*

Dear friends:

This is a bittersweet year for me. It is KAAN's 20th anniversary and a healthy time in the organization's life. This year, we've had people step into new key marketing and development roles and others volunteer to work on videography and a new website. There is an energy

afoot that is exciting. Now, why would an executive director choose this time to bow out of her position, as I am later this year?

I've worked very hard (alongside plenty of others) to get us to this healthy place. My reward is to see our leadership foundation expanding and more connections being made. My reward, especially, is this conference where all the names on the registration list come to life as people with specific stories and gifts and needs, with voices that add to our understanding of each other and of what it means to be adoptees, to be allies, to be community. To be a part of something that makes a difference in other people's lives ... I cannot think of anything greater.

Now is the perfect time to leave. There are strong informed, caring leaders to carry on. A new energy comes with fresh leadership ... a final gift my parting can bring. I, too, will benefit from time and space to serve in other roles, something I anticipate with joy.

My deepest thanks to Michael Stanley and Carolyn Hathaway for willingly taking the leap with me from the beginning of my time in this role. You both are family to me (one literally, I know) and I treasure your solid support and leadership. I also want to thank Rachel Hye Youn Rupright and Kimberly McKee for stepping into some major roles within the organization and sharing your perspectives and skills so freely. I have grown from working with you both.

I would also like to thank all of the staff and leaders who have worked with me since 2010, especially the following, some who have volunteered many, many hours to help keep KAAN strong and relevant:

Scottie Allen, Aerial A. Ashlee, Uhriel Edgardo Bedoya, Michael Burdan, Brenda Burlbaugh, Michael Burlbaugh, Suzanne d'Aversa, Sara Campbell, Ellic Conant, Connect-a-Kid, Jennifer Cox, Martha Crawford  
Maggie Dinneen, Michael Dinneen, Jennifer Fero, Erica Gehringer, Mark Hagland, Carolyn Hathaway, Eric Hathaway, Ellen Heitzig, Jen Hilzinger, Courtney Huber, Heidi Jaehne, Taneka Hye Wol Jennings, Hyaekyung Jo, Stephen David Johnson, KAME, Robin Hong Soon Kim, Shane Kim, Grace Ko, SuLyn Loebach, Kimberly McKee, Allen Majors, Alex Myung, Katie Jae Naftzger, Lindsay Norman, Benjamin Kim Oser, Eyoungsoo Park, Amy Partain, Margie Perscheid, Rachel Hye Youn Rupright, Rachael Rutigliano, Carolyn Scholl, Chris Shepard, Sejong Cultural Education, Inc., Selahart, Michael Stanley, Suzanne Switzer, Terra Trevor, Kevin Haebeom Vollmers, Sook Wilkinson, Chris Winston, Mark Winston

Long as this list is, the entire list of those who have contributed (additional staff, local team members, donors, conference speakers/performers, advertisers, and more) is far larger and would not fit on this page.

Please know that I value all of you.

Finally, I am grateful to my family for supporting me in this role ... I hope you have each benefitted as well.

I do not intend to disappear but look forward to experiencing the conference from a different vantage point next year. I certainly will have much more time to chat in the hallways or over a glass of wine.

In the meantime, immerse yourselves in our 20th conference and all the opportunities it offers. We have much to celebrate and accomplish together!

*Stacy Schroeder*

Executive Director/President



*Kimberly McKee*

gave her time and effort to build KAAN as an inclusive community—ensuring the voices of adoptees were centered as part of the Advisory Council. Stacy invigorated the dynamic programming to highlight the multiple perspectives attendees inhabit. This leadership change will support KAAN’s continued growth and I wish Stacy and her family the best as she starts this new chapter of her life.

*Kimberly McKee*  
Assistant Director/Secretary  
+++++

With great joy, I welcome everyone and thank you from the bottom of my heart for joining us. As I say every year, without you we couldn’t host this event. It’s hard to believe it’s been 20 years! It’s amazing to think of the lives we’ve impacted because of KAAN and the people this organization represents. My hope is that we look back someday and continue to see the positive impact we have for our community.

It’s been the vision of two great leaders that’s been so instrumental in our group’s success and prosperity. Each one who cared so much for our group. It’s with sadness, excitement and gratitude that we say “thank you” and “good bye” to Stacy. Sadness because she’s been such a caring, thoughtful, and passionate leader that I’ll personally miss. Excitement to watch and hopefully continue to be a part of her and her family’s next chapter in their lives! And finally gratitude, because it takes so much commitment and dedication to be the leader of this group. I know how throughout the year, this position takes time not just from Stacy but also her family, so “thank you” Stacy, Matt, Nick, Allison and Cleo!

Please take the time this weekend to enjoy yourself and know that that we’re not just a community, we’re family. We have a common interest, no matter what direction we’re coming from.



*Rachel Hye Youn Rupright*

*Michael Stanley*  
Treasurer  
+++++

Welcome! I’m excited that you’re participating in our 20th Anniversary Conference! This year’s theme is “Caring for Our Community” and our KAAN community is certainly unique. This conference is like no other place or space: bringing together adoptees and adoptive families to talk about issues such as race, identity, relationships, current events, belonging, and mental health, all through an adoption lens.

I send all of our session presenters, performers, and volunteers well wishes. Your contributions help make this conference a high-quality and enriching experience! For anyone considering submitting a session proposal for next year or would like to volunteer with KAAN, let’s talk! We’d love for you the get involved.

As a Korean adoptee who didn’t grow up around many other adoptees and Korean Americans, I finally found “my people” through KAAN. I hope you find “your people” here, too.

*Rachel Hye Youn Rupright*  
Co-Registrar & Conference Speaker Coordinator



*Michael Stanley*





Welcome to Minnesota!

AK Connection is excited that the 20th Anniversary of the Korean American Adoptee Adoptive Family Network (KAAN) Conference is being held in the Land of 10,000 Adoptees!

We hope you will take some time to explore Minneapolis and St Paul while you're here. The Minneapolis Institute of Art, the historic Frogtown neighborhood, and the Midtown Global Market are all wonderful ways to engage with the city beyond the Mall of America. There are lakes of every size to explore and admire if you need a little sunshine—find a local at the conference and ask them what their favorite lake is! Minnesotans are really quite friendly. We promise.

Since 2000, AK Connection has served as a resource for Adult Korean Adoptees in Minnesota. We are a volunteer-led non-profit organization run by and for Korean-Adoptees that provides monthly events and programming to enrich the lives of our people. Check out our website ([www.akconnection.com](http://www.akconnection.com)) to learn more. If you're local or visiting Minneapolis again in the future, we'd love to see you at our next event.

Best wishes for an enjoyable and memorable conference. We hope you have a great conference experience and get to enjoy a little of Minneapolis, too!

Your friends,

*The AK Connection Board of Directors*



KOREAN CONSULATE GENERAL  
NEW YORK, N.Y.

June 29, 2018

Dear Korean American Adoptee Adoptive Family Network members:

On behalf of the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in New York, I am delighted to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the Korean American Adoptee Adoptive Family Network (KAAN) on the occasion of its 20<sup>th</sup> Annual National KAAN Conference in Minneapolis, MN from June 29 to July 1.

Korean-born adoptees and their families are one of the key components that make up the overseas Korean community. It is important to make sure that they feel connected to their heritage and culture. I believe that the conference will contribute to achieving this goal.

Korean Americans, including Korean-born adoptees, play a crucial role in bridging Korea and the United States. Vibrant people-to-people exchanges and cultural understanding cement this alliance based on the shared values of free democracy and market economy. Many like-minded organizations, including KAAN, further solidify and strengthen this bond.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank KAAN for their dedication and continued good work. I hope that the conference will be a valuable opportunity to learn and to carry on a dialogue, by which the participants can share their stories and find common solutions to various issues facing the KAAN community and beyond.

I wish you happiness, health, and success in all your endeavors. Thank you.

Sincerely,

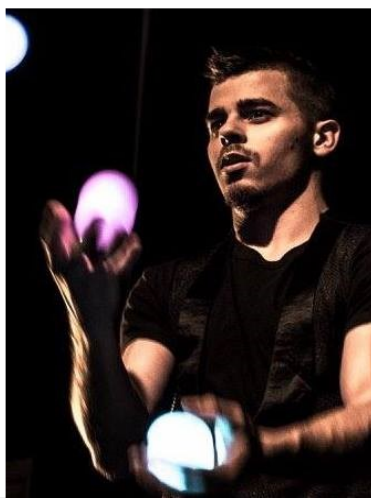
Amb. Hyo-Sung Park  
Consul General

# ON *the* MAIN STAGE

## Friday Kickoff Entertainers



*Midnite Martini*



*Bucky Buckbinder*

This husband-and-wife entertaining duo came to KAAN for the first time last year and wasted no time getting involved. This year, we are excited to showcase their talents.

Midnite Martini is a burlesque dancer who will share a (conference-appropriate) veil dance with us. She is also presenting a session on body positivity.

Bucky Buckbinder is an energetic and skilled juggler who can literally handle a lot of things at once.

Join us at our Friday anniversary kickoff to celebrate 20 years and enjoy the skills of these two.

## Saturday Breakfast Keynote: Nicole Sheppard

Nicole Sheppard returns to KAAN to talk about a heavy and important topic – suicide. For the past few years, she has been working under a grant with a local group to explore why mental health and suicide rates are higher among adoptees and what can be done to reduce risk and improve support.

Sadly, most of us know someone who has died from suicide. Friends and family feel powerless and devastated when this occurs. Make plans to attend this presentation to learn more about the ways we can begin to keep it from happening in the first place.





## Saturday Luncheon Keynote: Taneka Hye Wol Jennings

Taneka Hye Wol Jennings is a regular KAAAN participant who has spoken on numerous topics and helped to coordinate our youth programs in the past. Similarly, she has a broad set of experiences, both personal and professional, that connect to our conference theme and particularly her keynote focus on advocacy. Be inspired, convicted, and challenged by Taneka's unique blend of first-hand stories, creative writing, and insights into human rights issues as they affect adoptees and those who care about them.



Taneka Hye Wol Jennings



### Closing Facilitators: Aerial A. Ashlee, Shannon Gibney, and Kim Park Nelson

What better way to wrap up your conference experience than to listen to these three seasoned leaders, academics, and activists discuss what they have learned and heard during our weekend together? Expect thoughtful observations and useful takeaways to muse over during your trip home and into your day-to-day life. (as well as chances to share your own perspective). Aerial A. Ashlee (co-author

of *Vital: A Torch for Your Social Justice Journey*), Shannon Gibney (author of *See No Color* and the upcoming *Dream Country*), and Kim Park Nelson (author of *Invisible Asians: Korean American Adoptees, Asian American Experiences and Racial Exceptionalism*) are a perfect trio to conclude our conference weekend of *Caring for the Community: Mental Health, Self-Care, and Advocacy*.



# Beyond Limits

Nikki Abramson

A diagnosis of a rare genetic disorder—1 of 10 cases known in the world—gives Nikki Abramson a perspective on life that is unique. Along with that come the challenges of disabilities that are often not seen outwardly, the identity of being an adoptee and a woman of color. Overcoming assumptions and ignorance (including her own) with humor and wisdom, she gives the audience members of her play *Beyond Limits* a toolbox of strategies for maintaining hope, even in difficult times. Abramson teamed up with Sara Truesdale and Gizelle Erickson to write the play based on her life story. Breaking Barriers with Toolbox Theater, LLC is the unique theater troop that brings the play to life. Breaking Barriers provides opportunities to explore differences and highlight perseverance using theatrical presentations. The company shares in authentic ways through personal experience, thought-provoking questions, and the power of theatre and seeks to entertain, uplift, and inspire through their presentations.

*Beyond Limits* has been performed for Twin Cities' audiences. Now Breaking Barriers is thrilled to bring their message to KAAAN.

## MEET THE CAST & PRODUCTION CREW

### Nikki Abramson

**Creative Director, Actor, Co-Playwright, Producer**

Nikki Abramson is thrilled to perform this show for an audience of the Korean community. She has enjoyed playing a variety of roles in various theatre companies including: Wonderlust's Production 'Adoption Play' and Artistry (BCT). She has performed in choir groups, improv groups, commercial, and print work. Nikki is a teaching artist with Upstream Arts that works with peo-

## Friday Night Performance

ple with disabilities in teaching social and communication skills through the arts as well, as is a director for youth theatre. She is the author of the book "I Choose Hope" and "Hope for Today" as well as five anthologies. Thanks to the production crew and cast as well as her family/friends for their support. More info: [www.nikkiabramson.com](http://www.nikkiabramson.com)

### Dennis Dienst

**Technical and Managing Director for BBTT, Producer**

Dennis Dienst has been working in theatre since 2009 with Morris Park Players and a few other groups. He loves creating for theatre,

whether it's for sets, props, or adding to costuming. He likes helping the actors to be surrounded by things that allow them go deeper into their characters! There are many different parts of this show that have Dennis' fingerprints on them and he hopes you will enjoy the show and tell everyone you know to come and see the show... and then also remember some of the lessons within this show. Those moments when you see yourself within the show! Enjoy and Encourage Others!



*A diagnosis of a rare genetic disorder—1 of 10 cases known in the world—gives Nikki a perspective on life that is unique.*

### Sara Truesdale

**Artistic Director for BBTT, Producer, Co-Playwright**

Sara Truesdale has directed, taught, and performed with multiple Twin Cities theatre companies. She's worked with The Children's Theatre Company (CTC), The Jungle, Red Eye, Bedlam, History Theatre, Teatro del Pueblo, Season's Dinner Theatre, and Gremlin, among others. She was a resident company member of St. Croix Festival Theatre. She graduated with a Communication-Theatre degree from St. Olaf College and completed the HECUA City Arts Program. This production of *Beyond Limits* combines artistry and changing perceptions, a beautiful thing for theatre to do.





Dennis Dienst



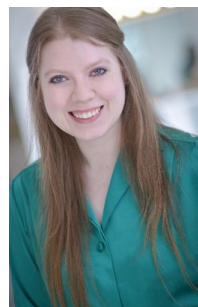
Sara Truesdale



Barb Hynes Tomczyk



Kimberly Michaels



Colleen Thul

**Barb Hynes Tomczyk**  
*Director*

Barb is a freelance director and teaching artist in the Twin Cities area. She has directed over fifty stage productions, and developed and run workshops on everything from Audition Techniques to Stage Combat. Barb is a longtime member of the Hennepin Theatre Trust Spotlight Program. She also helped develop the State of Minnesota benchmarks for theatre education. Barb's love of theatre began at age fifteen and continues to this day.

**Kimberly Michaels**  
*Actor and Singer*

Minnesota native and Korean Adoptee, Kimberly Michaels, a versatile singer/songwriter, released her debut album of some of her favorite originals on February of 2017. Tony Axtell, co-wrote and co-produced the music with her. Her professional career of singing background vocals and arranging began in 1990, in LA. Since then she's been non-stop singing and writing R&B, Funk, Jazz, Gospel & Pop music.

**Colleen Thul**  
*Actor*

Colleen is an actor based in the Twin Cities area having moved here last year after receiving her BA in Theatre Arts. Recent credits include "Once Upon a Mattress", "Wizard of Oz", "Hello, I Must Be Going...", and "Much Ado About Nothing". Colleen is excited to be joining Toolbox Theatre to help bring this powerful story to life and hopes that you are moved by it.

**Kassia Lisinski**  
*Stage Manager*

Kassia is grateful for the opportunity to work with Toolbox Theatre as stage manager for Beyond Limits. Primarily a sound and projec-

tion designer, Kassia has previously worked with companies including Patrick's Cabaret, 20% Theatre, Mission Theatre Company, and Market Garden Theatre. They are also a writer and collaborator excited to be moving towards full-time freelance work after managing Mixed Blood Theatre's box office for just over a year. In their spare time Kassia enjoys reading on their porch, gardening, and quality time with friends and cats (and dogs and more).

**Teresa Foushee**  
*Composer of "It's Gonna Be Alright"*

Teresa wrote the song, "It's Gonna Be Alright," to work through her own tough times and she's thrilled it's message is going "Beyond Limits." When Teresa is not making music she can be found training for triathlons, learning life lessons with her spouse from their rescue dog, Butch, or writing and illustrating children's picture books. Teresa thanks the Beyond Limits team for including the song and thanks you, the audience, for attending and hopes you will be moved by the message of this performance. You can learn more about Teresa's stories and songs at [www.PosiVibes.com](http://www.PosiVibes.com).

\*\*\*\*\*

*We are a traveling company. If you're interested in bringing this message to your organization, please contact us:*

**Breaking Barriers with Toolbox Theatre, LLC**  
BBTTCreative@gmail.com  
612-567-1135  
Nikki Abramson, Creative Director  
Dennis Dienst, Managing Director  
Sara Truesdale, Artistic Director

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

- What is in your toolbox? How are you using your tools on a daily basis?
- How do you advocate for yourself? How do you seek out the accommodations to be your best? How can you bring out the best in both yourself and others? Can you teach others to advocate for themselves? Who are your advocates?
- What are some ways that you encourage your soul?
- Have you experienced grief/loss? How so? How did you start to have acceptance? How did the process of acceptance impact how you moved forward?
- What labels have people put on you, or labels you put on yourself?
- When have you discovered that you were ignorant about something? How did that realization help you learn and grow?



Kassia Lisinski



Teresa Foushee





*Saturday Night Performance*

# Middle Brother



*Eric Sharp*

*Headshot by Dani Werner*

*As a professional actor Eric has been seen onstage at Mu Performing Arts, Guthrie Theater, Alliance Theatre, Ten Thousand Things, Theatre de la Jeune Lune, and many others. He has performed regionally and internationally in Minneapolis, New York, Atlanta, Toronto, Edinburgh, and once co-produced and performed a play in a full-size swimming pool.*

Yes, you are right ... we have scheduled not just one but TWO great plays for you to enjoy as part of our 20th anniversary conference.

You are welcome.

Our second conference performance is written by longtime Mu Performing Arts performer Eric Sharp (Guthrie Theater, Alliance Theater, Toronto Fringe).

Middle Brother is a jet-setting theatrical journey exploring loss, reunion, and unanswered questions from the Korean adoptee experience. The play is being shared as a staged reading at the conclusion of our June 30 evening gala dinner.

Middle Brother received its 2014 world premiere at Mu Performing Arts and was a finalist for the National New Play Network showcase.

Sharp's debut play was in development for over three years. It started from a conversation with former Mu Performing Arts artistic director Rick Shiomi and was subsequently developed through the Mu/Jerome New Performance Project.

As a teaching artist, Eric also leads workshops for Mu Performing Arts, Penumbra Theatre, and COMPAS, as well as teaching a suite of freelance theater workshops on various disciplines. His pedagogy is based on principles of equity, social justice, and intercultural dialogue.



For more information about *Middle Brother*, check out the playbill distributed during the performance or visit [www.worksharp.org](http://www.worksharp.org).

### ABOUT THE PLAY

“Now boarding Korean Air Flight 100 with service to Seoul. ... “

Adopted to the Midwest as a toddler, Billy buys a one-way plane ticket to Korea. With help from a chorus of wayward street vendors, he unexpectedly reunites with his older birth brother and must somehow reconcile his modern American life with his newfound Korean past.







# The Korean Adoptee Homeland: Why Minnesota?

*by Kim Park Nelson, PhD*

I began my research—and my own Korean American adoption experience—in Minnesota, which is home to a higher concentration of Korean adoptees than any place in the United States (and the world, with the exception of Sweden). The population of Korean American adoptees in the state of Minnesota, estimated to be between ten thousand and fifteen thousand, suggests a half-joking parallel with the state motto, “The Land of 10,000 Lakes.” In fact, there are about fifteen thousand lakes in Minnesota, so it would be accurate to say that there is indeed a Korean adoptee for every lake.

Between February of 2003 and December of 2006, I collected oral histories from thirty-four adoptees who lived in (or had lived or grown up in) Minnesota, most in the Twin Cities region of Minneapolis and St. Paul and the surrounding suburbs. At the time they gave their oral histories, they ranged in age from twenty-one to forty-four; most were in their late twenties to mid-thirties, with both a median and an average age of thirty-one. Only eight were men, which reflects the fact that more girls than boys had been adopted from Korea until the 1980s, and probably also my own position as a woman. Of these thirty-four, six gave their oral histories in Korea, because they had relocated to their birth county as adults; I knew two of these six before they left Minnesota for Korea. The other twenty-eight gave oral histories in Minnesota while they lived there. Seven had grown up in other states and had moved to Minnesota as adults, and the other twenty-seven were raised in Minnesota.

I have been asked many times, by people familiar with the Korean American adoptee community, why there are so many Korean adoptees in Minnesota. Minnesota is probably the only place in the United States where the practice of Korean adoption has become so normalized and commonplace that a viable and visible Korean adoptee community has developed along many different axes, including support for Korean adoptive families and children, adoptee-led networking and activism, journalism and publishing that privileges Korean adoption experiences, Korean adoptee artistic expression, participation by Korean adoptees in the Korean American community, and formal adoption research. I believe that this concentration of adoptees is the result of several historical, structural, and sociocultural factors that have worked in concert to make Minnesota an American homeland of sorts for Korean adoptees.

Minnesota has a long history of progressive social politics and policies. The radical leftist Farmer Labor party was the most successful left-wing party in the country in the 1930s and went on to merge with the state Democratic Party in 1948 to create the Democratic Farmer Labor party.<sup>52</sup> In addition, Minnesota has a tradition of populist engagement with state policy through civic organizations like the Citizens League.<sup>53</sup> This is one important factor that has led to “activist government and innovative social welfare programs [because] . . . government . . . has been viewed as a positive instrument for the betterment of society.”<sup>54</sup> Minnesota has a strong history of liberal policies around issues like welfare reform, health care, education, and social poli-

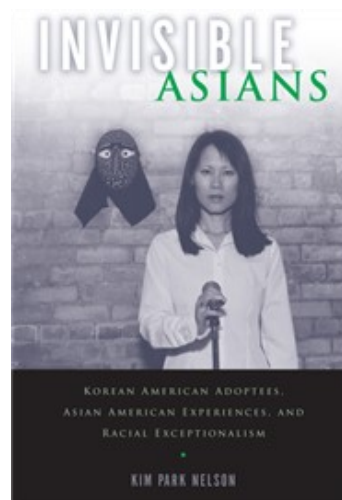


cy, made possible (until recently) by the general economic well-being of the state coupled with high political participation among a fairly homogeneous voting population holding progressive-to-liberal political values.<sup>55</sup>

Minnesota's White ethnics, predominantly descended from Scandinavian and German Lutheran immigrants, have traditionally been strong supporters of the welfare state. It is notable that social conventions against adoption or non-biological kinship are largely absent in Germany and the Scandinavian countries; Sweden has the largest population of Korean adoptees in Europe (both in absolute number and per capita). The fact that Minnesota (as well as Sweden, incidentally) has historically been racially homogeneous helped support its racially progressive policies when it came to family matters. In 1948, Minnesota was the site of the first transracial adoption of an African American child into a White family, and the state's infrastructure, social norms, and reputation as a state friendly to transracial adoption began to develop. Minnesota was also one of nine U.S. states that never enacted antimiscegenation laws, probably in no small part because few people of color resided in Minnesota during the era of antimiscegenation fervor from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. The state's high degree of racial homogeneity also meant that racial politics in the state have tended to be assimilative. Although Minnesotans may not have been threatened by small racial or cultural differences, the extreme isolation that people of color, including Korean adoptees, faced in the state encouraged assimilative adaptation; this is entirely consistent with adoption industry rhetoric from the 1950s to the 1970s that encouraged White adoptive parents to prevent their adopted children from having contact with their birth culture.

Given this social and political history, it is hardly surprising that Minnesota is home to child welfare organizations cum adoption agencies that have long histories of facilitating adoption. Most notable among them are Lutheran Social Services, which initiated a Korean adoption program in 1967,<sup>56</sup> and Children's Home Society, founded in 1889 to facilitate adoptions of poor children born in East Coast cities who arrived on the orphan trains.<sup>57</sup> Children's Home Society expanded its adoption program to transracial and transnational adoption in the mid-1950s during the Korean War. Children's Home is the only agency in Minnesota that still facilitates overseas Korean adoptions. Since the mid-1970s, when in-race adoptable children for White prospective parents became less available and domestic transracial adoption became less socially acceptable, both of these Minnesota adoption agencies actively promoted Korean adoption over other options because of its relative ease and predictability. By that time, Korean adoptions had been underway for over twenty years, and the agencies could offer prospective parents a reliable timeline and reasonable fee structure should they choose to adopt from Korea.

By the mid-1980s, the peak years of overseas adoption from Korea, so many Korean children were arriving in Minnesota that Korean adoption had become an obvious option for prospective parents. In fact, Korean adoption had become (and remains) normalized in Minnesota to such an extent that a snowball effect took over: adoption from Korea was no longer an act that parents felt would necessarily isolate them, but one that could actually connect them and their families with a growing community of adoptive families raising children from Korea. The size of the Korean adoptee population gave rise to a relatively large number of community resources for adoptive families and adoptees, including Korean culture camps, arts groups that teach traditional Korean music and dance, Korean-adoption-centered publications, and several Korean adoptee groups (the two earliest were Minnesota Adopted Koreans, established in 1991,<sup>58</sup> and AK Connection, established in 2000). As Minnesota's adoptee population grew, so did the interest of researchers (and of adoptees in other states); the large adoptee population made Minnesota a productive location for adoption research. The University of Minnesota is now one of the leading institutions in the field of transracial and transnational adoption research, with studies under way in medicine, psychology, family social science, and social work, as well as in Asian American studies and history. For Korean adoptees, even those who grew up in other states, the critical mass of adoptees living in Minnesota has made the state, especially the Twin Cities, a desirable place to live. The social and cultural climate around transracial and specifically, Korean adoption in Minnesota is complex, and adoption communities are active historically, socially, culturally, artistically, and academically.



From *Invisible Asians: Korean American Adoptees, Asian American Experiences and Racial Exceptionalism* by Kim Park Nelson, copyright 2016. With the permission of the publisher, Rutgers University Press.

# Generational Trauma *and* Korean Adoptees

*by Julie Jong Koch, MSW, LICSW*

When I was young, I used to look in the mirror and wonder what I had inherited from my Korean mother and father. My adoptive mother would inappropriately joke that my shoe size came from my adoptive father, or that my fiery personality must have come from my Korean side.

How do Korean adoptees make sense of genetics, adoption, and generational and historical trauma without knowing or understanding their own personal family history? My hope is that this can be a continuation into larger conversations, and that adoptees can begin to understand inherited trauma to help them understand underlying feelings of pain, distress or disconnection.

Prior to the popularity of DNA search sites like 23andMe, Ancestry.com, and more, many adoptees gave little thought to our past generations and ancestry beyond our Korean parents. For some, thinking about our past triggered feelings of sadness or anger. For others, there was just a missing void—unavoidable—yet we understood with a level of acceptance and carried on. Nowadays, this new DNA spotlight has sparked many curiosities for adoptees, especially potential connections to biological family. Some of these sites, in particular 23andMe, have also highlighted how our traits and genetic predispositions show up, giving us pause to think about how we have inherited these. As we explore the numerous angles that DNA allows us the answers to, I invite us to pause and give space to our histories and generations of pain and trauma as well.

Transgenerational trauma is the transfer of the overwhelming and unmanageable to the next generation, and is grounded in our DNA and epigenetics. Epigenetics, then, is a biological mechanism that affects how genes are expressed, silenced and read. Genes are impacted by many external factors, including stress and trauma. Dr. Rachel Yehuda, director of the Mount Sinai Traumatic Stress Studies Division, studies molecular neuroscience and gene ex-

pression. She notes that genes can suffer an adaptation in response to stressful or traumatic events, which can then show up in the next generation as a response to parental trauma. Because of this, children of trauma survivors can be more likely to develop stress or trauma-related disorders through changes in body chemistry.

Pre-verbal and biological experiences at the time of trauma can reprogram our stress system to prepare it for future trauma or stressful experiences. These can be permanent changes to our physiology or epigenome, which helps us or the next generation to adapt to a possible environment of adversity. In essence, our life experiences can modify our body chemistry, which can then be transmitted to children. This is not a new idea, but recent studies by Dr. Yehuda and other researchers are enhancing the proof of concept and its existence.

What does this mean to adoptees? At the very least, we must recognize the exceptional stress that our Korean mothers may have experienced while we were in utero. We need to know that high levels of maternal stress (adrenaline and cortisol) transmits that same stress to their offspring. We must see the rupture that took place at separation, and consider how our bodies and DNA adapted based on our physical and emotional experiences of that. We need to honor both the common trauma responses as well as the unique individual ones.

Other circumstances also factor into Korean adoptees' experiences of this generational transfer. It is important to observe the severe impact that Korea's violent military history had on families and individuals. From this violence came poverty and social struggles that collectively held the country in a state of fight, flight or freeze. The traumatic childhoods and lives of our ancestors go back further than most of us will understand, and ultimately culminates in our birth. Trauma is transformative. It changes everyone who

experiences it. For many adoptees, the trauma and stress of adoption also exists in a state of constancy through the ambiguous losses of language, culture and family connections. It is also ever-present in feelings of racial othering, cultural and racial incongruence, and overt racist experiences.

How then do we make sense of this and what do we do? In order to move forward, we need to decolonize the way we heal, and find ways for our own stories to be told and our own experiences to be centered. We need to acknowledge common struggles of depression and anxiety that many adoptees experience— not to pathologize, but to say hey, we’re feeling this, this is real, and we need to unpack the reasons why it’s imperative to promote emotional health. We won’t ever fully understand all the risk factors in adoptee mental health. But what we do know is that isolation in the transracial adoptee community, lack of knowledge, and self-blame can make it worse.

Healing can come through meaning making. When we reframe our experiences, we allow ourselves to see and feel our pain differently. It is not what’s wrong with you. It is what happened to you. You are not the problem—we are not the problem. Problems are the problem. When we realize this, we can redirect our energy to process the trauma, seeks ways to cope, and remove the self-blame that has kept us stuck. So how do we heal ourselves, our future generations?

The word healing is in heavy use in many fields these days. Like many words, it’s important to explore what this means to you individually, and to those you are in community with. Ask yourself what you are seeking. What does emotional health look like? Can you have positive emotional health while still seeking change or repair? While still experiencing ongoing stress or trauma?

We know that people moved through trauma before modern mental health therapy existed. We also know that people in communities where psychotherapy or other forms of “therapy” aren’t prescribed also find ways to process their trauma. A sizeable way we see this is done is through human connection and relationships. Social support is also a good buffer against mental health issues. By finding “our people”, we can rely on each other for support and safety, which are key components of healing.

Additionally, I believe that adrienne marie brown, in her book *Emergent Strategy*, can provide some guiding principles and reminders for us as we live our lives both as individuals and within the ever-strengthening adoptee community. She explores intentional change through a social justice framework, and reminds us: Starting small is okay. Change is always happening. Find the conversations that need to happen. There is growth from everything. Trust each other. Focus on relationships, and resilience will happen. Be present. What you pay attention to is what gets bigger.

Community-oriented solutions don’t discount the importance or helpfulness of processing through trauma in other ways, or focusing on feelings and emotions that exist in the face of difficult events. Healing will look different for all of us. Though narratives, mindfulness, somatic body work, and other approaches, we can individually seek out what resonates for us. But it’s important to do the grounding work first. Living mindfully in the present and finding daily connections will give us the strength to then honor the past and seek hope in the future. Seeing, acknowledging, and working toward healing trauma, is how we intercept its cycle through generations.

Adoptees are resilient. We are told that time and time again. There is truth to this, and we need to allow space for the parts of us that are weary—that carry the pain of our mothers and ancestors. The pain that we carry is the pain of more than just us. To see this and do the difficult work of healing is to disrupt the the trauma and soothe the effects of history.

+++++

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Dr. Rachel Yebuda*
- The Body Keeps the Score- Dr. Bessel van der Kolk*
- Waking the Tiger- Peter Levine*
- My Grandmother’s Hands- Resmaa Menakem*
- Emergent Strategy- adrienne marie brown*





# Compassionate Community

AK Connection

has served as a resource for adult Korean-Adoptees in Minnesota for almost 20 years



## Who We Are

We are a volunteer-led non-profit organization run by and for Korean-Adoptees that provides monthly events and programming to enrich the lives of our people.

## Our Mission

We strive to support the whole Korean-Adoptee, which can include non-adopted family members and friends, through our mission of connection, empowering, and understanding one another to strengthen and grow our shared community.

**Check us out on our website to learn more!**  
[www.akconnection.com](http://www.akconnection.com)

# Advocacy for Unwed Mothers

by Shannon Bae

During my ten years living in South Korea, I was lucky enough to work closely with the mothers of Korean Unwed Mothers' Families Association (KUMFA) and other organizations who were fighting for the rights of unwed mothers to raise their children

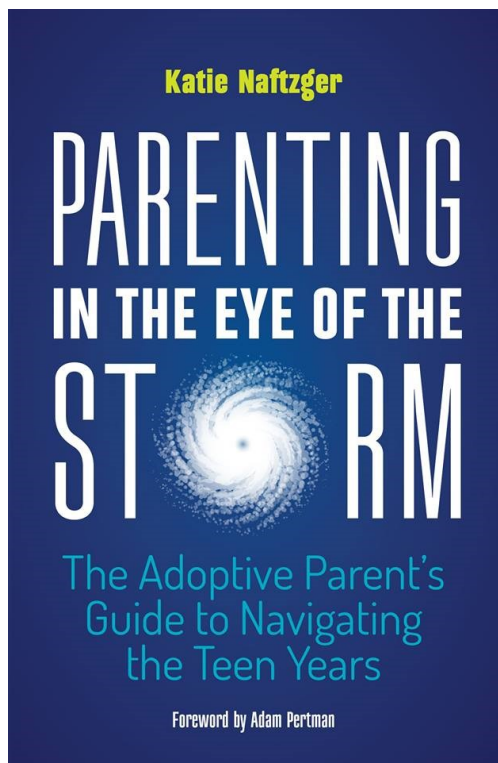


in South Korea. As a Korean adoptee, my work with the Korean Unwed Mothers' Families Association was personally meaningful due to the connection between adoption and unwed motherhood in South Korea. Since the 1980s (when I was adopted), over 80 percent of the children sent abroad for adoption have been the children of unwed mothers, and since the 1990s that figure increased to over 90 percent. As a mother and a feminist, I find it heartbreaking that women who might otherwise choose to raise their children feel forced to relinquish their children due to financial constraints and social stigma. KUMFA is an organization that recognizes and advocates for the rights of unwed mothers by lobbying for policies that provide resources and support to unwed mothers and their children and fights against the structural and social discrimination against unwed mothers' families in Korean society.

While unwed mothers are relegated to the social margins due to their decision to raise their children alone, adoptees are also marginalized by their lack of language access and cultural capital. The solidarity between adoptees and unwed mothers is a mutually supportive relationship and together, adoptees and unwed mothers have worked to change policies related to both unwed mothers' and adoptees' rights. When adoptees work with unwed mothers to fight for their right to raise their children, it sends a powerful message to Korean society that even those of us who are adoption "success stories" believe that unwed mothers have the right to raise their children, regardless of socio-economic class or marital status. And with the support and activism of unwed mothers, the rights of adoptees to better birth family search support is also gaining recognition in Korean society. Beyond social change, the coalition of adoptees and unwed mothers has also brought about legislation change such as the Single Parent Family Support Act and the Special Adoption Act.

Often overshadowed by social and legislative change, but just as importantly, the solidarity between adoptees and unwed mothers has also engendered significant personal relationships. While I was living in Korea, they treated me as a part of their families: inviting me to their homes, cooking me meals, sharing large batches of kimchi with me, and helping me to celebrate my own life events – they were there when I found my mom, when I got married, and came to visit after I had a child of my own. Before becoming a mother myself, I was able to bear witness to the way that they raise their children with grace and wisdom, even in the face of immense social stigma and discrimination. I consider many of the KUMFA moms dear friends, onnis, mentors, and role models – strong women who will always be a part of my life.





*For Adoptive Parents*

# Put Your Oxygen Mask on First

*by Katie Naftzger, LISCW*

On planes, the flight attendant says, “If you are travelling with a young child or a person who needs assistance, put your own oxygen mask on first before assisting others.”

Heather, adoptive parent of three, had her hands full. Alexa, adopted from Ethiopia, was 15, Jess was adopted from China and was 13 and Sarah, adopted from Korea, was nine. Alexa was in residential treatment, stayed there during the week and had home visits on weekends. Things had been worsening. It was after a particularly difficult weekend that she got in touch with me.

“It was all going along swimmingly,” Heather said in her parent meeting.

“We had bread in the oven, the fire was going in the fireplace and we all played cards. Everything was just perfect! Then, Alexa’s friend called and asked her to go for a movie that night. We get into this thing about the curfew and, before you know it, they’re all going at it. Alexa’s yelling and screaming, ‘I hate you!’ Then she pushes a stack of books off the kitchen table all over the floor. Sarah starts crying and goes to her room. Jess, still with her apron on, was like, ‘Not again! This happens every weekend!’ And I burned the bread! Can you believe it?”

Heather sighed. “It seems like this happens every weekend. It starts out fine and then something happens and it just deteriorates. I’m so worn down. I don’t know. I can’t even see straight sometimes. I know I should be more patient.”

Heather shook her head. Then she gestured under her eyelids at the dark circles.

“Look at me! I’m a wreck! I don’t know what else to do.”

“You guys have been through so much. It’s no wonder that you’re debilitated. That’s too much for any family.”

Heather nodded.

“A few things. It sounds like you’re so good at cultivating a warm, family-like atmosphere with the bread baking and everything, but given how compromised your girls’ history of abuse and neglect has been, I wonder whether it might feel too pressured for them. In their mind, they’re so far from the Norman Rockwell family and if they sense that that’s what you want, it can raise a lot of feelings for them, like guilt and worrying about disappointing you. I’m wondering whether it might make sense to tone it down a bit. It’s enjoyable to spend time as a family, but it doesn’t have to be as special.”



Heather nodded, agreeingly. “Okay, I see what you’re saying. So, not the bread?”

“Right, or just any project or activity that has to go smoothly the whole way through in order to turn out well. But I’m also thinking about just how exhausting it is to parent your children right now. Do you and your husband, you know, ever go out, spend time together without the kids?” Heather blinked. “Go out? Like for dinner? Oh, we haven’t been out in months. I can’t remember the last time that we did something like that. It’s hard to find a sitter for the kids, they’re so difficult...”

“Right! Even more reason to make it happen,” I said and smiled.

Heather thought for a second, “We have talked about how we’ve wanted to go away for like an overnight or weekend, or something. There’s been so much going on. We just forgot about it.”

“Do you happen to know anyone who might be able to stay with the kids if you were to plan something like that?”

“Well, actually my mother is just about 25 minutes away. She might be willing to stay with them. They love her.”

Heather did go away with her husband for the weekend. She talked about it at our next meeting. “It was great for us to get away. We relaxed and I actually was able to do some reading! I did end up reading some adoption and parenting books and finished a novel that I’d put on the back burner. And, when we got back, I was just so happy to see the kids.”

Then Heather said, “They all came and hugged me. But the thing is, I had no expectations.”

It wasn’t that Heather literally had no expectations. But she was able to really see them in ways that she hadn’t before. Heather put a



value on her wellbeing, allowing her to be more open, generous and loving with her family.

Why is it important to include self-care on your priority list? You’ll live longer. And that’s important. But you’re also a role model. You value yourself and your life and your family. You feel empowered, and if not, you find ways to address that. You don’t make decisions based on fear and trepidation, and expect the same from your teen.

However, it’s also important to strive to accept wherever and whoever you are in this moment, warts and all! No need to be critical or judgmental even when you fall short, which you inevitably will. Feeling vulnerable is part of any parent’s journey who wants to stretch beyond their comfort zone into their growth zone. And, if and when you feel at a loss, hopeless, just begin again, wherever you left off. That’s a great place to start.

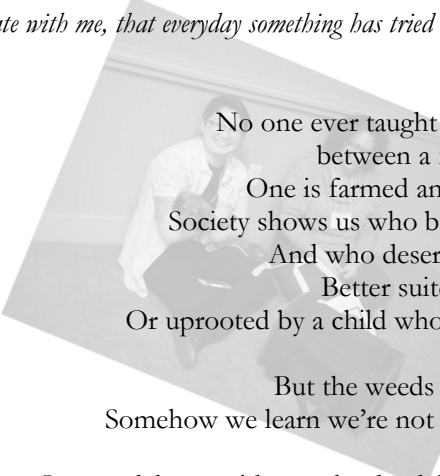
+++++

From *Parenting in the Eye of the Storm: The Adoptive Parent’s Guide to Navigating the Teen Years* by Katie Naftzger, copyright 2016, Jessica Kingsley Publishers. Printed with permission of the author.

# Celebration

by Stephen David 정은기 Johnson

*Come celebrate with me, that everyday something has tried to kill me and failed.*  
Lucille Clifton



No one ever taught me the difference  
between a flower and a weed  
One is farmed and the other is free  
Society shows us who belongs at the table  
And who deserves to be polluted  
Better suited to be instituted  
Or uprooted by a child who doesn't yet know

But the weeds always come back  
Somehow we learn we're not really weeds at all.

Come celebrate with me, the dandelions in late spring  
Who thrive and survive despite the pesticides of the world  
They rise up through the cold refusing to be told  
Go and die silently

Come celebrate with me, the single mom in Pohang  
Who plants perilla leaves in the cracks  
Of a home she may never own  
Disowned by a family she never chose

Celebrate the joy that she knows  
The mugunghwa she grows  
The car that she owns despite the stigma  
That shows up in her paycheck

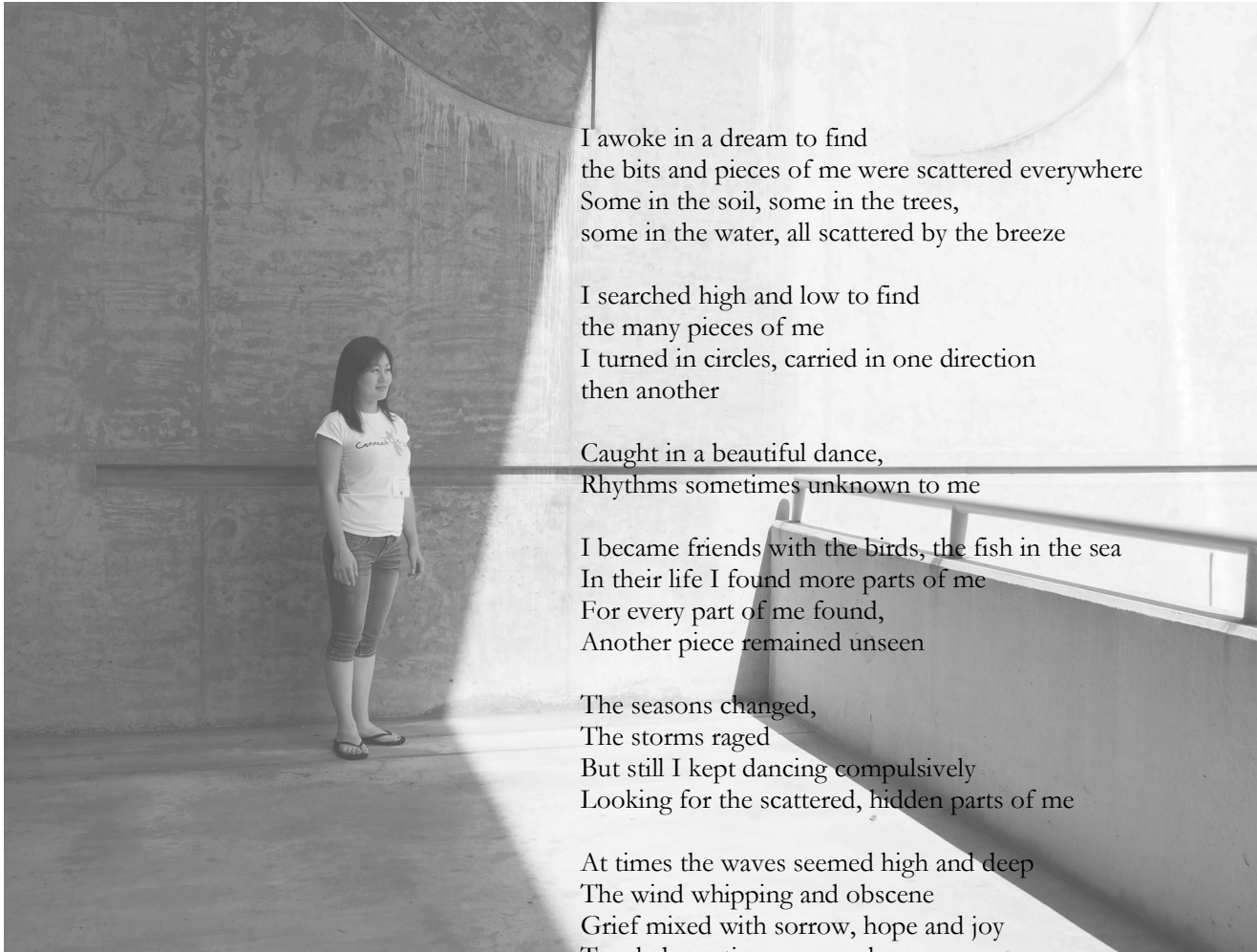
Come celebrate with me, the time machine  
To take back another statistic who left us far too soon  
Suicide means you and I  
Will never have time  
To speak the same language

Remember when we went to the noraebang?  
We swayed and screamed to Arirang  
I still can't sing, but I would take lessons together  
If it means that you'd want to be alive and dance a while longer.

Come celebrate with me, that we are alive  
Celebrate the strength it takes to be broken  
The comfort of your skin  
And the warmth of your own embrace.

# Bits and Pieces

by Taneka Hye Wol Jennings



I awoke in a dream to find  
the bits and pieces of me were scattered everywhere  
Some in the soil, some in the trees,  
some in the water, all scattered by the breeze

I searched high and low to find  
the many pieces of me  
I turned in circles, carried in one direction  
then another

Caught in a beautiful dance,  
Rhythms sometimes unknown to me

I became friends with the birds, the fish in the sea  
In their life I found more parts of me  
For every part of me found,  
Another piece remained unseen

The seasons changed,  
The storms raged  
But still I kept dancing compulsively  
Looking for the scattered, hidden parts of me

At times the waves seemed high and deep  
The wind whipping and obscene  
Grief mixed with sorrow, hope and joy  
Tangled emotions, never clean

I knew that I might never find  
All the answers that I seek

As it turned out the beauty was in  
The dance, the turns, the never-ending weave

In and out, up and down,  
Crying out  
Sweeping around  
Embracing the many parts of me.



# I Believe

## Our Voices are Needed

by Nicole Chung



More than one adoptee has told me that we have a way of finding one another, out in the world, and I believe this is true. It is also a comfort to me, as someone who knew very few adoptees as a child. When I meet fellow adoptees now, so often they will tell me, “I’m thinking of writing about adoption.” Or, “I’ve just started writing about it.” A few have even asked me for advice, something I always feel ill-equipped to offer, but what I can tell them—what I can tell you—is that your voices are important.

While adoption is not all I write about, so much of my work has touched on it in some fashion. It’s unavoidable—when I write about my childhood, my family, my parents, how I parent, how I grieve my father, why race and culture matter, why representation matters, adoption is always there: sometimes at the forefront, sometimes in the background, in my mind if not on the page. It is the source of so many facts

and frustrations, so many joys and longings. It created in me a lifetime’s worth of questions, only some of which I’ve found answers to. It gave me a hunger to eventually find other people who looked like me—and to find my birth family; define my own identity; tell my own story.

For a long time, I wasn’t sure I could or would ever write about it. I only began to publish personal essays about adoption when I was around thirty years old, after many years of writing journal entries and rough drafts that never made it off my hard drive. The comments and emails from fellow adoptees were immediately life-giving—I felt seen and understood in a way I hadn’t before. I hoped my essays might help some of them feel the same.

Many adoptive parents, too, were grateful that I’d shared my perspective. But I also heard from people who seemed threatened by a transracial adult adoptee sharing her story at all. How do your parents feel when you write about your adoption? they asked, as if to imply I’d been somehow disloyal. As the parent of an adopted Asian child, it bums me out to hear you refer to your family as “my white family,” one person said. We took our daughters away from orphanages, not their native cultures, another told me. Several insisted that I don’t speak for all adoptees, as if I ever claimed to, while telling me why their child’s race didn’t matter to them (or their child). Once, at the end of a long email explaining why my perspective on transracial adoption was short-sighted, an adoptive parent urged me to “give [my] country a break”—as though writing about the complexities of my own adoption, expressing my wish for racial and political solidarity from my adoptive family members, amounted to a condemnation of America itself.

Underlying some of this misinterpretation and criticism, I suspect, lurks the fear that their children (and nearly always,

the children parents tell me have no complicated feelings whatsoever about racial identity or adoption are still actual children as opposed to adult adoptees) might grow up to be like me. Or who they have decided I must be: an angry or ungrateful adoptee, someone with a chip on her shoulder, someone with “issues.” It can be wearying to encounter these comments, especially when I don’t consider my adoption to be any kind of tragedy or mistake (given my birth family’s history, I’m practically a poster child for why adoption can be a good option). Yet a small but determined number of people seem to read all my writing on the subject as thinly veiled or open criticism of my adoption specifically, and all adoptions everywhere.

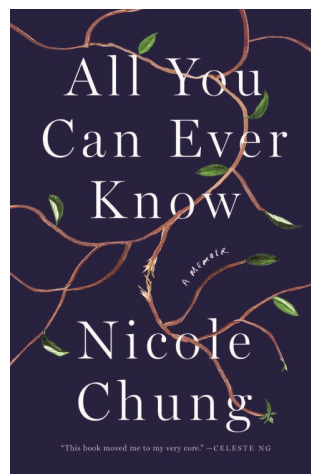
I find it both strange and telling that it is most often adoptive parents who assume I am trying to make myself into a spokesperson for all of us. If writing my own work and editing that of others has taught me anything, it is that there is a stark difference between the personal and the universal, and the first can only ever partially illuminate one small corner of the second. As much as possible, I try to write without a hard agenda. I’m not an op-ed columnist trying to persuade people to feel a certain way or take a certain position—I’m an adoptee and a writer who just wants to help them think about adoption in a way that might be new to them. I know that I’m not speaking on behalf of all people who’ve been adopted, and this realization is precisely what has freed me to say what I know, what I’ve lived, what I think.

I believe that a worthwhile institution ought to be able to stand up to individuals sharing their own experiences; to critical thought and discussion within the broader culture. I’ve curated and published adoption essay series—essays about adoption by adoptees—at The Toast, and now at Catapult, because I believe these voices are essential. Transracial adoptees should be leading conversations about transracial adoption. Our stories shouldn’t always be told for us. Sometimes it can feel challenging to find those spaces where we can speak for ourselves and feel safe doing so, but I believe there is not just a need but a real hunger for these stories, for our stories.

I wish I could tell every adoptee just beginning to write about their own experience that it will always be read thoughtfully, generously, without defensiveness or anger. I wish I could deny the burden of representing an adoptee perspective minimized or ignored for so long. Any adoptee who chooses to write about adoption has the right to know that it will not always be easy. I’ve written essays that required scraping down to where it hurt, stung, just to find the truth and express it. I’ve had readers accuse me of betrayal, ingratitude, “race baiting,” setting a bad example for my own children, not loving my adoptive family, not loving my country. I don’t blame any adoptee who has encoun-

tered similar pushback, in conversation or in writing, who decides that wider publication and discussion is neither desirable nor safe. You always have to look out for yourself, your own needs, your own health. Writing is often taxing, sometimes thankless emotional labor, and so is responding to and engaging with others’ feedback, positive or less so.

But I’ve seen understanding, empathy, and community grow when writers are open and honest about their own experiences. I’ve heard from so many adoptees who needed to read stories like theirs, who might not have realized how many of us are out there feeling similar things. I’ve had adoptive parents and people considering adoption thank me for telling the truth. I’ve listened to countless readers who told me they understand the issues involved in adoption just a little better because of adoptee writers. I know how much your words matter, if and only if you decide you want and are able to share them. So that’s what I’d urge you to remember if and when you tell your truth, and some people push back—out of fear, or misunderstanding, or ignorance, or self-preservation. Remember that no amount of criticism, no loud counterexample, can negate things you have lived; things you know to be true. Remember that only you are the authority on your own life and your experiences. Remember that there are so many of us out here who are truly, deeply grateful when you speak.



**NICOLE CHUNG** has written for The New York Times, GQ, Longreads, BuzzFeed, and Hazlitt, among many other publications. She is the editor in chief of Catapult magazine and the former managing editor of The Toast. Find her on Twitter at @nicole\_soojung.

Her new book *All You Can Ever Know* is out on Oct. 2 and available to preorder at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and IndieBound. Signed preorders are available exclusively through Powell’s City of Books in Portland. <http://bit.ly/NicoleChung>.



## ABOUT US

Sejong Cultural Education, Inc. is:

- \* devoted to the growth and happiness of our children;
- \* committed to providing unique experiential opportunities spanning lives and cultures;
- \* proud to offer programs that encourage understanding of both Korean and American culture.

## SEJONG CAMP

Our week-long summer Sejong Camp addresses the needs of both adoptees and children in Korean families, building bridges between the two. Expanding ones understanding of the history and culture of Korea is Sejong's primary focus, and our courses in self-esteem, art, and language help deepen campers' connection with that culture. Sejong seeks continuously to provide opportunities for young Korean-Americans to build confidence and esteem.

**Sejong Cultural Education, Inc.**  
**SEJONGUSA.ORG / OFFICE@SEJONGUSA.ORG**

Connect with us at

- FACEBOOK.COM/SEJONGCAMP**
- INSTAGRAM.COM/SEJONGUSA**

## MISSION

To foster a sense of Korean-American cultural identity for families formed by adoption, birth, marriage, or choice; through education, mentorship, and community building.

## PROGRAMS

- \* Week-long summer camp in New Jersey with courses in self-esteem, art, language, cuisine, and more
- \* 2 week-long organized trip to Korea, including homestay, cultural performances, adoption agency visit, and more





*From One Adoptee to Another*

# BEING AT KAAN



*by Katie Naftzger , LICSW*

I want to share a story that I often reflect on when I go to KAAN.

I had arrived at my tennis class and started hitting back and forth with the others to warm up. I said to Joe, the coach, “I don’t know what it is. I just haven’t been playing well. I just can’t seem to find my stride.”

Joe watched my playing for a moment. Then he said, “Loosen your grip a little bit.”

What, really? I looked at my hand. Then I smiled. I was holding on too tightly. My need to control it was getting in my way.

I’ve never been much into meditating. And, when people say, “Relax, take a deep breath,” I just shake my head and shrug my shoulders. But, loosen your grip - this made sense. The harder I tried to force an outcome, the harder it was to get there.

Sometimes less is more.

Whether it’s your first time or not, KAAN is out of your comfort zone, by definition. A ballroom full of Korean-adoptees, parents and families, and others, immersing yourself in the topics that don’t surface in your usual life. It’s intriguing, though, isn’t it?

There may be times when you need a breather but don’t want to go to your hotel room. We have a “quiet” room where you can just go and take the time and space that you need.

We also have support sessions when a licensed clinician will be around to listen to any emotional overflow that may occur in a drop-in group setting.

Just remember and trust your decision to come to KAAN even if you’re a little nervous. I still get nervous and this isn’t my first rodeo.

Attend to your needs, immerse yourself, but try not to lose yourself. And yes, if you want... loosen your grip a little bit.

You won’t regret it.

# LOVING *into the* VOID

by Matthew Salesses



I met my wife in 2005, when I was twenty-three. She was twenty-six. It was the first time I was in Korea since my adoption. I was stuck in a terrible job that had housed me in a love motel and had control over my visa. I wanted to know whether I was Korean or American, and the job was a sign: give up Koreanness forever. That possibility that I was Korean had always taunted me (and been used to taunt me: “Go back to your country”). To be rid of it would be a kind of freedom.

Instead C saved me as if she had found me still huddled under the bridge where I was left as a baby. In a very Freudian way she raised me. She taught me, I thought, how to be Korean—she taught me how I was Korean.

How to eat, how to behave, how to speak, how to show respect, how to date, how to dress, how to inhabit my body, how to be with hers. She taught me how to love.

We married in 2009, in America. Now it is 2018 and C is dying of cancer in Korea. When she is gone, I will love without my beloved. I will love into the void.

Once again, I will be unrequitedly Korean. In fact, C’s Koreanness is maybe the one thing about myself that I have not wanted to think about—why it is that as a Korean adoptee I married a Korean woman. I have not wanted to think about this, because I have not wanted to ask myself, would I have fallen in love C if she was not Korean? or how entangled is my love for C with my love for Korea and the wish that Korea love me back? I have not

wanted to ask these questions because I have not known what good it could do to ask them.

C was being treated in Korea because our insurance in America was terrible and she still has Korean citizenship. This context is both important and a different story. I mention it because it separated us. When she first flew to Korea, I couldn’t leave my job. We have two kids, one a baby, and we couldn’t afford daycare. C and the baby left, the elder child and I stayed behind. We hated having to separate, but we learned how to live in separation. By the time I got a leave from my university and we reunited in Korea, separation had become a part of us. It was the

separation of survival. With C's immune system compromised, her energy low and her pain high, she often needed to be alone. She couldn't be touched. Someone had to keep the kids away—I needed to bond with the baby, who didn't know me. C saved her strength to live longer, hoping one day to make herself and us whole again.

Now the doctors have given her one month to live. There is nothing to save for. In a way this has let her come back to us, now that there is only leaving left.

Surviving is not the same as living. To live is to risk death. When you are sick, risking death is off the table. When you are actively dying, death is always at risk and life is always in hand. "This is not life," my wife would often say when she was hospitalized and couldn't see us. What is life? It is love.

What this tells me is that loving is more like dying than it is like trying not to die.

Once again, my wife is teaching me how to love.

For the last year I have been reading mostly about melancholy, trying to find some meaning in the void. Melancholy not in the colloquial sense (as it has come to be used nearly synonymously with depression) but in the psychoanalytic sense. Freud famously wrote that melancholy is neurotic mourning. In psychoanalytic theory, the process of mourning is the process of stopping yourself from wanting something that is lost, such a deceased family member. To divest the desired object of desire. To stop loving what can never love you back.

Melancholy, then, is to continue to love something that is permanently lost to you.

In "A Dialogue on Racial Melancholia," David Eng and Shinhee Han argue that Asian Americans are racial melancholics. We want to be loved by whiteness, which will never love us (not individually, but structurally—e.g. the bamboo ceiling). Of course this melancholy can also be extended to other racial minorities. What makes Asian Americans different—at least in a long-held opinion perhaps most famously argued by the editors of the seminal anthology *Aiiieeeee!*—is how our love manifests: in silence. Asian American silence, diligence, hard work, compliance, is what we believe will make whiteness love us. In other words, we become the Model Minority Myth that whiteness uses against us.

Like many Asian adoptees, I was a quiet child supposed to be good at math, who for a long time tried to be grateful,

tried not to complain about the racial transactions I was constantly forced into. Despite my hatred for math, I believed I would become a mathematician or at least a scientist. I took the myth as my own identity. (Now I am a writer who can barely count.)

What Eng and Han want to say about racial melancholia, though, is not that it is a disease. They call it racial melancholia both to link it to and to distinguish it from Freud's melancholia (which is grief gone wrong). Let's not pathologize the void in which we live. Eng and Han want us to know that the void is shared—they suggest that what we should do with our melancholy is find our fellow unrequited lovers, is use it to form a group identity.

It should be apparent here that transnational, transracial adoptees have a compounded sense of large-scale melancholia, in that they come to want love from whiteness and also from the cultures in which they were born, neither of which they will ever truly receive. Adoptees love into the void not only racially, but developmentally. We are taught to love a shadow version of our lives.

Loving into the void is why adoptees desire and fear reunion. The void becomes familiar and can even seem safer than finding that the object of your love is within reach but may or may not want to see you. This is a kind of void before the void. It's the moment before you open Schrödinger's box to find that he stuffed a dead cat in there to begin with. If you aren't certain that your birth family abandoned you, then it is possible that they didn't. The void before the void is a way of surviving—you have become used to this melancholy and have made it a part of your life. To find yourself in a new void and to adapt to it would mean having to take down the shaky foundation of your life and start again with nothing.

The truth is that even in a "good" reunion, adoptees often feel unsettled, feel the void still out there. Even if their birth families may try, Korea will never accept them entirely. Like whiteness, it will always be out of reach.

Let's put Korea aside for a moment to ask: If whiteness will never love us back, then what does it want from our love? Perhaps this is a silly question, a child whining that it feels unloved. Like a loving parent, I will answer it through examples.

Recently I was reading about various studies that show that people who consciously "ruminate" or try to explain



their feelings rarely end up accurately describing how they feel. (As Sherlock Holmes or Doctor House or any real estate agent would tell you, everybody lies—even to themselves.) The result of thinking and talking about their feelings is either to change how they consciously feel while their unconscious feeling remains (as in a study where people were asked to say how their relationship was going and why, the why often changing their conscious opinion of how) or their descriptions of their feelings contradict what seems to be their unconscious feelings (as in a study where other people describe the subject with far more consistency than the subject describes himself). Many of us have probably experienced other people telling us we are in love before we know it ourselves. Other people often pick up on your moods before you know you're being moody. About yourself, it seems, you're often the last to know.

To look more closely at a single study, let's follow an experiment in which people chose art to take home and hang on their walls. Some of the subjects were told before their choice that they would explain their reasons to the researchers; others simply took the art home without talking about it. After some time had passed, the researchers followed up to see how happy or not people still were with their choices. In not so surprising results (especially to the "I know it when I see it" crowd) it turned out that the people who were asked to give specific reasons for their choices ended up less happy with the art they chose, on average, than those who had chosen their artworks based on their "gut" and not had to explain why.

This shouldn't make one rush to the conclusion that we are better off not thinking much about how we feel. Though one might be happier with an individual choice, in the long-term you won't learn to make better choices. In other words, you won't learn anything from feelings you don't think about. In my case, in the case of my marriage, I thought I could afford not to think about what my marriage to a Korean woman meant, because I didn't expect to ever have to make another choice like it again.

Here is another anecdote that I have written about before because I think about it often. One day an Asian American student came into my office hours to say she was very upset about everything she had learned about Asian American Studies. Sure she better understood the system against her (why she didn't seem to get the jobs she was qualified for or why people thought of her in certain ways or addressed her differently than her white boyfriend, etc.), but she was also far less happy with the world now that she

knew where she stood. Not knowing that these instances were symptoms of a system, she used to be able to think of them as individual mistakes.

I explained to her that this is how it always feels at first to learn the racial reasons behind why you feel the way you do. I felt the same despair when I first realized I was not white and that my non-whiteness was the reason people treated me the way they did. I wished to go back to not knowing. I wished to get rid of every single mirror. But a. I could not, and b. at least now I knew why I got upset when, for example, someone insisted that I must be smart because I was Korean. I used to think I must be a bad person to hate someone's well-intentioned compliment.

Over time, as you understand the context of your feelings better, you understand your feelings better, which means you make better decisions. You gain some small control by knowing what you cannot control. In ignorance, I said, there is short-term happiness and then a crippling mid-life crisis where you can never become the white person you've always wanted to become and you don't know why you're so damn broken. (To paraphrase.)

It was terrible to know that my racial difference mattered so much. It was terrible to miss a mother who, I am told, abandoned me as a baby. When I first learned these things, I became angry and depressed and suspicious. My parents said I had an anger problem. But my life was even more confusing not knowing where I stood. Friends would mysteriously quit me without warning, people would mysteriously pick fights with me without warning, "bad" teachers would mysteriously ignore my hand or blame me for something I didn't do and call me a liar, "good" teachers would mysteriously steer me toward math and away from novels, though I hated math more and more and loved most of all to read. I couldn't figure out why I felt the way I felt or, even more so, what to do about it. Why was I so sad? Why was I so angry? Why didn't acting up make me feel better? The more I thought about it and linked my anger to its causes, the more I learned that when I got angry an injustice had been done to me (I found this formula later, in Aristotle). I learned to recognize my feelings as intelligent.

In the art study, there was one group of people who both defended their choices and continued to be happy with them: people who knew a lot about art. You can go with your gut and be happy—without knowing what to look for, you might come across an object you love—but you will not learn how to find that happiness or even really what it is. To love better is to know better what your love

can tell you about itself, its object, and you.

In other words: whiteness wants us to keep loving without thinking about what that love can tell us.

In Jane Jeong Trenka's memoir, *Fugitive Visions*, about moving to Korea as an adoptee, Trenka spends many of the pages on music. She describes her piano education and the obstacle of her small hands. She loves playing, but she knows she has a ceiling. Finally she decides to remake herself as a pianist. In what becomes the book's central



metaphor, Trenka first unlearns how she used to play, and then learns how to play with more than her fingers, with her whole body. Here is how she describes loving into the void of what she used to know.

Building technique after breaking everything you learned before is an exercise in uncertainty, probably like learning to walk again after a horrible car accident. Take a muscular movement you've never thought about much, if at all, and suddenly think about how to do it. How do you walk? What moves first? The hip, the foot, the ankle, or the toes? How much weight on each one, and where exactly to place the weight? . . . In a way, [rebuilding from nothing] was paint by number. But in another way, it was a lesson in how to be free.

What Trenka is really talking about is her identity—as a lover, as a daughter, as an adoptee, as a Korean. In the end she is able to quit the piano: maybe because she is able to unlearn her old movements, she is able to mourn, to stop wanting what she cannot have. It was her adoptive mother who loved the piano and wanted her kids to play, so the loss is tied up in her American identity. Trenka isn't able to quit Korea. By the end of the book she is not only loving into the void, she is living within it.

Writing about her difficult relationship with the Korean language, Trenka attempts to define *아쉽다*, a word she says has no English equivalent: “to deeply, passionately want to have or to do something, but to not be able to fulfill that desire.” For Trenka, her life separated from her birth language, separated from her mothers, is about permanent loneliness: “this defining characteristic that I have grown like hair uncut since childhood.” It is lonely to face the void. Indeed, loneliness is a common symptom of melancholia. Instead of giving up your love of the lost object, you feel that love has been lost from everything else. In Jonathan Lear's book about Freud and love, *Love and Its Place in Nature*, he claims that love is a natural component the world. Borrowing Winnicott's phrase, Lear says the world, like parents, needs to be “good-enough,” needs to answer the subject's love neither too little nor too much. To the melancholic, the world reflects her loss. It is a world that does not love back, a world not good-enough, and unlike with the lost object, the melancholic need not love either the world or herself.

I have been thinking about Beethoven, who later in his life loved into a void of sound. Perhaps by loving into that void, he was able to share with others what he could not himself have.

Beethoven was suicidal and alcoholic, as self-destructive as so many of the adoptees Trenka loves in *Fugitive Visions*. To Beethoven, music must have been like Korea—because he could not stop loving it, he must have felt like his options were either to end his life or give it to what would never give it back. Music—or rather the absence of music—both tortured and saved him. When we listen to Beethoven's ninth now, knowing that he never heard it as clearly as we still can centuries later, it is like cutting a hole in a piece of paper in order to make a circle. We construct the void into which he loved as we experience the love he made from it.

After living in Korea for several years, Trenka writes that she loves the “quiet” and “stillness” she finds. I wonder where she found it. The Korea I know is loud and busy. Maybe into the noise she constructs her silence. Maybe what the editors of *Aiiieeeee!* get wrong is that silence is not necessarily submission. Silence is a void, but it does not exist on its own. It is a void Asian Americans make. When a person makes silence, it rarely goes ignored. More often than not, silence makes other people uncomfortable.

Silence must, if not be filled, be reckoned with. Though Trenka finds loneliness among other lonely adoptees, together their non-presence forces their not-good-enough world to reckon with them. Adoptees make Koreans very uncomfortable. Trenka puts it well: “And now to this place we have returned, a stain upon the conscience of Korea, straddling two centuries with our brokenhearted mothers, our guilt-ridden fathers. We took no vow of silence, nor did our families, yet still we can hardly speak.” Eventually Trenka and her community turn to activism, turning that discomfort into action.

What I find really remarkable though is that what directly follows this description of adoptees as “a stain upon the conscience of Korea,” hardly able to speak, is the sentence in which Trenka’s asserts her “delight in the simple and quiet life that Korea offers.” There she is, not only living within her loss, but reconstructing it as a positive.

If what is “true” to Trenka is her loneliness, it is because she has acknowledged it as true in order to learn how to love it. What she seeks are other adoptees who have done or are doing the same.

The truth of the void is exactly what whiteness wants to hide. Do not examine your feelings, whiteness demands. It is fascinating that if you don’t acknowledge the void, then you are the one made uncomfortable by it, by finding that others do acknowledge it. When I still believed I could be white, I hated the efforts my adoptive parents took to show me that I was Korean. I hated culture camps and other adoptees. I do not belong here, I thought. Why are my parents taking me to a place with Korean kids when they’ve always said I’m the same as them?

When you do not acknowledge the inability of silence to win whiteness’s love, your silence betrays you. It does not in fact belong to you—as the editors of Aiiieeee! claim, it belongs to whiteness. To know the void for what it is, is to destroy the expectation that the object should love you back. Perhaps it allows you to replace the object with the love itself. You experience the possibility of loving love. Of, in fact, loving your melancholia.

Eng and Han might say that loving love is what we are doing when we love other racial melancholics—when we find community. The impossibility of being loved back is too much for someone with no other love. It doesn’t surprise Trenka that Seoul’s melancholic adoptees often commit suicide or at least engage in destructive behavior. She

says they hardly even try to talk each other out of it. Perhaps it is no surprise because she knows, from her piano days, that you have to destroy a thing in order to love it. Though this is how scholar Eve Sedgwick would put it, it might be kinder to say: you have to destroy a thing in order to know how to love it.

For most of my marriage, C seemed to fill the void of Korea. I loved someone Korean, at least, who did love me back. I did not want to think further about this, because I did not want to know that the void wasn’t actually filled at all. In truth, in acknowledgement, I see now that C stood beside me at the edge of that void, that she was an example to me of what it was like to be loved back by Korea, never the possibility that I too might be. She was helping me look into my own blankness.

Now my wife is teaching me how to love into the void of her death. What I want more than anything is for her to be healthy again. My desire for this impossibility is all-consuming. I can want nothing else, because everything else I want includes her. I am in the void before the void. Once C dies, I will pass into the void of the rest of my life.

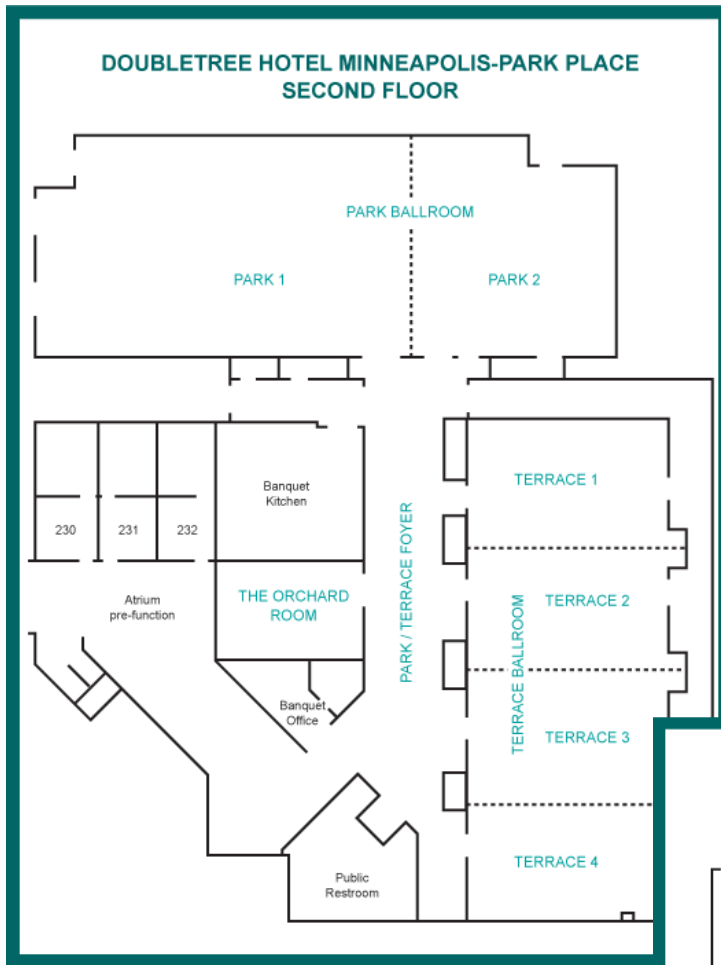
If I am to live with my melancholy, I have to think that it is not a sickness. Melancholy, at the very least, is a way of loving. I don’t want to stop wanting C to be alive and healthy, because that would be to stop want. It is better to want something impossible than to want nothing. It is better to construct nothingness than to construct nothing. To love into the void is to affirm that it is still there. I have to think that my soon-to-be-impossible love can sustain me, not despite what I will lose but because I will lose her.

+++++

**MATTHEW SALESESSES** is the author of the novel *The Hundred-Year Flood* (Little A/Amazon Publishing), an Amazon Bestseller, Best Book of September, and Kindle First pick; an *Adoptive Families* Best Book of 2015; a *Millions* Most Anticipated of 2015; a *Thought Catalog* Essential Contemporary Book by an Asian American Writer; and a Best Book of the season at *Buzzfeed*, *Refinery29*, and *Gawker*, among others. Forthcoming are a new novel, *The Murder of the Doppelgänger* (Little A, 2019), and a collection of essays, *Own Story* (Little A, 2020). His previous books and chapbooks include *I’m Not Saying, I’m Just Saying* (Civil Coping Mechanisms), *Different Racisms: On Stereotypes, the Individual, and Asian American Masculinity* (Thought Catalog Books), and *The Last Repatriate* (Nouvella). You can find out more at [www.matthewsalesses.com](http://www.matthewsalesses.com).



# Hotel Map



## SECOND FLOOR

**Store + Registration**  
Orchard

**Meals + Main Stage Events**  
Park 1

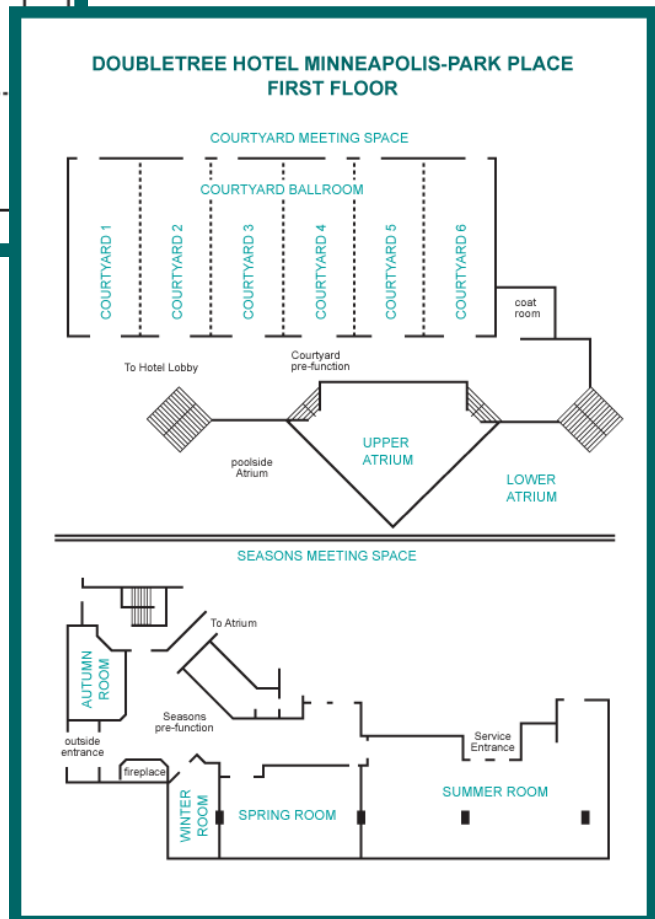
**Breakouts**  
Terrace 1  
Terrace 2  
Terrace 3  
Terrace 4  
Park 2

## FIRST FLOOR

**Quiet Room**  
Autumn

**Occasional Breakouts**  
Winter  
Summer

**Youth + Childcare Rooms**  
Spring  
Summer





## FRIDAY, JUNE 29

### 1:00-5:00PM

Registration, Exhibit Hall, Bookstore

### 1:30-2:30PM

- ◆ Asian Cosmetics Workshop #1
  - ◆ Sejong Meet and Greet
  - ◆ Newcomer Orientation
    - ◆ *Newcomer Orientation*

### 2:45-3:45PM

- ◆ Asian Cosmetics Workshop #2
- ◆ Vulnerability/Boundary Setting
  - ◆ Youth/Childcare Activities
    - ◆ *Expanding the Pipeline*

### 4:00-4:45PM

Conference Welcome and Kickoff

### 5:00-7:00PM

Adult-Adoptee-Only Dinner (*adv. reservation necessary*)  
 Community Dinner (*optional, order off menu*)

### 7:00-8:00PM

Registration, Exhibit Hall

### 8:00-9:30PM

Performance: *Beyond Limits*  
 Youth Activities by Age (movies, games, K-pop video creation)

**PLEASE NOTE**

*Adoptee-only sessions are marked in red italics.*

Schedule accurate as of press time. Check your magazine insert for up-to-date listings and room assignments.

We recognize that the material discussed at the conference may be overwhelming at times. For your convenience, a **QUIET ROOM** will be offered throughout the weekend. Please feel free to take advantage of it as needed. See the matrix insert for the location.

# schedule

## SATURDAY, JUNE 30

### 6:15AM Physical Activities

Recreational Jog  
Zumba

### 7:00-8:30AM Continental Breakfast

- ◆ 7:30 First-time Participant Meetup
- ◆ 7:30 Youth Breakfast Meetup  
(*Field trip 9-4:45PM*)
- ◆ 7:30 Registration & Exhibit Hall Open
- ◆ 8:00 Keynote—Adoptee Mental Health & Suicide:  
What's the Connection?/ *Nicole Sheppard*

### 8:45AM-10:00AM

- ◆ Effective Communication
- ◆ Decolonizing Mental Health
- ◆ *Body Betrayal*
- ◆ Suicidality

### 10:15-11:45AM

- ◆ Post-Adoption Supports in Korea
- ◆ Early Interventions in Adoptee Identity Formation
- ◆ *What Did You Say?*
- ◆ For God's Sake

### 12:00-1:30PM Luncheon

Keynote—Finding Healing in the Pursuit of Justice/  
*Taneka Hye Wol Jennings*

### 1:30PM Book Signing

Meet at bookstore

### 2:00-3:15PM

- ◆ *Post-Adoption Supports in the US (adoptees + parents of adoptees 16+)*
- ◆ Advocacy and You
- ◆ Body Positivity
- ◆ *Self-Care 101*

### 3:30-4:45PM

- ◆ Side by Side Film
- ◆ Creative Arts for Healing
- ◆ *Health Issues*
- ◆ Mental Health and the Good Adoptee (*Adoptee-only discussion open for others to listen until final Q&A*)

### 5:00-5:30PM

- ◆ Support Forums (*see matrix*)

### 6:00-10:00PM Social & Gala Dinner

6:00 Pre-Dinner Social with cash bar  
6:30 Meal, Recognitions, Raffle  
Adoptee Group Photo  
Performances —*Middle Brother*  
7:45 Youth Pool Party (*approx. time*)

## SUNDAY, JULY 1

### 7:00-8:30AM Continental Breakfast

### 8:30-12:15PM Youth Activities

- ◆ 8:30-11:00 Youth Program Medley
- ◆ 8:30 Support Forum: Non-Adopted Siblings
- ◆ 9:45 Support Forum: Children of Adoptees
- ◆ 11:00 Good-bye Party

### 8:30-9:30AM

- ◆ White Families Exploring Whiteness
- ◆ Healing at the Margins (LGBTQ)
- ◆ *Recovery and Renewal Post-Marriage*
- ◆ *Who Can Relate? (adoptees 16+)*
- ◆ What Did You Say?

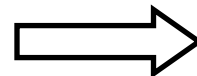
### 9:45-10:45AM

- ◆ *Are You From the North or the South? (adoptees 16+)*
- ◆ Just Believe Them: Spouses
- ◆ Objects of Appropriation
- ◆ *Healing Through Writing*
- ◆ Latest Research
- ◆ Parenting Adoptees in the Adult World

### 11:00-12:15PM

- ◆ Closing Coffeehouse—*Where Do We Go From Here?*  
facilitated by Aerial A Ashlee, Shannon Gibney, and  
Kim Park Nelson

For the full schedule for our **CHILD-CARE & YOUTH PROGRAMS**, turn the page ...



Detailed session descriptions begin on page 39 and speaker bios on page 47.



# YOUTH & CHILDCARE PROGRAMS

## general information:

Our childcare (ages 3-7) and youth (ages 7-17) programs are integral parts of KAAAN's conference. Many who attend are young adoptees; the program is open to siblings and children of adoptees as well. Our most important goal is to connect youth to the community. We progress from casual activities to ones of deeper conversation. Friendships are frequently forged between participants and with mentors.



We are proud to partner with Sejong Cultural Education, Inc. to deliver these programs. This year's coordinator is Benjamin Kim Oser.

Childcare will be offered in four blocks, covering the major session slots of the conference. Parents utilizing the childcare room are expected to work on one of the blocks for each child enrolled. Time will be pretty informal, especially if the group is small, and will include a number of activity stations plus other opportunities. Some participation with the older youth on Sunday may occur, including the closing party.

Parent must print and complete the consent form in order for their youth to participate in the field trip. This year, the group will be bowl-

ing and traveling to some Minneapolis sites including the Mall of America. These activities are designed to give participants time to get to know one another in a fun, non-threatening environment and to give them a positive experience of traveling in a primarily Asian-American group.

## youth and childcare schedule:

### FRIDAY

- 1:30-3:45 PM Youth: Games & Activities with mentors (*drop-in*)  
Childcare Block #1
- 8:00-9:30PM Movies (*parents accompany children 6 & under*)

### SATURDAY

- 7:30AM Meet mentors/peers in ballroom for breakfast and parent-check-in. Turn in signed consent forms. Group will leave ballroom for introductory games and rule-setting before field trip.
- 8:45-11:30AM Childcare Block #2
- 1:30-4:15PM Childcare Block #3
- 4:45PM Parent pickup of field trip youth (*please be prompt*)
- 7:45PM (*approx.*) Pool Party (*parents accompany non-swimmers and all children 6 & under*)

### SUNDAY

- 8:30-11:00AM Youth Program Medley  
Childcare Block #4 (*merged with Youth Medley at times – still under separate supervision*)
- 8:30-9:30AM My Brother/Sister Was Adopted (*special breakout for non-adopted siblings of adoptees*)  
Exploring My Identity in HS & College (*special breakout for adoptees 16-20+*)
- 9:45-10:45AM My Parent is An Adoptee (*special breakout for children of adoptees*)  
Dealing with Microaggressions in HS & College (*special breakout for adoptees 16-20+*)
- 11:00AM Good-bye Party with Youth, Childcare, & Mentors
- 12:15PM Parent Pickup (*please be prompt*)



# session notes

## JUNE 29

### fri 1:00-4:45pm

#### Registration & Exhibit Hall

Rachel Hye Yoon Rupright MSW, Ellen Heitzig, Suzanne Switzer, MS, Brenda Burlbaugh  
Sign in, pick up conference materials, and browse our store and exhibit/vendor tables. Presenter books may still be arriving during this time but will be available all weekend.

### fri 1:30-2:30pm

#### Newcomer Orientation

**\* ADOPTEEES ONLY \***

Katie Jae Nafitzger LICSW

KAAN is often described as a family reunion. And, like in most families, you can expect to experience a full spectrum of emotions, epiphanies, and energy throughout the weekend. This orientation session provides a space to meet other people who are new to the conference as well as hear advice on how to make the most of your time here.

#### Newcomer Orientation

Stephen David Johnson (정웅기) BSW MA

Similar to the concurrent adoptee-only newcomer orientation, this session is open to all participants who wish to connect with others to prepare for the conference. We highly recommend that first-time attendees take part in one of these sessions.

#### Asian Artistry: Break All of the Rules/ Cosmetics Workshop #1

Annie Haubenhofer

**(optional; pre-registration required, limited space)**

This space-limited workshop is to give Asian adoptees the tools and techniques on how to feel comfortable in doing their own makeup. As we all know, there are not a ton of mainstream artists that showcase Asian artistry in the makeup world and not many people want to tackle it either. Let's be our own advocates and do things that we find inspiring for ourselves and forget looking for inspiration. Let's be our OWN. Class will include how to create an easy two-color smoky eye look utilizing an ombre technique. Participants must bring their own makeup and tools; suggested list of items will be provided to registrants prior to conference. Makeup

and brushes may also be available for purchase.

Non-Asians and those who have not secured a slot are welcome to observe the class.

#### Sejong Meet & Greet

Sejong Cultural Education, Inc.

Want to meet the youth program leaders and other conference youth and families? Or perhaps learn more about the programs offered by Sejong Cultural Education, Inc., this year's youth program coordinator? Stop by for refreshments and conversation.

#### Youth Activities

Sejong Cultural Education, Inc.

Meet other conference youth in a series of activities.

#### Childcare Block #1 (ends 3:45pm)

Sejong Cultural Education, Inc.

Parents who enroll their child/ren in this program may drop them off for play and activity during all four time blocks but are required to volunteer during one of the slots.

### fri 2:45-3:45pm

#### Expanding the Pipeline

**\* ADOPTEEES ONLY \***

Kimberly McKee PhD, JaeRan Kim LISW PhD, Kim Park Nelson PhD, Aerial A. Ashlee MEd

While the bulk of research on transracial and transnational adoption used to be conducted by adoptive parents and their white allies, there is a growing cadre of adult adoptees in higher education working as professors and researchers. The goal of this session is to expand the pipeline of adoptee researchers by providing the time and space to connect and learn more about working in academia with those more established in the field. This session will be an informal discussion about the benefits and challenges with being an adoptee researcher and teaching adoption-related content.

#### Being Vulnerable and Setting Boundaries

Katie Jae Nafitzger LICSW

Our conference community is an ambitious one. We bring together people from across the spectrum with varying levels of

experience with adoption and opinions about related topics. Our community is also an intentional one, built for dialogue, education, and support across this same spectrum. As such, boundaries are exceptionally important. So is taking time to really be authentic and to listen, especially for those who are not adoptees. This session explores what it means to be in community together. Participation is particularly recommended for those new to our conference.

#### Asian Artistry: Break All of the Rules/ Cosmetics Workshop #2

Annie Haubenhofer

**(optional; pre-registration required, limited space)**

This workshop is a duplicate of Workshop #1 offered at 1:30PM, except class will include how to place contour and highlighter to achieve a sculpted face. Please see further description under Workshop #1.

#### Youth Activities

Sejong Cultural Education, Inc.

Meet other conference youth in a series of activities.

#### Childcare Block #1 (con'd)

Sejong Cultural Education, Inc.

### fri 4:00-4:30pm

#### Conference Kickoff

KAAN staff plus performers

Midnite Townsend, Bucky Buckbinder

Meet KAAN's leadership and get the scoop on conference details. Juggling and a veil dance will add some drama to the beginning of our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference.

### fri @ 5:00pm

#### Adoptee (18+) Dinner

**(optional; add. \$\$, pre-registration requested, open to all registered adoptees 18+)**

Aerial A. Ashlee MEd

This year's adoptee dinner is at an all-you-can-eat Korean BBQ less than five minutes from our conference hotel (Six Korean BBQ & KTV, 6440 Wayzata Blvd Golden Valley, MN; www.facebook.com/sixbbqktv). Cost is \$30 per person (inc. meal, Pepsi products, and gratuity). \*\*\*If

adoptees under the age of 18 wish to attend, they should be accompanied by a registered/paid adoptee chaperone over 18+. Anyone who needs a ride or wants to carpool, please meet promptly at 4:45pm in the hotel lobby.

### Community Dinner Meetup

*(optional; add. \$\$, open to all)*

We have reserved a section of the hotel restaurant for conference participants to gather for dinner. Come as you are able and order off the menu.

### fri 7:00-8:00pm

#### Registration

Sign in; pick up materials.

### fri 8:00-9:30pm

#### ADOPTEE PERFORMANCE:

##### *Beyond Limits*

*Breaking Barrier with Toolbox: Theatre, LLC*  
Join teaching artist, educator, and author Nikki Abramson and a cast of colorful characters as she refuses to accept the predictions of her doctors. Told at age 5 she would die in her teens, Nikki pushed past her limits and defied barriers to live her life to the fullest. Nikki has teamed up with local playwrights Sara Truesdale and Gizelle Erickson, along with Dennis Dienst, to bring her story to life. A diagnosis of a rare genetic disorder—1 of 10 cases known in the world—gives Nikki a perspective on life that is unique. Along with that come the challenges of disabilities that are often not seen outwardly, the identity of being an adoptee and a woman of color. Overcoming assumptions and ignorance, including her own, with humor and wisdom, she gives the audience members a toolbox of strategies for maintaining hope, even in difficult times. The cast will bring a story that will entertain, inspire, and uplift you.

#### INTERGENERATIONAL ACTIVITIES:

*Sejong Cultural Education, Inc.*

Parents and others are welcome to join in with any of these evening activities. Children under 7 must be accompanied by an adult:

Games—*Kia (ages 7-9)*

Creation of K-Pop Video—*Lotte (ages 10-13)*

Screening/Discussion of *Seoul Searching*—*Samsung (ages 14-17)*

\*\*\*\*\*

## JUNE 30

### sat @ 6:15am

#### Recreational Jog

*Stephen David Johnson 정웅기 BSW MA*

Meet in the lobby for a leisurely three-mile run.

#### Zumba Class

*Midnite Townsend*

Join KAAAN for a fun, dance-party celebration for any level or experience! This class will have you moving to international rhythms and songs from Latin America to K-Pop. Easy to follow dance steps that combine all the elements of a workout (cardio, conditioning, flexibility, balance) that is often described as an exercise in disguise. A great way to boost your energy and start your day smiling all while burning calories and having a great time!

### sat 7:00-8:30am

#### Continental Breakfast

Continental breakfast; please wear conference name tag.

### sat @ 7:30am

#### Breakfast Meetup for First-time Participants

*Katie Jae Naftzger LICSW, Stephen David*

*Johnson 정웅기 BSW MA*

Grab some breakfast and join us at a specially marked table.

#### Youth Breakfast Meetup & Field Trip

*Sejong Cultural Education, Inc.*

Eat with other conference youth at a special table in the ballroom prior to heading out for the day's activities. **Parents must stop by table to sign in their youth.**

Group will travel with adoptee mentors to the Mall of America, bowling, and other fun area sites and enjoy a meal at a local Korean restaurant.

#### Registration & Exhibit Hall

Sign in, pick up conference materials, and browse our store and exhibit/vendor tables.

### sat @ 8:00am

#### OPENING KEYNOTE: Adoptee Mental Health and Suicide: What's the Connection?

*Nicole K. Sheppard MA*

Several studies have shown that adoptees are at an increased risk for experiencing

mental health issues including suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Since 2016, through the Eliminating Health Disparities Initiative Grant (Minnesota Department of Health), the Korean Adoptees Ministry (KAM) Center has been exploring this phenomenon in Minnesota. The aim of the multi-year project is to further our understanding of how adoptees are impacted by significantly higher rates of mental health and suicide issues; and more importantly ways in which we can reduce risk and improve support to the Korean adoptee and broader adoptee communities. This keynote will provide background information on our findings and resources to support the community.

### sat 8:45-10:00am

#### Getting to the Why of Adoption & Suicidality

*Katie Jae Naftzger LICSW, Joy Lieberthal Rho*

*LCSW, Melanie Chung-Sherman LCSW*

This workshop will focus on the intersection of adoption and suicidality. The three panelists, all of whom are Korean-adopted clinicians, will delve into themes and insights from their clinical work with adoptees through the life cycle. The dialogue will include themes such as the tragic hero, survival, perfectionism and loss.

#### Mindfully Increasing Effective Communication in Adoptive Families

*Nicole K. Sheppard MA*

Open communication contributes to healthy family relationships and greater mental health. However, parents and children in adoptive families may feel unprepared and unsure of how to talk about crucial issues such as adoption, race, and culture. Attendees will participate in a mindfulness activity and learn ways to engage in more open communication with each other regarding these challenging yet important topics.

#### Decolonizing to Depathologize: Adoptee Mental Health

*Kelly Condit-Shrestha PhD; Hye-Kyong Kim*

*Psy.D. L.P.; Julie Jong Koch MSW LICSW;*

*Eva Song Margolis*

This session will be a roundtable discussion led by Korean adoptees with experience engaging in mental health work and adoptee communities from a variety of perspectives: academic, activist, clinical social worker, and psychologist. The panel aims to create a non-oppressive forum to explore how we can productively discuss and engage with our differences, while



supporting the unique emotional health needs present in the Korean adoptee community.

### Body Betrayal

**\* ADOPTEEES ONLY \***

*Mariette Williams MS, Shaaren Pine*

As women of color, our bodies are the subject of intense scrutiny - from others and ourselves. During this session, panelists will share some of the challenges they had growing up as women of color, struggling with the expectations of what their bodies should and should not look like through a predominantly-white lens. Sharing personal examples, panelists will discuss how they felt betrayed by their bodies and how they felt betrayed by others as well. The panel will also use clips from the media to examine how stereotypical representations and expectations can be harmful, especially in formative years, and what we can do to combat them.

### Childcare Block #2 (ends 11:45am)

*Sejong Cultural Education, Inc.*

### sat 10:15-11:45am

#### Adoptee Advocacy & Post Adoption Support in Korea *John Compton*

*오명석, Mee Joo Kim*

Living in Korea provides a deeply informed perspective of the current needs of returning adoptees. With over 22 combined years of experience serving adoptees in Korea and beyond, the session leaders are uniquely positioned to identify and advocate for a contemporary interpretation of Post Adoption Support that serves a more robust spectrum of adoptee needs. The speakers will highlight what they see as current gaps in service, as well as current advocacy efforts to strengthen support for adoptees and Korean families.

#### This Is Us: Early Interventions in Adoptee Identity Formation

*Angela Gee LMFT MA, Robyn Joy Park MA MFTI*

This session will illustrate how Adoptee Identity Workshops provide an energetic and safe space for emerging adoptee identities. Segmented by developmental stages, the workshops utilize creative arts, movement, and interactive activities to encourage child and adolescent adoptees to identify their thoughts and feelings about relevant themes, within the greater context of their unique experience. The workshops encourage adoptees to engage with their feelings from a place of empowerment.

#### For God's Sake: The Role of Religion in International Adoption

*Mariette Williams MS, Grace Newton BA*

"We did it for the Lord." "God called us to adopt." Phrases like these are not uncommon among religious adoptive families. This session will examine the role of church and religion in international adoptions, throughout history and today. We will also discuss how faith plays a role in the lives of adoptees growing up (church attendance, church camps, baptism) and the role of faith in adult adoptees. Finally, we will examine the decline in international adoptions in the church's responses.

#### What Did You Say?

**\* ADOPTEEES ONLY \***

*Wendy Marie Laybourne PhD, Shaaren Pine*

From blatant actions to seemingly benign yet intrusive questions, racism remains a part of the lives of transracial adoptees. However, we are often ill-equipped to navigate this reality, and many of us are not taught how to handle these situations. This session will provide practical tips on responding to racist questions and comments from strangers, friends, and family.

#### Childcare Block #2 (con't)

*Sejong Cultural Education, Inc.*

### sat @ 12:00pm

#### LUNCHEON & MIDDAY

#### KEYNOTE: Finding Healing in the Pursuit of Justice

*Taneka Hye Wol Jennings MSW*

This keynote will focus on the deep connection between individual and community healing. Through a mix of poetry, anecdotes, and personal reflection, Taneka will address the complex intertwining of privilege and disenfranchisement evident in the lived experiences of many Korean adoptees, and bridge this with broader human rights issues facing immigrants and communities of color. Issues relevant to the current socio-political context will be focal - including the Adoptee Citizenship Act and DREAM Act.

**Post-Keynote Book Signing:** Conference authors will be available in the bookstore after the keynote. Bring your copies of their works to be autographed.

### sat 2:00-3:15pm

#### Post-Adoption Support in the United States

**\* ADOPTEEES & PARENTS OF ADOPTEEES 16+ ONLY \***

*Merrily Sadlowsky MSW LICW*

This workshop provides an overview of the gaps in adoptee-centered, post-adoption support and mental health services offered by agencies for adoptees ages 16+, and the implications for adoptee well-being and healing. The presentation highlights the importance of post-adoption services as viewed through the lens of adoption as a life-long process. Participants will be empowered to find post-adoption support and mental health services that fit their needs. They will also be provided with a list of questions to ask adoption agencies and post-adoption service providers, as well as alternative ways to have needs met outside of adoption agencies.

#### Shifting the Narrative: Advocacy & You

*Margie Andraeson MPA, Kurt Blomberg, Kyung Hoon Filla-Kim, Adam Kim MA*

Ever wonder how you can work toward systemic change for the adoptee community? Join Network of Politicized Adoptees for a panel on changing the narrative around adoption through engaging in critical discourse. The discussion will situate the adoption narrative within a broader socio-historical context as well as highlight specific points of protest. Panelists will discuss how they became involved in adoption advocacy, how advocacy work ties into their intersectional identities, and how participants can get started in advocacy work. The second portion of the session will equip participants with tools for activism and the session will conclude with a brief Q&A.

#### An Adoptee's Journey to Body Positivity

*Midnite Townsend*

Midnite has a history with eating disorders, obsessive dieting, and the search for self-acceptance. As a professional dancer and leader in the burlesque community, she has advocated for body positivity and a deeper exploration into the societal messages we internalize. These pressures are further complicated through the eyes of an adoptee, who already struggles with identity and the experience of not looking like anyone else in their family. In this session, Midnite will share her story and facilitate a discussion regarding resources and tools to encourage body positivity.

## Self-Care 101

### \*ADOPTTEES ONLY\*

Soojin Pate PhD

Life can be challenging for transracial and transnational adoptees given the complexity of gains and losses accumulated via adoption and the multiple -isms at play in our lives. However, the application of regular self-care can help mitigate the toxic and debilitating effects of oppressive systems on our bodies, minds, and spirits. In this workshop, participants will learn simple yet powerful tools to recharge, restore, and rejuvenate.

## Childcare Block #3 (ends 4:45pm)

Sejong Cultural Education, Inc.

### sat 3:30-4:45pm

#### [Excerpts from] Side by Side: Out of a South Korean Orphanage and Into the World

Glenn Morey

Created by Korean adoptee and filmmaker, Glenn Morey, *Side by Side: Out of a South Korean Orphanage and Into the World* is a 5-year international documentary journey of 100 filmed interviews with Korean adults who, as children, were displaced from their families of origin, into orphanages. Now ranging in age from 18–60s, they were adopted to the US, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, France, and Australia ... or they “aged out” to live in South Korea. Through the telling of many stories, *Side by Side* opens an intensely experiential window of oral history, social and academic understanding, and empathy. This session is a unique opportunity to join the creator as he shares clips from the film, as well as themes and insights from the project.

## Post-Adoption Services & Creative Arts Healing

Mele Kramer

This session is a two-part presentation exploring the uniqueness of the international adoption experience from a mental health perspective. Part 1 is a discussion about the distinctness, limitations, and possibilities in post-adoption support services while navigating through the personal journey of being adopted. Part 2 is an interactive experience that touches on healing through an expressive art process.

## Health Issues

### \*ADOPTTEES ONLY\*

HeeWon Lee BA, Judith K Eckerle MD

As adoptees, many of us do not have access to medical histories and are unaware

of what conditions may be more prevalent in our background. Join a medical doctor and a genetic counseling intern (both Korean adoptees) to discuss myths about our health and learn about options that may increase your health awareness and physical well-being.

## The Collision of Mental Health & the Good Adoptee

### ADOPTTEE DISCUSSION

(Non-Adoptees may observe this session)

Katie Jae Naftzger LICSW

When adoptees struggle with mental health issues, it can be difficult to share that experience with others, even when the listener is caring, competent, and empathic. Katie will facilitate a discussion about what it means to be a “good adoptee” and how it can complicate the process of better understanding and working through mental health issues. A range of feelings and experiences will likely be shared. Adoptees may share if comfortable. Others are invited to observe and ask questions at the end.

## Childcare Block #3 (con'd)

Sejong Cultural Education, Inc.

### sat 5:00-5:30pm

#### Support Group Meetups

A quiet place to decompress and process feelings from the day. No formal session ... just a safe place to talk. Separate spaces for adoptees and non-adoptees.

### sat @ 6:00pm

#### Pre-Dinner Social

Cash bar, appetizers, last chance to buy raffle tickets.

### sat 6:30-10:00pm

#### Saturday Gala & Performance

Enjoy dinner, cash bar, and conversation with your tablemates before we begin our evening festivities. Program includes recognitions, anniversary highlights, raffle drawing, and adoptee group picture, concluding with a staged performance of *Middle Brother*.

## Info on *Middle Brother*

Now boarding Korean Air flight 100 with service to Seoul. Adopted to the Midwest as a toddler, Billy buys a one-way plane ticket to Korea. With help from a chorus of wayward street vendors, he unexpectedly reunites with his older birth brother, and must somehow reconcile his modern American life with his newfound Korean past. Written by longtime Mu Performing

Arts performer Eric Sharp (Guthrie Theater, Alliance Theater, Toronto Fringe), *Middle Brother* is a jet-setting, theatrical journey exploring loss, reunion, and unanswered questions from the Korean adoptee experience.

## Youth Pool Party

Youth will be dismissed for a chaperoned pool party at approximately 8:00PM (after the picture and before the play). All non-swimmers and children under seven must be accompanied by a parent. Pool party ends at 9:30PM.

\*\*\*\*\*

# JULY 1

## sun 7:00-8:30am

### Breakfast

Continental Breakfast ... please wear your name tag.

## sun 8:30-9:30am

### Exhibit Hall

## White Adoptive Families Critically Exploring Whiteness

Kyle Ashlee MS, Aerial A. Ashlee M.Ed

An inherent privilege of being white is not having to think about race. What are the implications of this privilege within the transracial adoptive family? By critically examining whiteness, white adoptive family members can be more racially conscious regarding the adoptive journey. This session provides an introduction into critical perspectives on whiteness for white adoptive family members to become more racially aware. Key concepts related to critical whiteness will be shared and discussed, highlighting important implications for transracial adoptees.

## Healing at the Margins: LGBTQ Adoptees & Their Loved Ones

Erica Gebringer, Tynishia Walker MSW, Kate Zielaskowski, Becca Zielaskowski

### SPONSORED BY THE ELLIE CO-NANT MEMORIAL FUND

This panel of self-identified LGBTQ+ adoptees and their partners is an opportunity to share their experiences and to create a specific space to discuss and question what it means to have intersecting identities and/or what it means to support others with varying gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations.

## Recovery & Renewal Post-Marriage

**\* ADOPTEEES ONLY \***

*Amanda Assalone PhD*

The purpose of this session is for adoptees to engage in an open discussion about relationships, marriage, and divorce. Many in our community have struggled through divorce and personal relationships, and each individual recovers, renews, and rebuilds in their own way. This unique session offers a space to talk with other adoptees about their experiences with the goal of providing support for adoptees who feel alone in the process of ending a marriage or relationship.

## Who Can Relate? Best Practices in Transracial Adoptee Teen Support

**\* ADOPTEEES 16+ ONLY \***

*Rosita González MS, Grace Newton BA, Kalkidan Solomon Fett*

In a casual meeting of three transracial adoptees, the idea of reclaiming safe spaces for themselves and young adults in their community emerged. After some additional brainstorming and meeting with local post adoption services, they decided to organize a group meeting for transracial teens in grades 8-12. Come hear how this group allows teens to share their narratives in a safe adoptee-only space.

## What Did You Say?

*Wendy Marie Laybourne, Shaaren Pine*

From blatant actions to seemingly benign yet intrusive questions, racism remains a part of the lives of transracial adoptees. However, adoptees are often ill-equipped to navigate this reality, and many are not taught how to handle these situations. This session will provide practical tips on responding to racist questions and comments from strangers, friends, and family. We will also discuss strategies for evaluating our own beliefs, speech, and behaviors for implicit biases we may hold.

## Youth & Childcare Program Medley (Childcare Block #4)

*Sejong Cultural Education, Inc.*

Youth can choose from a variety of options, including small group discussions on identity, a photo scavenger hunt, and other activities.

## Support Forum

**\* NON-ADOPTED SIBLINGS OF ADOPTEEES AGES 7-17 ONLY \***

Non-adopted siblings are natural lifelong advocates for their adopted brothers and sisters. Participation in this conference helps them gain an understanding they might not achieve elsewhere. However, we recognize that it is helpful for them to have a space to process all they have heard and felt. This conversation will be facilitated by a therapist.

## sun 9:45-10:45am

### Latest Research on Transracial/Transnational Adoption

*JaeRan Kim LISW PhD, Shawyn Lee PhD MSW LGSW, Kimberly McKee PhD, Elizabeth Raleigh PhD*

What is the future direction of research on transracial and transnational adoption? Please join us for a roundtable discussion featuring the perspective of scholars working in the humanities, social sciences, and behavior sciences who will discuss their research in ways that are accessible to non-academic audiences. We will have ample time for Q&A and we hope to spark a discussion involving a wide range of stakeholders including general audience members, adoptive parents, adoption practitioners, and adopted persons.

### Just Believe Them: Partners & Spouses Supporting Adoptees

*Kyle Ashlee MS*

Partners and spouses are important sources of support for adoptees. Given that many partners and spouses of adoptees may not fully understand the adoptive experience, they can struggle to find the best ways to support their partners through the adoptive journey. This session will explore strategies for adoptive partners and spouses to effectively support adoptees without adding further emotional labor to the adoptive experience. Three insights will be shared from the presenter's experience as the spouse of an adoptee. Additionally, this session will explore several case studies in order to reveal the nuances of partners and spouses supporting adoptees.

### Objects of Appropriation in the Therapy Room and Beyond

*Melanie Chung-Sherman LCSW, Joy Lieberthal Rho LCSW, Martha Crawford LCSW*

The phrase "cultural appropriation" entered mainstream, progressive vernacular in the last several years. Cultural appropriation tends to vary contextually as well as

through perspective. It is unconscious as much as it is conscious. This workshop will explore the intersections between cultural appropriation, triad members, and the therapeutic relationship, including how adoptees may inadvertently play a role in cultural appropriation.

## Healing through Writing

**\* ADOPTEEES ONLY \***

*Julayne Lee MAEd, Marci Calabretta Cancio-Bello MFA*

What questions and thoughts in your adoption journey remain unsaid? Who do you want to hear your thoughts and feelings? In this workshop, adoptees will write unsaid parts of their journey in whatever mode they are most comfortable with (poetry, prose, journaling). Participants will have the option to share their writing with others. The purpose of this exercise is to set us free from the unsaid and find healing through writing. No writing experience is required, but please bring a notebook or journal and something to write with.

## Parenting Adoptees in the Adult World

*Mark Hagland, Max Gates*

As adoptees enter adulthood and independence from parents and family, the challenges of living in a majority white society can intensify. This transition presents adoptive parents with the challenges of understanding the changing world that our children live in and with the opportunity to deepen our shared experiences as parent and child. Three life events will be explored: college, career, and marriage. Parents of adult transracial adoptees will summarize their experiences, then participate in discussion with attendees. The goal is to enumerate issues that arise at these transformational moments and explore effective responses.

## Are You From the North or the South? Practical Strategies When Faced with Racism, Stereotypes, and Microaggressions

**\* ADOPTEEES 16+ \***

*Alyson Yost, Berin Hale M.Ed, Stephen David Johnson (정응기) BSW MA*

Most transracial adoptees are faced with racism, stereotypes, and microaggressions from an early age. Questions like *Where are you from? Are those your real parents? How much did you cost?* often leave adoptees feeling isolated and hurt. This



interactive session will explore some common scenarios from an adoptee perspective and equip participants with practical suggestions on how to respond.

**Youth & Childcare Program Medley (Childcare Block #4)**

*Sejong Cultural Education, Inc.*

Continuation of activities from the 8:30AM block.

**Support Forum**

**\* CHILDREN OF ADOPTEES AGES 7-17 ONLY \***

Children of adoptees have a unique perspective and are certainly a part of the KAAAN community. This time, facilitated by a therapist, is set aside for discussion of whatever questions and issues have arisen during the conference.

**Support Forum**

**\* ADOPTEES ONLY \***

A final opportunity for adoptees to gather at the close of the conference for support and discussion of what they have experienced and the feelings that have been unearthed at the conference.

**sun 11:00am-12:15pm**

**CLOSING COFFEEHOUSE:**

**Where Do We Go From Here ... How Do We Advocate for Our Community?**

*Aeriel A. Ashlee, MEd, Shannon Gibney MFA MA, Kim Park Nelson PhD*

Three accomplished scholars and activists will facilitate a discussion about what caring for our community looks like and how this intersects with advocacy and activism, pulling from topics

and information shared throughout the weekend. Emphasis will be on identifying actionable items conference participants can begin doing upon their return home.

**Youth & Childcare Block #4**

**Closing Party**

*Sejong Cultural Education, Inc.*

Gather with friends and mentors for games, a screening of the K-pop video, and yummy treats.

\*\*\*\*\*

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS (CFP)**

**#KAAN2019**

**Transforming the Adoption Narrative**

**Minneapolis, MN**

**June 28-30, 2019**

**\*\* Submit Aug 15 – Nov 1 \*\***

Details at [www.KAANet.org](http://www.KAANet.org)

Some of our best sessions have grown out of conversations at previous conferences. Got a topic you feel should be addressed? Jot down your thoughts and submit a proposal for #KAAN2019. The CFP will be posted on our website by mid-August.



**CourageInStone.com**

BEFORE & AFTER, LLC





Since 2013, Me & Korea has provided opportunities and assistance to Korean adoptees and their families to learn about Korean culture and history, their family heritage, and background.



## WHAT WE DO

**Mosaic Tour:** Brings adult Korean adoptees back to Korea for a ten-day tour to learn about their roots, research their past, and discover more about themselves through meaningful connections with Korean people and communities.

**Hapa Tour:** Gathers adult adoptees who are mixed race to return to Korea for a ten-day journey to experience the history, the culture, and the people of Korea.

**School for Korean Adoptees and Families:** Teaches Korean adoptees and their families in California about basic Korean language and Korean culture through arts, crafts, and activities; as well as build their Korean identity.

• **“Dazzling Hope” Memoir:** Keon-Su Lee is a retired Korean police officer who has helped Korean adoptees find information about their birth families. Paperback copies of his memoir are available in English for purchase.

• **Wings:** Helps children and youth in South Korea with donated gifts, scholarship funds, and special outings. Wings currently supports children and teenagers at Angels’ Haven and unwed mothers at AeRanWon Mothers and Babies Home.

• **Birth Search Assistance:** Offers assistance to adoptees who are looking for more information about or to initiate contact with their birth families in Korea.

## WHAT’S NEW

### Omma Poom Project, A Memorial to Korean Adoptees Around the World:

The City of Paju in South Korea is developing a memorial park dedicated to the approximately 200,000 children who were sent from Korea and adopted to be raised around the world. Opening ceremony events are scheduled for September 10-12. Me and Korea is working closely with the City of Paju to provide feedback and support on behalf of adoptees and community members.



To learn more about us, make a donation, or apply for our next tour:

[www.meandkorea.org](http://www.meandkorea.org)

[www.facebook.com/MeAndKorea](https://www.facebook.com/MeAndKorea)

### Contact

Minyoung Kim, Executive Director  
info@meandkorea.org



Me & Korea, Inc. is recognized by the IRS as a Section 501(c)(3) public charity.



# speaker bios

## **Allen, Scottie**

Scottie Allen, MA, NIC, Q-MHI, EIPA 4.7 is a hearing transracial Korean adoptee who works as a WI DSPS and DPI licensed, nationally certified ASL/English interpreter. She is assisting KAAN by recruiting and coordinating qualified ASL/English interpreters for the annual KAAN conference. Scottie earned her MA degree from Gallaudet University in Deaf Studies/Culture Studies, her Qualification in Mental Health Interpreting from the State of Alabama Department of Mental Health Services and earned a 4.7 out of 5.0 on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment. Scottie has been back to Korea several times, frequents KAtCH events and IKAAs Gatherings, and is in reunion with her birth family. This is her second KAAN conference.

## **Andreason, Margie**

Margie Andreason, MPA, has over a decade of experience working within the philanthropic sector and in grassroots organizations. She is currently the Diversity Equity Inclusion Manager at Northwest Area Foundation based in St Paul, MN. Before joining the Foundation, Margie worked on Asian Americans / Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy's (AAPIP) National Gender and Equity Campaign, which aimed to build organizational capacity for social justice in Asian-led nonprofits in Minnesota and California. Margie is very active in the Korean adoptee community and is also engaged with the broader Twin Cities community. She is commissioner for District C on the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, is a member of the advisory board for the Coalition of Asian American Leaders, is a co-chair for Network of Politicized Adoptees, and is an active volunteer for AAPIP's Minnesota Chapter, Pan-Asian Voices for Equity-Minnesota, and Don't Buy Miss Saigon Coalition. She also serves on the Community Innovation Grant selection committee for Headwaters Foundation for Justice. Margie has a master's in public affairs from the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs and a bachelor's degree in social work and political science from Concordia College-Moorhead.

## **Ashlee, Aerial A.**

Aerial A. Ashlee, M.Ed., is a scholar activist passionate about racial justice. She is a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Aerial's dissertation research explores how transracial Asian American adoptees describe and make sense of their racial identity in college. Aerial is also co-founder of a social justice consulting firm with Kyle C. Ashlee, her life and business partner.

## **Ashlee, Kyle C.**

Kyle Ashlee, M. S., is a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership at Miami University and the spouse of an adoptee. He focuses on developing tools for white people and men to effectively engage in anti-oppression work. Kyle is the co-founder of a social justice consulting firm with his wife, Aerial Ashlee, focusing on building critically engaged communities that strive to dismantle systems of oppression. He and Aerial are also the authors of VITAL: A Torch for Your Social Justice Journey, an award-winning book outlining everyday strategies for effectively engaging in social justice work.

## **Assalone, Amanda**

Amanda E. Assalone, PhD is the Postdoctoral Research & Policy Analyst at the Southern Education Foundation (SEF) in Atlanta, Georgia. Prior to joining SEF, Amanda completed her doctoral studies in higher education at the University of North Texas. Her research focused on improving post-secondary access and outreach initiatives for underrepresented students. Amanda's dissertation investigated the college pathways of Asian American community college students and explored how family, culture, and model minority stereotypes influenced their college aspirations, perceptions, and experiences. She also has extensive experience working in community college outreach, academic advising, educational programming, and high school counseling. Amanda was adopted from Seoul through Dillon International at three months and grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

## **Blomberg, Kurt**

Kurt Blomberg is a Korean adoptee who lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In 2015,

he traveled to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea through the Korean Education Exposure Program (KEEP). Kurt is a former professional dancer and is now focused on education, specifically creating spaces and places that are radically welcoming.

## **Buckbinder, Bucky**

Matthew "Bucky" Buckbinder has been a circus entertainer for 4 years. He has juggled his way around the world from Italy to Ireland to his current hometown of Chicago. Bucky instructs in circus camps and festivals and enjoys spreading the art of juggling to all ages! Bucky also works as a personal trainer, shaves his girlfriend's head and has seen all of the Fast and The Furious movies. This is Bucky's second year attending KAAN. He is excited to be able to share his skills to the conference.

## **Burlbaugh, Brenda**

Brenda Burlbaugh is from Annapolis, MD, and has two sons adopted from Korea, ages six and seven. She is the owner of an online retailer of motivational and inspirational gifts (courageinstone.com). Brenda enjoys traveling, cooking (well, mostly eating), fine wine, jogging, reading, and napping. This is her fifth KAAN conference.

## **Burlbaugh, Mike**

Mike Burlbaugh is a real estate developer located in Annapolis, Maryland. He and wife Brenda are adoptive parents of Jacob (7) and Lucas (6) - both from South Korea. In between addressing his boys' proclamations that he is "completely wrong," Mike spearheads fundraising opportunities for KAAN and generally does a bang-up job of cooking Korean food at home. 2018 will be the fifth KAAN conference Mike and family have attended, and each year Jacob and Lucas make new and important connections with the community.

## **Cancio-Bello, Marci Calabretta**

Marci Calabretta Cancio-Bello, MFA, is the author of Hour of the Ox (University of Pittsburgh, 2016), winner of the 2015 AWP Donald Hall Poetry Prize, and 2016 Florida Book Award bronze medal. She has received poetry fellowships from Kundiman, the Knight Foundation, and the American Literary Translators Asso-

ciation, and her work has appeared in Best New Poets, Best Small Fictions, The New York Times, among others. More info at: [marcialabretta.com](http://marcialabretta.com).

### **Chung-Sherman, Melanie**

Melanie Chung-Sherman, LCSW-S, CTS, LCPAA, PLLC has worked in the field of child welfare since 1999. She is a Texas Board-certified clinical social worker and supervisor, and a licensed child placing administrator through the State of Texas. She has specialized in the field of child welfare ranging from foster care, adoption, mental health, trauma-informed care, and administration. She is the owner and founder of a private practice specializing adoption-focused care in North Dallas.



*Stephen David Johnson*

### **Compton, John**

John Compton (오명석) grew up in Hawai'i and has been living in Korea since 2009. He has held several positions within Global Overseas Adoptees' Link (GOA'L). Currently, he is an Internal Advisor for GOA'L and a member of the board of directors for Korea Adoption Services. He was part of the first group of thirteen Korean adoptees to gain dual citizenship in 2011. In his free time, he enjoys snowboarding, mountain biking, scuba diving, plane spotting, and traveling.

### **Condit-Shrestha, Kelly**

Kelly Condit-Shrestha, PhD, is an immigration and adoption historian, and Post-Doctoral Research Associate in the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. She also serves as Lead Historian on the Vision and Strategy Group of the Adoption Museum Project's Public History Initiative. She is currently working on a book, tentatively titled *Adoption and American Empire: Migration, Race-Making, and the Child, 1845-1988*.

### **Crawford, Martha M.**

Martha Crawford, LCSW, is an adoptive parent, a psychotherapist, and a member of the Executive Officers committee of the Sejong Cultural Education Inc. She is the author of the blog *What a Shrink Thinks* and a long-time member of the KAAAN community.

### **Eckerle, Judith K.**

Judith K. Eckerle, MD, is the Medical Director of the Adoption Medicine Clinic at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Eckerle helps families pre and post-adoption with consultation, referral and clinical services. She was trained at the Medical College of Wisconsin, Weill Cornell Medical Center, and the University of Minnesota's Center for NeuroBehavioral Development. She is active personally and professionally in adoption and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) education and advocacy worldwide.

### **Erickson, Sarah**

Sarah Erickson, NIC, is a nationally certified ASL/English interpreter. She was born in Seoul, South Korea, and was adopted into a blonde haired, blue-eyed family when she was seven months old. She grew up in a small Norwegian town, attending the annual Syttende Mai festival and eating lefse, sandbakkels, rosettes, and other Norwegian desserts. Saying "Uff-da" was part of her every day vernacular. Sarah currently lives in Duluth, Minnesota with her husband and almost two-year-old daughter. This is her first KAAAN conference. She is thrilled to be interpreting and hopes her family can join her in the future.

### **Evans, David N.**

David N. Evans is a nationally-certified practitioner providing ASL-English interpretation and translation services for over 30 years. He is a student of the Integrated Model of Interpreting (IMI), which allows practitioners to analyze their work in holistic, non-evaluative terms. David works in community settings, and specializes in conference and recovery/12-step work. An adoptee himself, David's roots are in Kansas City and northern, rural Alabama though he makes his home in Minneapolis where he owns a beautiful 1911 house on the edge of downtown. He is excited and honored to be attending/working his first KAAAN conference.

### **Farnham, Jenae**

Jenae Farnham, NIC, Q-MHI, is a Korean adoptee and works as a nationally certified ASL/English interpreter in MN

and WI. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Minnesota, Crookston and her A.A.S degree in ASL Interpreting and Transliteration from St. Paul College. She has been back to Korea once. This is her first KAAAN conference.

### **Filla-Kim, Kyung Hoon**

Kyung Hoon Filla-Kim is a Korean Adoptee from Minnesota. Previously, she worked with New Communities in the Twin Cities and currently she is involved with Network of Politicized Adoptees (NPA), as well as an informal group focusing on the adoptee experience of mothering. Kyung Hoon spent her early life in Northwest Minnesota and has also lived in Florida, Colorado and Seoul, South Korea. She is an avid traveler with an interest in cross-cultural community building through shared stories and advocacy.

### **Gates, Max**

Max Gates is the father of two adult adoptees from South Korea. His children live, work, and play in very different environments, providing a window into the diverse, challenging experience of being an adult transracial adoptee. Max lives outside Detroit, Michigan, and works in communications for an automobile manufacturer. Previously he was a journalist and science writer for 25 years. He has helped organize and present classes for prospective adoptive parents, and he and his wife, Ellen Koltus, have attended KAAAN conferences regularly for several years.

### **Gee, Angela**

Angela Gee, MA, LMFT, is a marriage and family therapist in private practice in Atwater Village, California. Her work focuses on helping adoptees and their families develop a greater understanding of adoption as an integral aspect of one's identity. Angela received her undergraduate degree from the University of California at Santa Barbara and holds a Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology from Antioch University Los Angeles. Her clinical training includes working with adolescents and adults at The L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center, The Maple Counseling Center, and Teen Line. As a Chinese-American adoptee and adoptive parent in a transracial family, her personal history informs her professional practice. She facilitates a free monthly support group for teen adoptees as well as an annual adoptee identity development workshop for adolescents. Angela is an adjunct professor at her alma mater, presents at national conferences on adoption, leads

transracial adoptive family trainings for agencies, and provides private consultation and pre and post-adoption education for families at local child welfare and adoption agencies.

#### **Gehringer, Erica**

Erica Gehringer is a Korean American adoptee, currently studying to obtain her Master of Social Work. After graduation, she plans to work within the adoptee community in some way. Her main goal in life is to support and advocate for people with marginalized identities, those who are most often left out of positive mainstream conversations and spotlights.

#### **Gibney, Shannon**

Shannon Gibney, MFA, MA, is a writer, educator, activist, and the author of *See No Color* (Carolrhoda Lab, 2015), a young adult novel that won the 2016 Minnesota Book Award in Young Peoples' Literature. Gibney is faculty in English at Minneapolis Community and Technical College, where she teaches critical and creative writing, journalism, and African Diasporic topics. A Bush Artist and McKnight Writing Fellow, her next novel, *Dream Country*, is about more than five generations of an African descended family, crisscrossing the Atlantic both voluntarily and involuntarily (Dutton, 2018).

#### **Gonzalez, Rosita**

Born in Korea, Rosita Gonzalez, MS, is a transracial adoptee. In 2014, she journeyed back to Korea for the first time and helped start the #FlipTheScript movement on Twitter with her Lost Daughters' sisters. Since then, she has not only visited Seoul again, but also took her family and 3 cats to live in Seoul in 2015. She blogs at [mother-made.us](http://mother-made.us).

#### **Hagland, Mark**

Mark Hagland is an adult transracial and international adoptee, born in South Korea in 1960, and adopted at the age of 8 months into a white American family. Raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, he has lived in Chicago for over three decades, and has been a professional journalist for 35 years. He has participated in 16 KAAAN Conferences, and speaks and writes widely on transracial adoption subjects. His contributions have been included in several anthologies published by adult transracial adoptees.

#### **Hale, Bevin**

Bevin Hale, MEd was adopted from Korea at the age of four months and

grew up in the St. Louis (MO) area. In 2006, she traveled to Seoul to attend her first KAAAN conference. Bevin is an elementary school teacher who currently resides in Boston with her husband and two children.

#### **Hathaway, Carolyn**

Carolyn Hathaway has supported KAAAN in a variety of ways in the past eight years including audio-visual and website support. She lives near Philadelphia with her husband and two children. Hearing the wide variety of voices and viewpoints at KAAAN has helped make her a better parent and she is pleased to support this group.



*Wendy Laybourne*

#### **Hathaway, Eric**

Eric Hathaway has been KAAAN's AV coordinator since 2011. He and his family appreciate the opportunity to participate in the conference and support its mission. Eric lives in Philadelphia and works for Boeing.

#### **Haubehofer, Annie**

Annie Haubehofer's first experiences with makeup came in her later years. While she has always been creative and artistic graduating with BFA's in Art & Design, she never thought makeup would be another part of her creative outlets. Makeup has allowed Annie to reflect on herself personally and has learned that it has changed the way she feels about herself and how any woman can redefine beauty however they see fit. We don't need to follow societal norms and pressure to feel beautiful. Annie uses her skills to help educate and support clients' needs. She started out working at Sephora part time and that sparked her to continue on with educating herself in the cosmetics world and is currently a Cosmetics Consultant/

Beauty Educator and Color artist for brands like First Aid Beauty, and BECCA Cosmetics. She has also appeared on Buzzfeed, Marie Claire Magazine, Features on Instagram and Youtube. Her main goal is to leave her clients feeling like they can translate the looks at home, so she's very passionate about educating the client and empowering them to be able to do things on their own.

#### **Heitzig, Ellen**

Ellen Heitzig, MSW, LCSW, was adopted when she was five months old and grew up in central Illinois with her younger sister, also adopted from Korea. She currently serves as KAAAN's co-registrar. Ellen received her master's degree in social work from Washington University in St. Louis and is currently a district social worker. Ellen previously served as the social worker for Sejong Cultural Experience Inc. and traveled on the annual Korea trip each year. In this position, she worked with adolescents and has facilitated biological family reunions.

#### **Jennings, Taneka Hye Wol**

Over the past 30+ years, Taneka Hye Wol Jennings, MSW, has sought to develop a deep, rooted understanding of her identity as a Korean adoptee, Asian American, and immigrant. Throughout this journey, she has found healing and fulfillment by investing in organizations that create safe spaces, expand access, and advance equity for these and other historically marginalized groups. Taneka currently serves as Deputy Director for HANA Center, a Chicago-based non-profit that integrates social services and advocacy to advance immigrant justice. She is President of Korean Adoptees of Chicago (KAAtCH), a member of the Adoptee Rights Campaign and International Korean Adoptee Associations (IKAA), and a mentor for young transracial adoptees and their families through Connect-A-Kid.

#### **Johnson, Stephen David 정은기**

Stephen Johnson is a reunited Korean adoptee, activist, entrepreneur, and longtime contributor and beneficiary of KAAAN. He studied social work at Baylor University and international development at Eastern University's School of Leadership and Development. Stephen is also a member of the KAAAN Advisory Council. He and his partner currently live in Austin, Texas.

#### **Kim, Adam**

An adopted Korean, Adam Kim, MA, is a graduate student in the psychology



department at University of Minnesota. A personality psychologist by training, Adam studies intergroup relations, identity, and transnational adoption all through a cultural lens. Current projects include understanding the predictors of inter-minority solidarity, developing a new way to understand the experience of displacement and migration, and investigating how transnationally adopted individuals think about their birth family and culture.



*Kimberly McKee*

**Kim, Hye-Kyong**

Hye-Kyong Kim, Psy.D., L.P., was adopted from Seoul, South Korea in 1975. By day she works as a clinical psychologist at Indian Health Board and by night she writes poetry and prose. Her work can be found in numerous journals (under Hei Kyong Kim or Beth Kyong Lo), anthologies, and media, including: *Outsiders Within*, *Seeds from a Silent Tree*, *Paj Ntaub Voice*, *Journal of Asian American Renaissance*, *How Dare We! Write: A Multicultural Creative Writing Discourse*, *New Truths: Writing in the 21st Century* by Korean Adoptees, *Proceedings of the First International Korean Adoption Studies Research Symposium*, *MoonRoot*, *Adoption Today*, *Parenting as Adoptees*, *Asian American Press*, and *Gazillion Voices*.

**Kim, JaeRan**

JaeRan Kim, LISW, PhD, is an assistant professor at University of Washington Tacoma. Her research focuses on adoption, race, disability, and the intersections of these three identities. JaeRan has over fifteen years of experience working with foster and adopted children and families and has developed numerous training curricula for child welfare professionals.

**Kim, Mee Joo**

Mee Joo Kim has worked in non-profit settings and with hundreds of adult Korean adoptees for over a decade in the U.S. and South Korea. She manages the Alumni Connection and discussions for First Trip Home, a program that brings adopt-

ees back to Korea for the first time specifically for the purposes of conducting in-person birth family searches, and currently serves as the Mental Health Services Program Coordinator at Global Overseas Adoptees' Link (GOAL). Mee Joo and her husband (also an adoptee) reside in Seoul, where they are raising their son.

**Koch, Julie Jong**

Julie Jong Koch, MSW, LICSW, is a licensed independent clinical social worker and psychotherapist at Watercourse Counseling Center in Minneapolis. She specializes in working with transracial international adoptees, POCI (People of color/Indigenous), those on the LGBTQ spectrum, as well as others who have experienced trauma or marginalization. She integrates her lived experience with professional training and therapeutic skills. Julie received her MSW from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities where she was a Child Welfare Scholar, and has also completed the Permanency and Adoption Competency Certificate through the University of Minnesota's Center for Advanced Studies in Child Welfare.

**Kramer, Mele**

Mele Kramer, the founder of 100,000 Kranes for my Mother™, is currently a Doctoral Student studying Industrial and Organizational Psychology at Walden University.

**Laybourne, Wendy**

At four months of age, Wendy Marie Laybourne was adopted from Korea by a white working-class couple and was raised in Memphis, Tennessee. Growing up in a city haunted by the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., she was acutely aware of the centrality of race in America. Experiences of racial division, racial inequality, and bridge building have informed her perspective and career. Wendy holds a B.A. in sociology from the University of Memphis, M.A. in sociology from the University of Maryland, and this spring completed her Ph.D. in sociology also at the University of Maryland. Her research focuses on racial and ethnic identity development and the effect of structured cross-racial interaction.

**Lee, Heewon**

Heewon Lee, B.A., is a genetic counseling graduate student. Since 2014, she has worked in the University of Minnesota's division of gynecologic oncology as a study coordinator and research assistant. Heewon is also the program coordinator for the GOLD study, which surveys a cohort of gynecological cancer survivors to determine risk factors for poor quality of life outcomes.

**Lee, Julayne**

Julayne Lee, MAEd, is an adopted Korean. She is also a Community Literature Initiative Scholar and a Las Dos Brujas Writers' Workshop alum. She has been published by the Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs, *Cultural Weekly*, and *Korean Quarterly*. Julayne has read her poetry in California, Minnesota, Boston, and Seoul, South Korea. Her first collection of poetry *Not My White Savior* will be published Spring 2018 by Rare Bird Books. More info at: [julaynelee.com](http://julaynelee.com).

**Lee, Shawyn**

Shawyn Lee, PhD, MSW, LGSW, has a background in macro-practice social work that considers the oppressive nature of larger systemic and historical structures and their effects on marginalized communities. As a historical research methodologist, Shawyn's research uses a maternalist ideological framework to examine the origins of Korean adoption. Currently, Shawyn is an assistant professor in the Department of Social Work at the University of Minnesota-Duluth.

**Lieberthal Rho, Joy**

Joy Lieberthal Rho, LCSW, is a social worker in private practice from New York. She is a Korean adoptee specializing in working with adolescents and young adults as well as international and domestic adopted people.

**Majors, Allen**

Allen Majors is a "first wave" adoptee who was adopted in 1961 to a farm in rural Illinois. He has been active in the adoptee community since 2008 and has served on the boards of Korean Adoptees of Chicago (KAAtCH) and the Korean Cultural Center (Champaign-Urbana, IL). He believes it is important to use photographs to document the adoptee community around the world and to share his view of Korea through images. Allen is employed as a labor advocate for public education employees.

**Margolis, Eva Song**

Eva Song Margolis is a Korean American adoptee from Minneapolis, Minnesota. She is a writer, organizer, and advocate for racial and economic justice. Eva has over 17 years of experience in the nonprofit industry working in the fields of community economic development, asset building, workforce development, housing, and youth development. She takes pleasure in connecting people, organizations, resources, and philosophies. As a poet, she sees how the arts can challenge and inspire us to dissect our understanding of the world, to redefine it, and to take charge in transforming it.

**McKee, Kimberly**

Kimberly McKee, PhD, is the director of the Kutsche Office of Local History and an assistant professor in liberal studies at Grand Valley State University. Her manuscript exploring the transnational adoption industrial complex and international adoptions of South Korean children to the United States is under contract with the University of Illinois Press.

**Meyer, Joe**

Joe Meyer was born Jeong Minwoo in 1979. At the age of three, he was turned over to the City of Bucheon, Korea after the death of his father. Soon afterwards he and his older brother were adopted in the United States. He was raised in suburban Minnesota with his brother and sister, also a Korean adoptee. In 2012, Joe returned to Korea for the first time and began exploring his own identity and adoption story. Joe's volunteer work with the adoption community began as a mentor with Connect-A-Kid. Later he became active with Korean Adoptees of Chicago: KAtCH and joined the board in 2016. Joe participated in the Me & Korea Mosaic Tour in 2015 and currently assists Me & Korea with their tour application process.

**Morey, Glenn**

Glenn Morey is half of a husband/wife filmmaking team, along with Julie Morey. Glenn was born in Seoul, Korea, in 1960. He was abandoned at less than two weeks old, taken to Seoul City Hall, then to a Holt orphanage. Adopted at the age of six months to the US, he now lives in Denver. He has a 35-year career as a brand leader, entrepreneur, and filmmaker.

**Naftzger, Katie Jae**

Katie Naftzger, LICSW, has been involved with KAAAN for several years. As a Korean adoptee, she maintains a private psychotherapy practice in Newton, Massachusetts, where she works with adoptees through the life cycle and with adoptive parents. Katie is the author of *Parenting in the Eye of the Storm: The Adoptive Parent's Guide to Navigating the Teen Years*. In addition, Katie offers school consultation as well as online groups and consultation for adoptive parents.

**Newton, Grace**

Grace Newton, BA, is a recent graduate from Macalester College and a Chinese adoptee. She has interned for the Minnesota based company Land of Gazillion Adoptees (LGA) and served

as editor for the college section of *Gazillion Voices*, the first adoptee-led adoption magazine. Grace is a member of *The Lost Daughters* and is one of the founding members of her alma mater's *Transracial/Transnational Adoptee Identity Collective*. Grace has spoken on panels at three KAAAN Conferences as well as at the University of St. Thomas, Macalester College, the Midwest Asian American Student Union Conference, the Midwest Conference on Asian Affairs, and for the *Families with Children from Asia – Midwest*. When Grace isn't discussing issues of race and adoption in person, she is writing about it online at her blog: [redthreadbroken.wordpress.com](http://redthreadbroken.wordpress.com).

**Oser, Benjamin Kim**

Benjamin Kim Oser, MA, was adopted at three months from Seoul. He has been involved with athletics since the age of five and he has been playing competitive ice hockey since he was eight, which includes collegiate club hockey for NYU. He is currently an educator and leadership administrator for the University of Delaware Athletic Department, as well as the camp director for a Korean culture camp in New Jersey. He is passionate about supporting the adoptee community, specifically relating to confidence building around male adoptee identity.



*Allen Majors*

**Park, Robyn Joy**

As a transracial Korean adoptee, Robyn Joy Park's personal participation in post-adoption services has included teen groups, mentor & mentee programs, living abroad in Korea, navigating birth family search & reunion experiences, and DNA testing. These experiences have deeply influenced and informed much of her professional perspectives. Both locally and globally, Robyn's experience includes working within various in-home, educational, agency, residential and therapeutic settings, providing trainings and workshops, and presenting at conferences. Robyn, MA, MFTI, received her undergraduate degree in Justice and Peace

Studies at the University of Saint Thomas and is a graduate of Antioch University where she received her Masters of Arts in Clinical Psychology specializing in both Child Studies and Applied Community Psychology. Her clinical training at agency and school-based settings has served children, adolescents and families, as well as individual and group counseling services that specialized in the core issues surrounding foster care and adoption. Robyn is experienced in the treatment of adoption-related issues, anxiety, depression, grief and loss, trauma, and maternal mental health.

**Park Nelson, Kim**

Kim Park Nelson, PhD, is an educator, researcher, and associate professor in the American Multicultural Studies program at Minnesota State University, Moorhead. She is the author of *Invisible Asians: Korean American Adoptees, Asian American Experiences and Racial Exceptionalism*, published in 2016 by Rutgers University Press. She received her Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Minnesota, where she also developed and taught the first college-level course exclusively focused on Korean transnational adoption. In 2007, Park Nelson was the lead organizer of the First International Symposium on Korean Adoption Studies, held in conjunction with the International Korean Adoptee Associations (IKAA) Gathering of Korean Adoptees in Seoul. She is also a member of the Executive Committee of the Alliance for the Study of Adoption and Culture (ASAC). Her work has appeared in multiple anthologies and scholarly journals. She has been interviewed on the topic of international adoption by Public Radio International and public radio affiliates in Minnesota, Wisconsin and California, and by a variety of local and national publications including the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*. Park Nelson has given many academic and public lectures, including keynotes at the IKAA Gathering and at KAAAN in 2017. She currently lives in Minneapolis.

**Partain, Amy**

Amy Partain is mom to a 12-year-old son adopted from Korea. Listening to and learning from adult adoptees since beginning their family's adoption journey in 2006 has changed Amy's worldview and life in ways she never imagined. She presented at KAAAN in both 2016 and 2017 and blogs about her experiences with Korean language, culture and cuisine at [www.KAANet.org . . . 51](http://thekorean-</a></p>
</div>
<div data-bbox=)

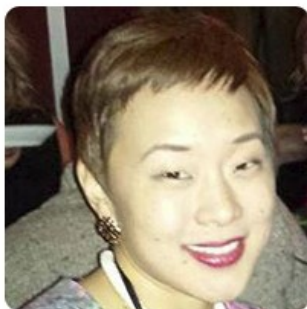
way.wordpress.com. Thankful for those who have shared their experiences, Amy is excited to support them as she begins serving on KAAAN's Advisory Council.

#### **Pate, SooJin**

SooJin Pate, PhD, is a writer and educator who is dedicated to praxis that centers the lives and experiences of historically marginalized peoples. Since receiving her Ph.D. in American Studies, she has taught courses on self-care, critical race theory, women of color feminism, and U.S. history and literature at various colleges and universities in the Twin Cities. She is the author of *From Orphan to Adoptee: U.S. Empire and Genealogies of Korean Adoption* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014) and *Motherloss: A Memoir* (forthcoming). Her writings on self-care, self-love, African American literature, and Korean adoptee film and literature have appeared in various journals and edited volumes.

#### **Pine, Shaaren**

Shaaren Pine is an Indian transracial adoptee, activist, mother, crafter, educator, author, and writer. You can find some of her work in *The Washington Post*, *Upworthy*, and *Masala Mommas*. She is involved with various adoptee organizations (Lost Sarees, Adoptions Links, DC, and the Adoptee Rights Campaign). She has lived in Washington, DC, since 1997.



*Eva Song Margolis*

#### **Raleigh, Elizabeth**

Liz Raleigh, PhD, is an assistant professor of sociology at Carleton College who teaches courses on race, the family, and adoption. Her work examines the ways in which adoption practitioners market the idea of transracial adoption to prospective parents and the implications for adoptive families. She is the author of *Selling Transracial Adoption: Families, Markets, and the Color Line* (Temple University Press 2017).

#### **Rinearson, James**

James Rinearson recently received his B.A. in sculpture from Guilford College. Adopted at three months, he was raised in Montclair, NJ, with two other Korean adoptees, James being the middle child. He currently works as a museum exhibit expert at a local business in Springfield, NJ. He has been involved with a Korean culture camp since he was six years old and enjoys being a counselor to the next generation.

#### **Rupright, Rachel Hye Youn**

Rachel Hye Youn Rupright is a Korean adoptee raised near Binghamton, New York. She currently serves as one of KAAAN's registrars and is a member of KAAAN's Advisory Council. She lives and works in Albany, New York.

#### **Sadlovsky, Merrily Young-Hye**

As a Korean adoptee and mental health professional, Merrily Young-Hye Sadlovsky, MSW, LICSW, is focused on solutions to address the unique needs of transracial/ transnational adoptees. She completed her Master of Social Work degree at the University of Michigan. She's licensed as a clinical social worker in California and Minnesota, and her more than 10 years of experience includes private practice, large public organizations, and community child welfare/mental health agencies. She started Adoptee Connections in Minneapolis, which offers services for adoptees and post-adoption professionals.

#### **Schroeder, Stacy**

Stacy Schroeder has been the president and executive director of KAAAN for the past eight years. Most of her career has been in leadership and event planning for nonprofits. She also co-authored a book and looks forward to more writing and creative pursuits when she steps back from her position at KAAAN later this year. For now, she is proud to use her skills to support the organization.

#### **Sharp, Eric**

Eric Sharp is a Korean adoptee actor, playwright, producer, and teaching artist based in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Recent performance credits include *Mu Performing Arts* (Two Mile Hollow, Charles Francis Chan, Immigrant Journey Project, Twelfth Night), *Ten Thousand Things* (Fiddler on the Roof), and *Children's Theatre Co.* (The Jungle Book). Other credits include Atlanta's Alliance Theatre, Theatre de la Jeune Lune, Walking Shadow, Frank Theatre, Playwrights' Center, and the Edinburgh and Toronto

Fringe Festivals. In addition to his stage work, Eric appears regularly in commercials, voiceovers, and small films you have never seen. More info at: [Work-Sharp.org](http://Work-Sharp.org).



*Merrily Young-Hye Sadlovsky*

#### **Sheppard, Nicole K.**

Nicole K. Sheppard, M.A., is a mindfulness-based mental health therapist based in the Twin Cities. She works at Mental Health Systems (MHS), specializing in Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT). Since 2016, she has also worked with the Korean Adoptees Ministry (KAM) Center as project manager of a Minnesota Department of Health-funded mental health and suicide assessment of the adult Korean adoptee community. Nicole grew up in Minneapolis and lived in Seoul, Korea (2002-2010), where she was a leader in global Korean adoptee community development and advocacy at Global Overseas Adoptees' Link (GOAL) as the vice secretary general and annual summer conference director. Currently, she is completing the Permanency and Adoption Competency Certificate (PACC) Training at the University of Minnesota.

#### **Solomon Fett, Kalkidan**

Kalkidan Solomon Fett is an Ethiopian adoptee, currently living in Madison, Wisconsin. She is pursuing her undergraduate degree in Social Work from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee with the aim to advocate for the mental health and well-being of adoptees. She served as a roundtable member on Ezi-bota, an online platform for members of the African diaspora, bringing her unique perspective as an adoptee. She was also a recent adoptee panelist at the Ethiopian Adoptee Kids Camp (EAKC). Kalkidan also served as a round table facilitator at a conference on Language Education Policy and Identities and Inclusion hosted at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



**Stanley, Michael**

Michael is a professional financial advisor and KAAN's treasurer. He splits his time between New York City and Philadelphia.

**Switzer, Suzanne**

Suzanne Switzer, MS, has been involved with the adoption community since her pre-teens and part of the KAAN family since 2008. She grew up in Denver, Colorado, and made her first trip back to South Korea at age seven. Multiple trips back have followed. Suzanne has been in reunion with her biological family for 19 years. Suzanne is an avid speaker and participant at a variety of national adoption and adoptee conferences, culture camps, and transracial parenting groups. Suzanne recently returned from living in South Korea for four years. Currently, Suzanne is the Program Director for Parker Personal Care Homes, a company that assists families and children with developmental disabilities. She also has an extensive background working in child welfare and the foster care system.

**Townsend, Midnite**

Midnite Townsend is a Korean adoptee, professional dancer, aerialist, and fitness instructor. She was awarded Queen of Burlesque in 2014 by the Burlesque Hall of Fame in Las Vegas and performs and teaches self-worth and wellness through movement all over the world. Currently she lives in Chicago where she teaches dance, barre, pole, pilates & HIIT classes and performs weekly. Connect with Midnite at [facebook.com/midnitemartiniburlesque](https://facebook.com/midnitemartiniburlesque) or [facebook.com/movewithmidnite](https://facebook.com/movewithmidnite).

**Tulimieri, Kat**

Katherine "Kat" Tulimieri, is a Korean-American adoptee born in 1986 and adopted at the age of three. She grew up on Staten Island, N.Y. with her parents and two older biological brothers to her parents. In 2010, Kat had the opportunity to visit Korea through her adoption agency, Spence Chapin. From that experience, Kat has leveraged those lifelong friendships and desire to reconnect with Korean culture and heritage. Later on, through her adoptee network, she was asked to join the Sejong Camp family, based in northern New Jersey. In her responsibilities with camp, she leads and executes all of the programming initiatives for camp participants. In addition, her leadership and attitude bring an invaluable energy

to camp and ability to mentor - both campers and staff. She is currently in a graduate program at Towson University, studying criminology and forensics. This will be her first time attending KAAN and she is excited to expand her network and learn more about the work being forged within the adoptee community.

**Walker, Tynishia**

Tynishia Walker is a queer, multiracial-black, transracially adopted social justice educator working for King County's Office of Equity and Social Justice. She uses her background in social work and experience in advocating for LGBTQ+ rights and inclusion to support King County's work of leading with racial justice. She hopes to one day work at the intersection of adoption and identity development focused on racial, sexuality, and gender identities.

**Williams, Mariette**

Mariette Williams (@mariettewrites), MS, is a transracial adoptee born in Jeremie, Haiti. She was adopted at the age of three and grew up near Vancouver, B.C., Canada. In July of 2015, she reunited with her birth mother and several members of her birth family. She lives in South Florida with her husband and two children. In addition to being a Journalism and literature teacher, she is a published author and supporter of international adoption reform.

son's 8th KAAN Conference. She is a Registered Nurse at Penn State Hershey where she has worked for the past 11 years. Alyson resides in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, with her family.

**Zielaskowski, Becca**

Becca Zielaskowski lives in the Bronx and is married to a Korean adoptee. This is her third KAAN conference.

**Zielaskowski, Kate**

Kate Zielaskowski is an adult adoptee who was adopted from Seoul as an infant. She earned master's degrees in social psychology and experimental psychology and is currently a Data Analyst at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York. She lives in the Bronx with her wife and two dogs.



*Alyson Yost*

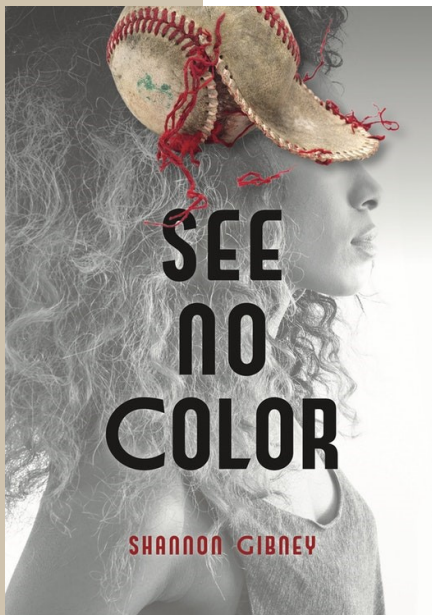
**Yost, Alyson**

Alyson Yost was adopted at four months old from Busan, South Korea. She returned to Korea with GOAL's First Trip Home in 2010. This is Aly-

# On the Freedom of the BORDERLANDS

by Shannon Gibney, MFA, MA

\*A SHORTER VERSION OF THIS ARTICLE APPEARED ON THE “DIVERSITY IN YA” BLOG IN NOVEMBER, 2015



One humid August afternoon many years ago, a 12-year-old girl huddled in the corner of a staircase, weeping. She was waiting for her parents to come home and comfort her, although she didn't know if they could do it. A voracious reader, the girl had just found a copy of a book on transracial adoption – that is, a book about children of color adopted into white families – on the top shelf of her parents' bookcase. Excited to finally find a book that spoke directly to her experience, the girl settled onto the family couch and dug into the worn paperback, devouring narrative after narrative on adult adoptees. After awhile, she began to notice her body heating up, as she read stories of black adults who had been raised in white environments. These grown adoptees stated that they would never fit in with white culture because they were not white, nor black culture, because they could not perform blackness. This is what will happen to me, the girl thought, and an alarm sounded in her brain. This is what has happened to me already. There is nothing I can do.

Of course, that girl was me, crouched, alone, and desperate for hope and some sort of recognition, on that step in my house as a teenager. Although it took me years to do it, I wrote *See No Color* for her. This coming-of-age young adult novel is for that scared 12-year-old mixed black girl, and all the other transracial adoptees out there, growing up alone without community, feeling like they will never really fit in anywhere and be “normal.” More universally, it is for anyone who has ever been outside the mainstream, and anyone who yearns to find a tribe where they can be truly accepted. It is for all those who have looked for themselves in the books and stories around them, and instead have only found a blank space, or something that scared them.

In telling the story of Alexandra Kirtridge, a mixed black girl adopted into a loving if somewhat misguided family, I wanted to offer that girl I was something else to pick up off that bookshelf. I wanted her to know that there are also stories of healing through the complexity of negotiating a multifaceted identity, not just stories of breaking under the weight of it. I wanted that girl to see herself years from then, as part of both black and white communities as well as others, standing right in the middle of that messiness and feeling all of it: the belonging, the not belonging, the shame, the joy, the endless questioning.

Now an adult with my own family, to me, this is the beauty of what Chicana feminist Gloria Anzaldúa has termed the borderlands/*la frontera*: It is a place where one's shifting identity and multicul-

tural fluencies and deficiencies are assets – simply because one does not demand that the world make them feel safe or legible. There is a freedom to being misread, or not read at all. There is also a freedom in not being at the center all the time. This is the freedom, and the poignant beauty, that young transracial adoptees of color have shared with me over and over these past two and a half years that *See No Color* has been out in the world.

I dedicated the novel to “the Others,” and the fact that many of these Others have seen themselves, their questions, their wonderings, their loneliness reflected in Alex’s story is perhaps its greatest achievement.

*Hello! I'm X, the student from X who you gave a copy of your book to on Wednesday. I finished reading it on Wednesday evening and spent yesterday thinking about what I wanted to say to you about it. What I've arrived at is: Thank you. I'd never heard the phrase "transracial adoptee" before, never met another person besides my brother with the same sort of story as mine. Alex's struggle with understanding and embracing her blackness is very very familiar to me, and it's something I'm working on through art and thought every day. I'm so glad that the universe decided to deliver this book to me right now, when I so clearly need it, wrote one young woman, who gave me permission to share this message.*

Another, a Latina sixth grader, approached me at conference after seeing me on a panel. “You said that the main character in your book is adopted by white people, and that you were adopted by white people?” she asked me. “Yes.” “Me too!” she exclaimed emphatically. After snapping a photo with me and getting my signature on her book, she skipped away, carrying it under her arm like precious cargo. I saw her a year later, at the same annual conference, where she ran up to me like I was a rock star, and announced with a broad smile that she had read the book, and that she knew exactly how Alex felt. She said that she was in seventh grade this year, and that it has been a difficult year, but that she is getting through it. “Seventh and eighth grades were the worst two years of my life,” I confessed. “I felt like a total and complete freak. You just need to get through it. Then it gets better.” She nodded. I have no doubt that I will see her next year at the same conference, where we will check in again.

It’s hard to describe what it’s like to have these experiences. It is like encountering an earlier version of yourself, but being able to give her something tangible, some substantial message in a bottle that she will be able to use on her journey. It’s almost like time travel, actually, this ability to go back and serve your younger selves with a gift of story, of recognition.

For a writer and transracial adoptee, there is no more marvelous opportunity.



++++  
**SHANNON GIBNEY** is a writer, educator, activist, and the author of *See No Color* (Carolrhoda Lab, 2015), a young adult novel featuring themes of transracial adoption that won the 2016 Minnesota Book Award in Young Peoples' Literature. A Bush Artist and McKnight Writing Fellow, her next novel, *Dream Country*, is about more than five generations of an African descended family, crisscrossing the Atlantic both voluntarily and involuntarily (Dutton, September 2018). Gibney was adopted by a white family in 1975, and writes frequently on topics of transracial adoption.



# The Fight for

## Stacy's Story, Michigan

*Stacy shares her narrative, giving insight of about how lacking citizenship sabotages a desire to learn about her origin and share it with her children, and more importantly jeopardizing the ability to continue to provide for her own growing children.*

Stacy, Michigan. A mother of two children was advised to not file for citizenship.

It has been about 5 years since I found out that I was not a U.S. citizen. It happened when I planned a trip to travel back to Korea and I had problems getting a passport! It was a bad way to find out my lack of status, but after hearing about other adoptees' experiences, I feel fortunate it wasn't a worse situation.

I was shocked when the first lawyer I spoke with recommended I live undercover instead of filing paperwork for citizenship. I was told the process of filing would alert Immigration to the many years I had voted and claimed I was a US citizen.

As an adoptee and a mom of two daughters, the thought of being deported and losing them was extremely unnerving. I was also worried about losing my job if my employers ever found out about my status. I was scared but also angered by the injustice of it all. I wasn't sure who I was most mad at – my parents for assuming I was a citizen, the adoption agency for not following up with my parents, or the Child Citizenship Act for granting citizenship for some adoptees but excluding me. Luckily for me, I found another immigration lawyer, and with their help, I am now a permanent resident. My heart goes out to other adoptees that are still living in silent fear of deportation.

*ARC notes to readers: Permanent residents are able to have rights to live and work without sponsorship in the U.S., however, they are not usually allowed U.S. Passports for traveling abroad. Those with permanent residency status can lose their rights depending on how the federal government interprets criminal activity. Permanent Residents are eligible to apply for naturalization without any special exceptions or consideration for their status as an adopted person. If a non-citizen or permanent resident is detained by ICE/CBP/USCIS, the person does not have the right to a court-appointed attorney. If the person wants legal counsel, the person is responsible for retaining and paying the legal costs. Only U.S. citizens are granted the right to court-appointed legal counsel and fair trial regarding justice and legal systems within the U.S.*

+++++

## David's Story, California

David is a devoted husband and father and has been a proud San Franciscan since he was 3 weeks old. He was born in Santa Catarina, Brazil and brought into the city by his adoptive parents just weeks after his birth. His adoption was finalized shortly after his 2nd birthday, and he was the first child of his psychologist mother and architect father. He was a gifted athlete all throughout school, and offered scholarships to private schools for his talents in baseball.

He has been a model citizen- maintaining stable employment, obtaining a driver's license, paying taxes, and even passing a Department of Justice background check to legally obtain firearms. David got married in 2013, and his daughter was born the following year. When attempting to obtain a passport, David found out that he is not considered a U.S. citizen. There is no record of his entry into the U.S., he is not provided with a pathway to citizenship as the result of his marriage or the Child Citizenship Act of 2001, nor can he apply for a green card. All of these things require proof of legal entry, and poor record keeping in the 1980's has deprived him of the necessary documentation.

David is now threatened with being torn away with the only biological relative he's ever met, his daughter. The Adoptee Citizenship Act of 2018 is currently the only opportunity that David has to obtain citizenship. David's Decree of Adoption reads, in part, that "the minor is now the adopted child of [the] petitioners...and shall be regarded and treated in all respects as their own lawful child; and that they shall sustain toward the child and the child towards them the legal relation of parent and child, and each respectively shall have all of the rights and be subject to all of the duties of natural parent and child".

David has been wrongfully denied the rights promised to him with the finalization of his adoption, and we have faith that our elected officials will protect our family and thousands of others who are relying on this bill.

+++++

## Justin's Story, Oregon

*Justin shares his narrative, giving insight of what it means to live as an adoptee without citizenship.*

Justin, Oregon. Leader for Day of Action delegation in Washington, D.C. on 10/04/2016.

I was adopted on March 15, 1985 from South Korea by a family with four biological children in Minneapolis, MN, via

# Adoptee Rights

a Special Needs magazine as I was born with heart disease. A month after I was adopted, my adoptive father started to sexually abuse me, which continued for 14 years until about three weeks before my 17th birthday. My adoptive father controlled everyone in the family, including my mother who turned to addiction as a way to medicate. The years of sexual abuse and torture have deeply scarred me mentally and emotionally, and I continue to struggle to recover to this day.

Growing up, my adoptive father threatened to either kill me or ship me somewhere if I ever told anyone what he was doing to me. Although he said this, I didn't understand to where I would be shipped off. I discovered in my adult life that my citizenship paperwork had never been completed, which has left me stateless as I am neither South Korean nor an American citizen. This has been a blow to my sense of identity; it makes me feel like a nobody, a fraud living in the U.S. It makes me question who I am and worry about whether there is any chance I could be deported. It is illegal for me to vote in a system where I pay taxes, and am denied a passport. Without a passport, I am locked into a country who views me as an outsider even though I was adopted by US citizen parents when I was 2 1/2 years old.

I cannot change what happened to me for those 14 years, nor can I change the fact that my citizenship paperwork was never completed. I have never seen an actual war, but have survived my own. Those who were entrusted to protect me from the moment I was brought off that plane deserted me; I was literally thrown to the wolves to be on my own. Citizenship should have been provided to me, and given the cumbersome process and great expense, I now cannot get it. If my parents did not send in the required paperwork, follow up should have happened, which also could have prevented the years I was assaulted repeatedly.

Given what I have gone through, I have not only stayed alive, I have proved I am an American Citizen. Sharing my story and being part of the effort to pass the Adoptee Citizenship Act helps me believe that something positive can finally come from all of what I went through. Every survivor strives to find closure and I firmly believe that being recognized as a citizen could be just that for me. I willingly share my story in the hopes that thousands like me can be recognized as such. I ask you to support the Adoptee Citizenship Act today!

+++++



These stories were all gathered by the Adoptee Rights Campaign (ARC). ARC is a diverse group of intercountry adoptees and allies striving to educate, organize and advocate for adoptee and human rights. These include but are not limited to adoption information, birth family information, health history, and equal civil rights.

Our current focus is on ensuring that all intercountry adoptees in the U.S. have the citizenship they should have obtained as children when they were brought into the country.

This March, ARC issued the report "US Adoptees Without Citizenship/ National and State-by-State Estimates." This report is the first of its kind.

Turn the page for the opening of that report ...

*Executive Summary of*

## **US Adoptees Without Citizenship National and State-by-State Estimates**

Study Contributors: *Anne Martin-Montgomery, MA MSc, Kurt Cappelli, MSME, Lucy Demitrack, Dr. Diane B. Kunz, Esq., C.J. Lyford, Esq., Michael Mullen, Margie Perscheid, MS, Christina Sharkey, Abby Spector, MMHS*

**Full report at [www.adopteerightscampaign.org](http://www.adopteerightscampaign.org)**

The U.S. International Adoption system is flawed and adopted children are paying the price. Children entering the U.S. for adoption undergo an exhaustive legal process yet they are not guaranteed U.S. Citizenship by virtue of adoption.

In 2000, Congress passed the Childhood Citizenship Act (CCA) which granted automatic citizenship to some, but not all adopted children. Without citizenship, children adopted by U.S. citizens are often denied driver's licenses, educational loans, employment, healthcare, and the right to vote. Adoptees are also vulnerable to deportation. Disparities in the U.S. adoption system are jeopardizing thousands of American families.

For adoption to function as intended, it must operate on a sound legal basis that prioritizes fundamental U.S. protections for all adopted children. Comprehensive legislation is needed to ensure citizenship rights are equally applied to all children of U.S. citizens.

How many children adopted by U.S. citizens lack citizenship and how can this number be estimated?

- The Adoptee Rights Campaign (ARC) estimates that the current number of children adopted from 1945 to 1998 who entered adulthood without U.S. citizenship ranges from 25,000 to 49,000.
- An additional 7,321-14,643 children adopted from 1999 to 2016 are at-risk of reaching adulthood without U.S. citizenship.
- These figures do not include children brought to the U.S. for adoption on non-immigrant visas and adoptions after 2016.
- The total number of children adopted by U.S. citizens living without the protection of U.S. citizenship will increase to a new total of 32,000 to 64,000 adoptees between 2015 and 2033.

Adoptees who are now adults without U.S. citizenship were adopted from Argentina, Brazil, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Germany, Great Britain, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Iran, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, Panama, Philippines, Russia, Samoa, South Korea, St. Kitts, Thailand, Ukraine, and Vietnam (ARC).

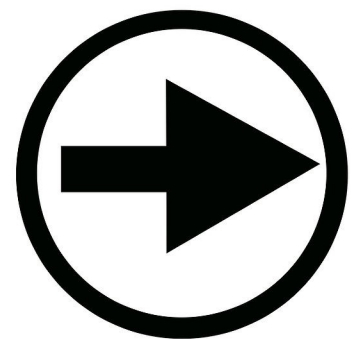
This report provides a comprehensive review of the available national statistics on intercountry adoption and for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories and Armed Forces families.

The current system undermines American family values and is an ineffective use of taxpayer dollars. It separates families, denies adoptees equal rights and threatens family permanency.

## **Learn more about adoption & citizenship ...**

**The Adoption Museum Project** ([www.adoptionmuseumproject.org](http://www.adoptionmuseumproject.org)), an organization that seeks uses the power of museums to help transform adoption, created a graphic that traces the history of adoption and citizenship in the United States.

You can find that graphic on the next two pages.





# ADOPTEE CITIZENSHIP IN THE U.S.

## Adoption Events

1940s

**U.S. intercountry adoption formally begins** as a temporary response to emergency situations, such as children of American GIs born in Europe and European children displaced or orphaned by WWII.

1950s

**Proxy adoptions are common**, allowing U.S. families to adopt foreign-born children without traveling outside the U.S. Some U.S. families adopt through **special acts of Congress**.

1953

U.S. immigration law **broadens the definition of orphan** to include children with two living parents.

1961

The Orphan Eligibility Clause of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1961 includes adoption in immigration law and **permanently provides non-quota visas, but not citizenship, for intercountry adoptees**.

1999

The **first known adoptee deportation** occurs.

2000

The Child Citizenship Act (CCA) **allows only certain\* intercountry adoptees to acquire U.S. citizenship automatically**.

\* Those who entered the U.S. on certain visas and who were under 18 years of age on February 27, 2001.

2011

A global coalition led by adult adoptees and AdopSource began **working to amend the CCA to lift the age restriction**. The coalition halted the pending deportations of Russell Green to South Korea and Kairi Shepherd to India.

2015

Adoptee Solidarity Korea – Los Angeles (ASK-LA) and a coalition of adoptees revive work on amending the CCA, spurring the formation of the Adoptee Rights Campaign in partnership with the National Korean American Education & Service Consortium (NAKASEC) and **leading to the introduction of the Adoptee Citizenship Act into Congress**.

2016

**Adam Crapser is the most recent adoptee to be deported**. He is returned to Korea as an adult. More than 25 adoptees are known to have been deported.

2017

An estimated 35,000–50,000 **intercountry adoptees do not have citizenship**.

## Related Events

1948

The **Displaced Persons Act** temporarily expedites immigration of European refugees, including a non-quota provision for 3,000 “eligible displaced orphans.”

1953–1961

**Refugee Relief Act** permits 4,000 orphans to enter the U.S. regardless of country of origin. The **Refugee–Escapee Act** offers unlimited visas to foreign orphans adopted by U.S. families.

1989

The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child is the **first international statute to mention adoption explicitly**. The U.S. is not bound by these rules because it has not ratified the Convention (the only country except for Somalia not to ratify).

1996

Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) and the Anti–Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act (AEDPA) **dramatically expand detention and deportation of immigrants**, making adoptees without citizenship even more vulnerable.

2008

Fourteen years after signing **The Hague Convention**, the U.S. begins to implement it. The Convention seeks to protect the best interests of all people involved in intercountry adoption.

510,207

Children adopted by U.S. parents from other countries from 1948 to 2016.

## Adoptee Citizenship and Deportations

25

**Number of U.S. adoptees known to have been deported.** They are deported as adults to their birth countries, where many have no known connections and don't speak the language.

35,000  
to  
50,000

**Estimated number of U.S. adoptees who do not have citizenship.**

0

**Number of U.S. government sources that centralize adoptee citizenship and deportation information.** This makes it difficult for adoptees to determine their citizenship and for communities to monitor deportation activity.

## Intercountry Adoptions

### The U.S. Adopts the Most Foreign-Born Children of Any Country in the World

The U.S. has adopted 115,593 children from South Korea alone, the top sending country.

#### Top 20 Sending Countries (1953–2016)

South Korea

China

Russia

Guatemala

Ethiopia

Ukraine

Vietnam

India

Romania

Colombia

Kazakhstan

Philippines

Haiti

Bulgaria

Cambodia

Taiwan

Mexico

76% of all U.S. intercountry adoptions come from the top four sending countries.

#### Sources:

Adoptee Rights Campaign. <http://adopteerightscampaign.org>  
Johnston, Robert. August 2017. <http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/policy/-adoptionstatsintl.html>  
Pilotti, Francisco. 1993. "Intercountry Adoption: Trends, Issues and, Policy Implications for the 1990's". *Childhood 1*: 165-177.  
Selman, Peter. 2012. "Global Trends in Intercountry Adoption: 2001-2010." *Adoption Advocate*. No. 44  
U.S. Department of State. <http://www.travel.state.gov>  
Weil, Richard H. 1984. "International adoption: The Quiet Migration". *International Migration Review 18* (2): 276-293.

For more details about sources, contact [info@adoptionmuseumproject.org](mailto:info@adoptionmuseumproject.org)

Content by HyunJu Chappell, Julayne Lee, Kate Lawlor, Kim Park Nelson, Kelly Condit-Shreshtha, Laura Callen, Leslie Griep, Priya Kandaswamy.

Design by (Jes)sica Lee.

ADOPTION MUSEUM PROJECT

To view this information online:  
[www.adoptionmuseumproject.org](http://www.adoptionmuseumproject.org)

# Return to Sender

by Julayne Lee, MAEd

*\*Since the Korean War, over 150,000 children have been sent to the U.S.A via inter-country adoption. Due to a loophole in the Child Citizenship Act, there are an estimated 35,000 inter-country adoptees living without US citizenship. Some have been deported to their country of origin.*

Korea exported me to America  
Before I could speak my name.  
Minnesota, Land of 10,000 Lakes  
Better Life, education

Forever family bruises  
denied me US citizenship.  
Homeless, absent high school degree  
starvation shoplifts  
military time served  
America's Promised Prison Land

Deported back to Korea  
Incheon Airport lobby  
solitary confinement persists  
no *Welcome* sign  
not even a 환영합니다

family reunions surround me  
mother's bouquet  
embraces graduated daughter

No arms encircle my ghost body.

Korean streets handcuff  
my life sentence  
birthland homesickness  
leftover kimchi barely sustains  
midnight Han River bridges  
protect my frozen soul  
brain resists foreign language  
들어오세요  
throat chokes syllables  
language is life  
도움말

From *Not My White Savior* by Julayne Lee, Copyright 2018. With the permission of the publisher, Rare Bird Lit.

**JULAYNE LEE** was given up for adoption in South Korea as a result of the Korean War. She was adopted by an all-white Christian family in Minnesota, where she grew up. She has spent over fifteen years working with Overseas Adopted Koreans (OAKs). She lived in Seoul and now resides in Los Angeles, where she is a member of the LA Futbolistas and Adoptee Solidarity Korea-Los Angeles (ASK-LA). She is also part of the Adoptee Rights Campaign working to pass the Adoptee Citizenship Act to ensure all inter-country adoptees have US citizenship. *Not My White Savior* is her first book.





# Notes From a Missing Person

(White Pine Press 2018) [www.whitepine.org](http://www.whitepine.org)

Jennifer Kwon Dobbs | [dobbs@stolaf.edu](mailto:dobbs@stolaf.edu)



“For a child adopted as a baby, the cultural heritage of one’s birth mother can only be a dead past detached from one’s actual lived experience.”

-- Vincent J. Cheng, *Inauthentic*

To search for Mother’s body is to listen with a poet’s attention that can rub across the word’s surfaces to listen for a pulse. Mother, you sit across from a social worker—a woman who is your same age—flipping through pages and indicating where you should sign. You’re pregnant—heavy with me during your sixth month—leaning slightly backward because your lower back aches. The social worker—maybe a mother, herself—disassociates from the fact that your bodies, sitting so close to each other, can do the same work: Your pen following the social worker’s finger indicating where you should leave your mark, your pen pointing to where the social worker flagged for your signature.

Your bodies are so close to each other that they become one body linked through paper—one that gives and one that takes away. Above you, Jesus points to his thorn-crowned head and looks beyond the frame’s plastic edge. On the social worker’s desk, a wedding photo and a little boy laughing and running toward the camera. His right hand holds a red-stitched baseball. The social

worker, anxious to return home, checks the paperwork and clips it inside a brown folder marked with a case number. She puts her hand on your shoulder to reassure you. You lean against a mother who wants to rush home to her child in Samsong-dong and who doesn’t see you as a mother. You blur together—one taking/one giving me away.

What proof do I have that this is your story? I can only see the space. Here’s a round black table, a set of gray office chairs upholstered in the Danish functional style. Here’s a tissue box, a beige telephone with a red button to place a call on hold. Here are the fluorescent lights. I can hear typing next door. White industrial linoleum flecked with multi-colored chips doesn’t muffle noise. Color portraits of joyful adoptive parents show mothers what they can’t provide. Tan metal file cabinets. A water cooler dispenses hot and cold. Maxim coffee sticks, styrofoam cups, English tea.

I can see the conversations around this table, the frayed gray fabric, split orange foam, the cooler’s cloudy plastic, and water damage stains on the ceiling because the building was hastily constructed (as were all offices during the 70s). You would’ve been childbearing age—anywhere from 18 to 45—and capable of working in one of many light industrial factories constructed during Park Chung Hee’s regime when South Korea engineered its economic miracle on your back leaning over a steady conveyer belt of t-shirts, tennis shoes, toys, tooth brushes, combs, and plastic mirrors crated for export. Your hands rush to keep up with the manufacturing speedway toward South Korea’s revolution from an agriculture-based nation to an economic tiger. You’re a farmer’s daughter from Jeolla-do or Gangwon-do or maybe one of Seoul’s own simply wanting to earn some money for family back home still squatting in an un-

heated room to shower with a hose. So when the social worker asks if you would sign here, you watch your hand move knowing that you will say nothing to your father or mother who take the money to buy food and encourage you to eat well. You eat in silence that night. You feed us both with your grief.

///

What am I saying? I can only describe a researched context, a slanted shadow. I can only speculate and dramatize because I can't find you. Is this a fetish or a document of desire? This is not your body. This is not mine. This is my tongue—meat flapping inside my crushed mouth. The military meat that Korea imports from the U.S.—spam/variety meats/mad cow/neo-liberal trade—ends up in budae jigae, a stew of scraps.

\_\_\_    님이 가족찾기 하고 있는 중인데 혹시 (입양) 서류를 볼 수 있을까요?

\_\_\_    님이 가족찾기 하고 있는 중이라 자기 서류를 보고 싶은데 갖고 있나요?

Can we see \_\_\_ documents? Do you have \_\_\_ documents?

I don't want constellations.

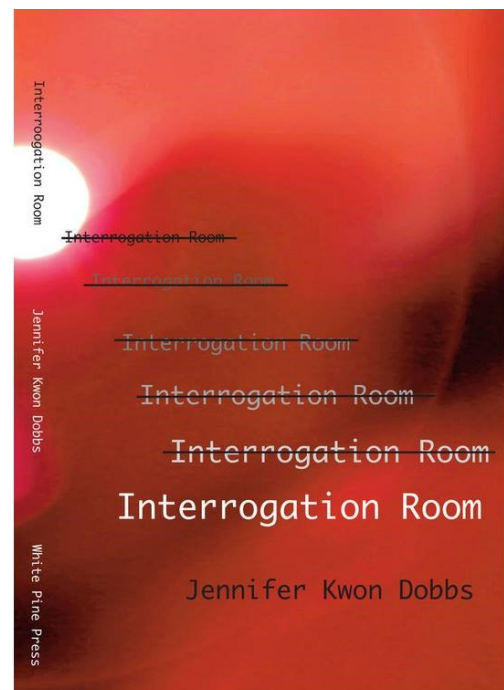
Which story is mine? Which story is yours?

My documents are yours, aren't they? The words that took me from you had to admit first that I belonged to you—that you're woman's flesh, not a social artifact—even as they erased your name. I don't know your name. I only know this body that came from yours. I only know this page. I try to rewrite this language that took my body away from your body knowing that I will only clear this page of fetishes you would never use for yourself—birth mother, gift giver, social artifact, dead memory, trace, smear, signature, \_\_\_, n/a, unknown, *even* mother. No, Omoni, you wouldn't have been dressed like these, and if I push through your skirts, I find blankness, this smoothness that is not your face.

+++++

From *Interrogation Room* by Jennifer Kwon Dobbs, copyright 2018, with the permission of the publisher, White Pine Press.

Raised in Oklahoma and reunited with Korean family, **JENNIFER KWON DOBBS** is the author of two poetry collections *Paper Pavilion* (White Pine Press Poetry Prize) and *Interrogation Room* (White Pine Press) and the chapbooks *Notes from a Missing Person* (Essay Press) and *Necro Citizens* (hochroth Verlag, forthcoming in German). She is associate professor of English and program director of Race and Ethnic Studies at St. Olaf College and is currently co-editing *Radical Kinships: An Anthology of Autocritical Writing*.



# MY CONFERENCE NOTES & CONTACTS



## MY CONFERENCE NOTES & CONTACTS

# MY CONFERENCE NOTES & CONTACTS

# MY CONFERENCE NOTES & CONTACTS



# SELLING TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION



FAMILIES, MARKETS AND THE COLOR LINE



While focused on serving children and families, the adoption industry must also generate sufficient revenue to cover an agency's operating costs. With its fee-for-service model, Elizabeth Raleigh asks, How does private adoption operate as a marketplace? Her eye-opening book, *Selling Transracial Adoption*, provides a fine-grained analysis of the business decisions in the adoption industry and what it teaches us about notions of kinship and race.

Adoption providers, Raleigh declares, are often tasked with pitching the idea of transracial adoption to their mostly white clientele. But not all children are equally "desirable," and transracial adoption—a market calculation—is hardly colorblind. *Selling Transracial Adoption* explicitly focuses on adoption providers and employs candid interviews with adoption workers, social workers, attorneys, and counselors, as well as observations from adoption conferences and information sessions, to illustrate how agencies institute a racial hierarchy—especially when the supply of young and healthy infants is on the decline. Ultimately, Raleigh discovers that the racialized practices in private adoption serve as a powerful reflection of race in America.

## MY CONFERENCE NOTES & CONTACTS



**Did you know that KAAN is an ENTIRELY volunteer-run organization?**

Our volunteer staff and speakers, as well as our generous donors, allow us to offer high-quality resources at an affordable price. We offer heartfelt thanks to all whose contributions have made a difference in this year's programming and services.

- Our speakers and presenters (pages 47-53)
- Our youth/childcare mentors, especially coordinator Benjamin Kim Oser (pages 2, 38)
- Our volunteer staff and leadership (page 2)

We offer a very special thank you to



and to the **Korean Consulate in New York**  
for their generous financial support.

# Contributions (6/1/17-5/31/18)

We deeply appreciate the support of these contributing individuals, organizations, and businesses. Please consider joining their ranks by making a tax-deductible gift to KAAAN today.



## CHAMPION ... \$5,000+

Korean Adoption Services  
Matt/Stacy Schroeder <sup>1,2</sup>

## TRUSTEE ... \$1000-\$4999

David Amarel/Martha Crawford <sup>1</sup>

## ADVOCATE ... \$500-\$999

David Flanagan  
Joseph Laney  
Robert Roche  
Christopher Shepard  
Rodney Spring

## PARTNER ... \$250-\$499

Justin Cocozzella  
Timothy Hogan  
InKAS  
Gary Koh  
Professional Interpreting Enterprise <sup>3</sup>  
Sharp Energy  
Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc  
Duane Zentgraf

## SUPPORTER ... \$100-\$249

Jae Brochu <sup>2</sup>  
Graham Brock  
M/M John Clarke  
James/Chip Devine  
Matthew Dewey  
Russell Dickens  
Angela Gee  
Kristin Hartman  
Brenda and Jan Johnson <sup>2</sup>  
Nick Kosmos  
Brad Lundberg  
Charles Mangold  
Amy Partain <sup>2</sup>  
M/M John Sidell  
Mary Smith  
Lisa/Joseph Stevens  
Matthew/Court Treuth  
Weems Brothers

## FRIEND ... \$50-\$99

Carolina Barksdale  
John Compton  
Margaret Cooke (in honor of Jacob/Lucas Burlbaugh)  
M/M William Briggs  
GOAL  
Caroline Hazen  
Stephen Johnson <sup>2</sup>  
Aaron Keel  
Rachel Hye Youn Rupright <sup>2</sup>  
Stephen Smith  
Gina Tomas  
Hazel Tran

## DONOR ... Up to \$49

Aeriel Ashlee <sup>2</sup>  
Elliot Brown <sup>2</sup>  
GoodShop  
Ellen Heitzig <sup>2</sup>  
Susie Wanamaker

## GIFTS IN KIND

Nikki Abramson  
Scottie Allen  
Patrick Amunson  
Shannon Bae  
Mike and Brenda Burlbaugh  
Stephanie M. Casey  
Nicole Chung  
John Compton  
Jennifer Kwon Dobbs  
Shannon Gibney  
Taneka Hye Wol Jennings  
Goeun Jeon  
Stephen Johnson  
Julie Jong Koch  
Korean Cultural Center of NY  
Julayne Lee  
Loveage, Inc.  
Allen Majors  
Me and Korea  
Katie Naftzger  
Kim Park Nelson  
Soojin Pate  
Christopher Phelps  
Elizabeth Raleigh  
Rachel Hye Youn Rupright  
Snack Fever  
Matthew Salesses  
Stacy Schroeder  
Eric Sharp  
Nicole Sheppard  
Kate Zielaskowski

## SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS

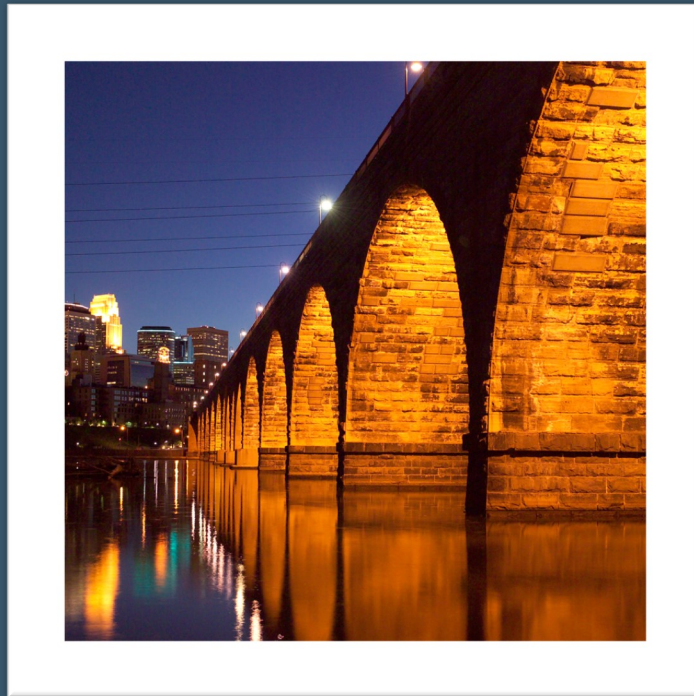
Adoption Museum Project  
Adoptee Rights Campaign  
AKA-SF  
AK Connection  
Amunson Audio  
Breaking Barriers with Toolbox Theatre LLC  
GOAL  
InKAS  
KAtCH  
KUMFA  
Me and Korea  
Meet Minneapolis  
Sejong Cultural Education, Inc.  
Ta-ri

GIVING DESIGNATIONS: <sup>1</sup> Ellie Conant Fund Donor <sup>2</sup> Adoptee Scholarship GoFundMe Campaign Donor <sup>3</sup> Interpreting Services Donor  
Current as of 5/31/18. Please excuse any accidental omissions.





Our 21th Annual Conference  
**TRANSFORMING**  
*the* **ADOPTION NARRATIVE**  
Minneapolis, MN  
June 28-30, 2019



*Photo by Minneapolis Parks and Recreation, courtesy of Meet Minneapolis*

*#KAAN2019 Call for Proposals @ [www.KAANet.org](http://www.KAANet.org) starting mid-August 2018*