
ICAV Perspective Paper

Would We Adopt via Intercountry or Transracial Adoption? Why, Why not?

17 February 2018



Inter Country Adoptee Voices

Introduction

In 2007, ICAV gathered the views in answer to this same question from 16 intercountry adoptees and when I recently read through our answers back then (myself included), I wondered whether there had been a shift in general responses compared to now. [2007 Perspective Paper Would We Adopt or Not?](#)

Personally for me, my view has changed over time. I began over 20 years ago — naive, lacking the language to understand my own journey as a relinquished and adopted person. The initial years for me, was coming to comprehend and deal with my own personal experience. Later, as the years went on and in meeting many other adoptees and hearing their experiences, I've come to realise there is a larger collective phenomenon of adoption. That is why I believe in the importance of ICAV's Perspective Papers. Once we start to harness the collective voice, we move from the deeply personal to embracing the larger en-masse experience and impact of adoption. No longer do I deny the ways in which relinquishment and adoption shape our lives. Together, these two experiences have a deep influence on our identity development and the ways in which we perceive the world.

Here are responses today, over 10 years on, from a group of adoptees within ICAV. We hope our thoughts can be used as a resource to help people think deeply about intercountry and transracial adoption.

We understand the choice to adopt children or not is deeply personal and we don't espouse to have the *right* way of thinking but merely share our views having lived the experience, as insight from our own journey's.

A huge thank you to the 24 people who shared their views and experiences in this paper! Without their willingness, this paper would not exist.

Enjoy the read!

Lynelle Long

Founder
February 2018

Introduction	2
Abby	4
Anna	4
Anonymous	5
Diana	6
Gabby	6
Harper	8
Hea	8
Joey	9
Josh	9
Kate	9
Kathy	10
Kim	11
Mae	12
Marcia	12
Margarita	15
Meisha	15
Melissa	15
Nikki	16
Suanne	19
Sunny	20
Susan	21
Susan	21
T	22
Tamieka	22

Abby

No. I couldn't remove a child from their country, culture and language of origin.

I think the first option for any child who can't stay with their first parents is kinship adoption in the country of origin. If that is not possible, I see only in-country adoption, with family name and contact with family intact, as the only option.

I lost so much. I truly would not wish that on anybody.

Anna

I am always so reluctant to respond to these questions. My observation of this subject is that people ultimately feel pressured to choose between being 'for' or 'against'. A very emotionally fuelled debate because every adoptee response comes from a deeply personal experience. I feel compelled to honour the adoptees who have had horrible experiences and I both envy and respect the adoptees who have had better experiences. But ultimately all of us adoptee have experienced grief and loss beyond our control. I know a big component of this loss is the loss of culture, which is completely valid.

My husband is Eastern European and both his parents, separately over the course of time with their own families, were forced to literally escape their own country due to various reason and sought refuge in a number of countries before settling in Australia. Their family, similar to the countless number of other refugees, love their culture but know the darker reality to cultures.

Several years ago my husband and I began our adoption process, which has been immensely difficult. During this time I had to confront a lot of my own issues (adoptee related and non-adoptee related) and as a result we have stopped our application to take the time to ensure we're doing this family journey with the right headspace and best intention. So when I am asked if I would I adopt? Yes, when intercountry adoption is best practiced, which it can and it does.

Adoption brings a phenomenal amount of issues. It breaks my heart that children's best interest are not always the focus point. But it's also true to say that children's best interests are not always overlooked. Some programs, sadly not all programs, have better due diligence than others. Not every adoption is good but not every adoption is bad either. This is what frustrates me about the adoption topics, the mentality of some needing

to make an absolute for all adoptions and all adoptees. The challenge is how to take one stance without depriving another of their own.

Anonymous

No. But, if you asked me a couple of years ago before I went through IVF, the answer would possibly be 'yes'..

With the prospect of not being able to have my own biological child, I did consider adoption. I would have only adopted a child with serious disabilities or a child whose family did not want them and had been abandoned. The reason I think like this about vulnerable children with disabilities is because I have learning/sensory difficulties. I was an extremely unwell baby, I weighed 3kg at 6 months and I was almost not allowed to leave my country of birth because I was declared too unwell. My parents had to fight for me. As much as I hate that I was taken from my mother, I know that in reality I did receive the best medical treatment and help with my learning difficulties by coming to Australia. Had I stayed in my country of birth, I would have grown up homeless and extremely sick, I may not be alive today.

I believe that every child deserves to be loved no matter. Yes, adopting would have been to fulfil my need to have a child so it's a bit selfish but at the same time it's also a bit selfish to plan to have our own children to fulfil our desires. If it comes down to adoption or a child being abandoned and left to die then I believe adoption can certainly work.

In an ideal world, I would like for more education, jobs, health care to be provided to vulnerable women so that there is a better chance for children to stay with their mothers. I would NEVER want to promote adoption or remove a child from their country of birth .. but if a mother refuses to look after her child for personal/cultural reasons then I think that intercountry adoption can work well.

If I had adopted, I would have only adopted from my country of birth so that the child would have grown up with a racial mirror.

Diana

There was a time when I would have. I even went to a open house/seminar for those considering Colombian adoption. I was adopted from Colombia as a newborn in the mid 1970's.

But then I learned of corruption in my orphanage from the era I was adopted in. Despite decades of corruption, that orphanage is still in business and is highly regarded by American adoptions agencies, American politicians and the Colombian government. I cannot fathom supporting or contributing to international adoption which is still so corrupt.

Furthermore, after becoming a mother, reflecting on my adoptee experience, having returned to my birth country and possibly locating my biological family, I firmly believe intercountry or transracial adoption is an absolute last resort.

The most ideal situation is family preservation unless significant abuse or trauma exists. The next option would be adoption in the country of origin in order to retain language and culture. The only way I would consider adoption is a mix raced Latino / Caucasian or full Latino child born in the United States.

Although I feel based on my experience and education that I would be a good parent to an intercountry adopted child, a child being taken out of his or her culture is doing a disservice to him or her.

Gabby

I started coming out of the adoption fog at age 48. At 51 years old, I consider myself way behind in my adoption journey compared to many of my peers and people I connect with in the adoption community. I have noticed my views and feelings around adoption swing wildly from year to year and even by month and it's only recently that I have even begun to articulate my thoughts and feelings in a way that I want to. My views are my views. They are not right or wrong and they change regularly. All in all I am still figuring out.

Would I adopt a child from a different race? At 41 years of age, I made a decision not to have children when I met/married my husband but that was mostly to do with my age

and our family circumstances. I was against myself having children right up until my mid 30s because I didn't want any child to have the issues I had with racism and adoption - and by default a child of mine would. In hindsight I feel that was quite a narrow view.

Yes, I feel I am probably more qualified than many to understand the issues a transracially adopted child will face. Would that make me a better parent? Speaking personally, I don't think so.

What I'm getting at here is that I've always had a choice. I'm in an incredibly privileged position to have a choice in every aspect of my life and I chose no. If I didn't have a choice and I had a transracial child passed to me - well, that's another story but I'm doubtful that I would raise him/her with as much love and generosity than my own parents did in a similar situation with me (not saying it was perfect - but overall, I do marvel over how the hell they did it).

Would I adopt a child from a different country i.e., via intercountry adoption? No, for the reasons above. My own feelings on intercountry adoption is that in 2017, I had hoped there would be other solutions available rather than sending kids from their birth countries to somewhere else. My view is that in an ideal world, there would be no adoption. My realistic view is that we do not live in an ideal world - and it's very unlikely we ever will. Until support systems are in place, the cultural shift in society to not penalise/ostracise single mothers or have safe/available contraception in all of the sending countries, I feel adoption is always going to be there. It doesn't help, in my opinion, that adoption is quite a profitable business in some places.

But there's stuff that we can help with. It pisses me off that in decades of adoption, adoptee rights and voices are routinely dismissed along with birth mothers. Sometimes I get so angry about the same bullshit existing which I grew up with in the 60s, 70s and 80s and see it still happening in 2017. I wish that organisations/groups would really hear/heed us when we share our stories, our truths and the wealth of information we adoptees offer, in the hope that it helps families and children.

However, I have also learnt (and am still trying to learn), not to judge. I have no right to judge other families' decisions, reasons for adoption or even outcomes. Adoption is complex. It's hard for everyone involved and not all is what it seems. Yes, it breaks my heart when I hear stories of abuse and broken-down adoptions but I also see the joy and

happiness in families that have adopted or have access to care and resources if the child has special needs that may otherwise be denied.

Yes, I do feel that in many cases those resources could/should be made available in their country of birth but the reality of that happening are often slim and my grasp of global government policies is shaky.

So my feelings are mixed: I don't think I could safely be in one camp or the other and right now, I'm working through my own journey. What I do feel is this, "Well, we're here! How can we make it better with what we've got?"

Harper

Firstly, I don't want children, period, so I'm sure that affects my answer, but if I did want kids, adoption would be my last option.

I am a strong believer in keeping kids with their first/birth families if at all possible and, if not, keeping them within their birth culture, preferably with a same-race family. Because of my own experiences as a transracial adoptee, I think that, if the parent hasn't had proper education in how to take care of a kid of colour, that it can be potentially damaging to the kid in the long run.

One is less likely to have issues with internalised racism at themselves if they are surrounded by people of their own race and have a lot of racial mirrors that they have a positive image of.

Hea

Adoption should be about the child and often it's about the adoptive parents. While I will never advocate in keeping a child in an abusive/neglectful house, I do believe in family preservation.

Brain scans of infants have shown the trauma of separating an infant from their mother. Saving Our Sisters finds that most US expectant mothers only need around US\$500 to parent. How can that same infant then fetch upwards of US\$60,000?

Adoption only guarantees a *different* life, not better. My adoptive father died when I was 4. We were poor. I was a free lunch child and received no dental care while growing up.

And then there are the ethical questions. Should poor families have the same right to raise their children as those who are more fortunate? How does a society decide what is poor? As a transracial adoptee, I only see a handful of white adoptive parents doing a decent job. I do not believe that in general, white adoptive parents should parent a child of another race.

Joey

No, I would not adopt unless other options had been pursued for the child first like preventative care to keep child within family and supporting birth mothers or parents, kinship adoption, adopting from same culture, and lastly international adoption.

I do understand and respect people that choose to adopt and that is their choice. But personally, I have experienced the trauma and identity crisis that comes along with relinquishment. I understand there is a need for adoption, but in my opinion, other options should be advocated, promoted and pursued first.

Josh

I would not adopt at all because I have no desire to have kids, and my girlfriend shares my view. I like to do things and have no time or money in my budget for kids. Call us a non-traditional couple, but just because we're together doesn't mean we need to be married or have children.

Kate

If given the opportunity to adopt a child from overseas, I wouldn't do it, even though I am an intercountry adoptee. This is because growing up in mostly white Australia in the 80's it was sometimes remarked to me, "You are so lucky to be adopted from Vietnam. Do you feel lucky?" "Um, no I don't, not really, I just feel me!" Or I'd be asked, "Imagine what your life could have been if you had have stayed."

That comment always strikes home. I couldn't imagine and still can't imagine what life would have been like. Sure I've fantasised about me maybe working in a rice field but that's as far as I get.

I had a fantastic childhood, I have amazing adoptive parents and a wonderfully loving family. So what I'm about to say is no reflection on my life and how happy I am living my life as Kate instead of remaining as Trinh Thi Ngoc.

I believe where possible every attempt should be made for a child to stay living in their birth country and culture. I think the displacement felt, the grief and life long pain of being separated from my birth country, my people, my original culture has had a significant impact on my life. It hasn't ruined it, but I've spent years in therapy coming to terms with my identity, rejection and abandonment issues that have affected my intimate relationships, and possibly stunted my emotional and psychological development.

Maybe if I'd stayed in Vietnam, these themes would not have been as strong as they have been? Maybe if I'd remained immersed in my birth country I would have different issues that shaped me. Who can say?

Kathy

I am an Iranian intercountry adoptee. Iran only allows Iranian citizens to adopt. Interestingly, my adoptive parents who are very supportive of my potential plan to adopt an Iranian child, asked why I don't adopt from somewhere else as living in Iran is hard. (I would have to stay in Iran for 6 months once I'm placed with a child.) And, I was very adamant that if I can't adopt from Iran, I won't adopt at all

I thought later about why, and I believe my feelings have to do with knowing that it's critical for an adoptee to be immersed in their language, culture, and heritage. This isn't about me or my ego in adopting. No. I think this is about my wanting to make sure that if I do adopt, I do it the right way - as a citizen of my home country who's taken all necessary means to ensure that the child belongs to more than simply the "nuclear family".

So if I do adopt, it will be from Iran, my birth country. Otherwise I won't be able to do it at all. My adoptive parents do not understand this. Tho again, they are supportive and I'm surprised they are being so great about things.

Kim

No. I wouldn't for the following reasons:

1. I don't want to add to the demand that may save a few real orphans and creates thousand more "orphans".

When I was kid I was often asked that question and I'd say yes. I thought then that if I adopted an orphan, there would be one less orphan, and if everyone adopts one or two orphans, there would be no orphans at all. But it's quite the opposite. The more demand there is, the more orphans are created.

I lived 3 months in an awful orphanage where we were abused daily and 10 months in a good orphanage where I was put up for adoption. Adoption didn't save me from the awful orphanage. It's the opposite. I was kept in the orphanage because my presence brought them money. I was lost but I knew my address but they didn't even bother to contact my family. I was transferred to the second orphanage because my adoption brought them. If it weren't for the adoption system in place, I would have been returned to my family.

2. I don't want a child to go through what I went through.

In the end, it has been more traumatic being adopted to a foreign land, to live in loneliness and homesickness, and to lose everything compared to living in an awful orphanage where I was not alone.

All I wanted while I was in the orphanages was to be returned to my family. All I wanted after being adopted was to return to my country and my family. I would even have accepted to go back to the awful orphanage if it had been offered to me.

3. Intercountry adoption is not the best solution, nor the only solution to help children in need. Moreover, it's not even necessary to help children in need in this manner.

If my adoptive parents had known me and loved me while I was living in Korea, they wouldn't have adopted me. If they had loved me, they would have helped me where I was. But they didn't know me, they never even met me before my adoption. It's normal not to love someone you haven't met, but it's inhumane to remove a child from his/her

country, community and raise him/her in an environment where nobody looks like him and nobody speaks his/her language.

During my last trip back, I met the housemother of my second orphanage. I learned those who weren't adopted were returned to their families after the orphanage closed. She told me about a few of the girls I knew. There was one girl, lucky her and her little sister, the potential adoptive parents who didn't want to adopt them because she was a bedwetter, so these girls were returned to their families.

Mae

In some cultures plenary adoption is illegal. You can't wipe out the child's identity. In Haiti for instance, you are required to leave their first and last name intact (unless they were not given a name, which is rare). You move their last name and make it their middle name and tack on your last name. This way when the kids are older, they are able to find their first family. So it really depends on the country. I think adoptions that wipe out the child's identity should be 100% illegal.

Marcia

10 years ago when I stepped into the adoption world, I was clueless. In that time I thought that adoption should be the last resort. It was mind-blowing to find out there has been so much child trafficking named as intercountry adoption. For me, it started with a friend adopted from Lebanon. She began her search and soon found out her whole adoption was illegal. All 500 adoptees from Lebanon with her, were also illegally adopted. When they return to Lebanon, they don't exist on paper, their ID number is from someone else, used to facilitate the adoption. I don't think any of them have found their family yet. This is very disturbing when we understand that only two people were responsible for all those illegal adoptions. The adoptees did not end up only in the Netherlands. The moment I got interested in the topic, I began to find out more and more cases of illegal adoptions.

In 2008, I went to the European Parliament with Roeli Post. It was the first time I met her. There I was able to see in real life how intercountry adoption is handled. I felt the energy of hot headed people because many of them were adoptive parents. They could use their own personal situation to make their point clear. I remember asking a question, but got an answer with no meaning.

When I started my own organization Plan Angel, that was the moment I started to realize that adoption and intercountry adoption has nothing to do with helping children in need. The Hague Convention has no value since it is in conflict with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). In beginning, as an organization, Plan Angel did not want to be part of the adoption discussion - we just wanted to focus on helping as many adoptees as possible.

From 9 out of 10 cases that we solved for Colombian adoptees, their story did not match up with what was written on their papers. When we also opened our doors for Colombian families also searching for their children because of adoption, it turned out to be that 80% did not voluntarily give up their child.

There has been so many examples in the news that in all the countries children were adopted from, that you have irregularities in international adoptions. To give you some examples:

- Romania (1994), we all know what happened there and that Roeli Post was the whistle blower
- India (1995) The Andhra Pradesh adoption scandals
- India (1990) Sanjeeva Rao
- Cambodia (2000) prosecution of Lauryn Galindo
- Britain (2003) "evil and exploitative" business of international adoption
- China (2005) Hunan orphanages by the Duan family
- Samoa (2005) organisation Focus On Children
- Guatemala (2007) foster home in Antigua
- Haiti (2007) 47 children, victims of child trafficking (possibly more)
- China (2009) orphanage scandal
- Samoa (2009) adoption agency tricked Samoan parents into giving their children up for adoption
- Ethiopia (2009) CAFAC scandal
- Vietnam (2009) selling more than 250 babies for foreign adoption
- Sweden vs Chile (2017) "child trade" to Sweden
- Turkey (2017) illegal child adoption scheme
- Uganda (2017) God's Mercy scandal
- Sri Lanka (2017) Sri Lanka adoption scandal, Dutch tv program
- India (2017) 17 Indian kids sold by adoption agencies

-
- US (1954) Georgia Tann orchestrated the seizure of thousands of kids - all under the pretence of doing good
 - Scotland (1960) It's estimated 60,000 Scottish mothers
 - Spain (1960) 300,000 babies stolen from their parents
 - Colombia (2012) adoption scandal (Manuel Teodoro)
 - Colombia (1981) babies for sale scandal
 - Australia (1950 - 1970) Australia's forced adoption era
 - Portugal (2013) 151 children released to adoptive parents in Portugal were returned to the authorities; the adoption 'cancelled' and the children taken back into care
 - Mexico (2012) adoption scandal
 - Vietnam (2012) 150 Vietnamese babies to Ireland

I could go on and on with the list but when you dig into adoptions, you will see that it has never been in the benefit of the child. Like never.

I also must say this is not only about international adoptions, with the domestic Colombian adoptees, it's even worse. Many of these adoptees, don't even have proof they were adopted. Since we are in close contact with 400 families, we can no longer stand there and say or do nothing about it.

Links I have used for background info:

<https://sputniknews.com/europe/201801311061227932-sweden-chile-adoption-scandal/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_international_adoption_scandals

<https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/us-soldiers-in-turkey-embroiled-in-illegal-adoption-scandal-14156>

<https://edition.cnn.com/2017/10/12/health/uganda-adoptions-investigation-ac360/index.html>

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41339520>

<http://www.timesnownews.com/india/article/child-trafficking-scandal-17-indian-kids-sold-by-adoption-agencies/56338>

<https://nypost.com/2017/06/17/this-woman-stole-children-from-the-poor-to-give-to-the-rich/>

<http://www.nytimes.com/1981/08/16/world/ring-in-columbia-kidnaps-children-for-sale-abroad.html>

<http://findingfernanda.com/the-story/>

<https://www.joe.ie/uncategorized/11-irish-couples-are-caught-up-in-a-mexican-adoption-scandal-31170>

<https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/evil-adoption-scandal-26373658.html>

Margarita

In this moment of my life I say No. Especially here in Italy. Because in Italy there is still racism. Actually there is no integration, sadly, in Italy. And I think it is important to and help people in their country, not by taking their children. In fact, I think that adoption is a new way of colonialism. Adoption and the way a child is given up in adoption is a trauma for that child.

With this trauma, the child and the person after, will deal with this all their life. The loss of the link with the family of origin and with one's own cultural roots represent a further factor of stress for adoptees. For this and many more reasons in this moment of my life, I say that it is better not to adopt via intercountry or interracial adoption.

Meisha

Good question, maybe I would consider adopting if I found a first cousin/relative through a DNA test and they were somehow truly orphaned (in honour of family preservation). Or maybe I would consider adopting a pregnant 16 year old or a new young mother so she wouldn't have to give up her child (again in honour of family preservation). I guess I am not very pro intercountry adoption since these circumstances are few and far between. I think for the most part my answer to this question would be NO.

Melissa

I would consider adopting from my own orphanage if we couldn't have our own child. With additional research, I believe I can trust the orphanage I was from. I feel very privileged to be in the most international part of the United States, Washington DC. So I really would have no good excuse not raising them multi-culturally, whether my children are biological or not.

I was adopted at 5 months old, I don't remember my birth country. So that aspect of my adoption wasn't traumatic for me. All I've ever known was Washington DC.

Nikki

I always knew I would adopt. Growing up, I was quite adamant with my friends as we whispered about where babies come from that they absolutely do not need to come from a mommy's tummy. "No, babies don't come from her tummy," I would proclaim with passion very rare for a young child, "I didn't come from my mommy's tummy, and she is still my mommy!"

As an intercountry adoptee, raised since I was 6 months old by a German-American family, my adoptive parents raised me as their own, and I love them deeply irrespective of their human flaws. I always knew I was adopted and of course felt the displacement and separation trauma typical amongst adoptees. There was no question in my mind as I continued to grow up that one day, I would adopt a child of my own. My adoption worked for me and I want to make it work for someone else. But, in a way that would build upon what I learned regarding the challenges of being the outsider in my adoptive family, as well as the outsider in both my adoptive and birth cultural communities.

My parents could not relate to my way of being in the world. From coming to the realization I was not "white" like my parents and being judged for it, to having a subconscious anger against my birth mother for not staying with me despite the odds. My parents took a practical approach toward my wounds, choosing to convince me that these wounds did not exist at all. This is not what I needed. I needed someone to help identify my wounds, put words to them, and then help me heal rather than ignore them. I needed someone by my side who could assure me I was not crazy or alone. My parents, to this day, will never be able to understand what I needed beyond the parental love, good education, and successful life path they forged for me.

Through years of journaling, engaging in expressive arts, therapy, and self-awareness practices, I was able to address many of the challenges that we adoptees face. Of course, I am a work in progress and continue to dig deep into my wounds in order to diagnose and treat them. I wanted to support younger versions of myself while they walk this path, as I know that children who are for some reason alone in the world, due to circumstances out of their control, share the same challenges. I have done several projects to support these children, including co-leading an NGO that delivers education programs to Syrian refugee and orphan children in Jordan and Lebanon. It will be no surprise to you that despite the language barrier, the children and I were able to connect and collaborate

with each other in ways that go deeper than words. It is a bond that children who have been left behind have with each other, despite the age difference.

I am now 39 years old. In November 2017, I visited Iran, my home country, for the first time since I left it in 1978. I was able to find the orphanage I was living in, before my adoptive parents took me to the United States. I was able to meet with the managers and learn about the children – why they were there and what they need in order to thrive. They need the basics, but they also need individualised attention from adults. They need the support and love from a family who can help them through the difficult journey of loneliness and trauma with empathy. Finding a family like this is nearly impossible. And yet, these children are sent to live with parents who simply meet various criteria that has nothing to do with their socio-emotional intelligence.

I asked the manager at the orphanage what the requirements were for adoption. Under Islamic law like that in Iran, only married couples who are unable to have their own children may adopt. This was the response I was expecting. Instead, she replied that while this is indeed the Islamic rule, the Iranian government had just a few months ago eased their adoption laws to allow single women over the age of 30 to adopt. The single woman must meet financial and suitability requirements to adopt, as well as be an Iranian citizen. I was adopted and naturalised in the US but still hold my Iranian citizenship.

My mind was blown. I thought I would have to wait, in fact should wait, to adopt until I was married. I worried that my yet-to-meet husband would disapprove – I had dated some men before who, while they thought my adoption was “cool”, ultimately insisted that they could raise or love no children other than their own. Now, it seemed that my being single would be an advantage.

I returned to the States and discussed with my parents. I was scared to tell them my plans to adopt as a single woman. Again, my mind was blown. Not once did they respond with disapproval or “how are you going to do this alone?” Rather, they said that if I want to do this, now is the time so that they can help me get on my feet as a parent.

My mother is worried about my adopting from Iran. Another Iranian requirement is that after a child is matched with an adoptive parent, she must stay in Iran for a 6 month supervisory and bonding period. Typically, Iranian-American dual citizens who adopt have family to stay with during this time. As I do not, I must find a job and housing, and

then hit the ground running in this country as a single mother. She asked why I don't adopt from somewhere else, such as Latin America or Asia, where the process may be easier. No. I am very adamant that I must adopt from the Middle East, and specifically Iran. I want my child to look at her adopted mother and understand that culturally and racially, she has a partner who understands the challenges she faces and how to overcome them.

If I cannot adopt from my home country, I do not want to adopt at all. I feel very strong about giving a child a home that will not only be shelter, but a place where she can witness her identity in her parent and grow with cultural competence and authenticity.

I booked a ticket and am now in Iran beginning the process. I am taking Persian language classes everyday. This will not only help me live long term in Iran while I wait in the adoption queue and complete the 6 month supervisory period, but it is essential that my child is able to retain the language of her country at home. I did not have this, and I admit I resented my adopted parents for not providing this to me.

I contacted my colleagues in the Iranian-American business community, and they are helping me arrange opportunities as a professional. It will be essential that I am financially independent for both my own survival and to demonstrate that I am financially qualified to adopt.

I am lonely here in Iran. I am finding that the feelings adoptees have of not fitting into our own culture and people is exacerbated a hundred fold now that I actually live here in my country of origin. I have, unfortunately, always looked at Iranians as people I cannot trust, translating the feelings of anger and betrayal toward my birth mother to an entire populous of people. I want to reconcile this feeling and move forward, so living here will help me overcome this challenge. This will be necessary for raising a child of a shared heritage. This child will need to trust me, and I must trust my fellow Iranians. This will be a shared learning for the both of us.

The journey has just started. Even if I cannot achieve what I came here to do – and trust me, working with the adoption agencies and US State Department has in some part been much worse than working with the Iranian officials - I need to try. And, if I am matched with a child, I don't even care if she calls me mother. I want her to know who her birth mother is. The ego behind being a parent is not what drives me to do this. Rather, it

is time for me to ask a child if I can support them with love and first-hand experience as they walk their own journey.

Suanne

I'm glad I was adopted. And I'm glad no-one stepped in and said my main need and right was to stay with my birth family because I would have missed out on the life I have now. I'm not saying that children and families shouldn't be helped as much as possible to remain together. But until the world is perfect, there may be circumstances where intercountry adoption is valid. My point is, maybe there is a right for the child to have this experience also. It may not be popular opinion.

If I hadn't found my birth mum 32yrs after I was given up in the VietNam war, I may have a very different perspective. Hearing from my birth mum about why I was given up and also being able to compare our lives now, the good and bad, this is where I'm coming from.

I have all the comforts as an Australian. And yes even though my adoptive parents were very physically, emotionally abusive from 13-21 years old, I'm still glad to be adopted. I've had so many mental health problems, not necessarily just because of adoption related issues. For example, I am bipolar which is a very biological issue. As a result I've had a psychiatrist since I was 14 years old. I still see a private psychiatrist weekly for a 50 minute comprehensive appointment. I did the sums the other day and worked out that the government subsidises my therapy / treatment to the cost of about AU\$10,000 a year just based on this out-patient treatment. There is also the costs subsidised when I'm an in-patient, which can be several times a year.

I hate to imagine my quality of life in a country where I couldn't take decent medical treatment for granted. There aren't many countries where you can be on a disability support pension (for starters) and on top of that be able to afford a high standard of care and choice in the private medical system. I often think that if I was in America even, I just wouldn't be able to access the medical care I do have here, as an unemployed DSP recipient of 6 years or even as a working person, only capable of earning just above the minimum wage. I wouldn't be able to maintain my health insurance as I do which can cover anything from \$10,000 or so for an average hospital admission up to \$100,000+ in a bad year.

My birth mother in Vietnam had a bad scooter accident a couple of years ago. She couldn't afford proper medical treatment and has been left in chronic pain with poorly treated injuries. She relies on herbs from the temple not just because of religion but because that's all she can access.

Of course I would have helped her but I cannot afford to pay for her treatment which requires cash up front to a French or other western run hospital in VietNam.

Sunny

Once when I was in my early twenties, I went outside for a break with a co-worker and got into an uncharacteristically optimistic conversation. I forget what caused me to declare that "Being adopted was the greatest gift I've ever received. My birth mom loved me so much she sent me somewhere to give me a better life," but I recall the head nod of agreement and the "Right on!" of support.

Time, though, has an extraordinary way of blurring youthful perspectives, turning juvenile dogma into awkward phases. What my statement lacked was maturity. Naturally, my ignorance didn't become clear until a decade after my proclamation. The conviction surrounding my innocuous ideology was based not on my opinion but on myths perpetuated by non-adopted acquaintances, people who earnestly wanted my adoption happy ending to come true.

Now I'm a mother of a three-year-old son. Every day is like an agility course where I jump from discipline strategy to communication style, trying to stay one step ahead of my child's developing independence. On harder days, I agonise each instance I see myself falling short. Parenting requires patience and creativity, gifts not natural to me. And despite its fun moments, parenting is tough.

But parenting an adopted child would add an extra layer of fear and concern. In addition to typical mothering challenges, I couldn't ignore the profound impact I — a knowledgeable potential adoptive parent — would have on an adoptee.

One would think, as a transracial-intercountry-adoptee, I'd consider adoption. I've read about some adoptees eventually adopting children as a way of giving back. To that, I say: Adopting a child to "*pay it forward*" follows the same logic as people producing offspring as an expression of gratitude toward their biological parents. Before intercountry

adoption or transracial adoption can continue, the repercussions suffered by victims of its practice must be fully resolved and acknowledged by all stakeholders.

I'm not advocating against intercountry or transracial adoption. I'm advocating for exceptional parental education, which may or may not be realistic — or possible — to provide. There are serious considerations and risks associated with intercountry and transracial adoption, far more than would be within the scope of this article; however, the question is whether I would ever obtain a child this way. My answer is no.

Susan

Intercountry adoption is not what it seems. Keeping families together is my number one priority. If there are no relatives, the child should go to a different family from the same culture and race but I acknowledge this has its challenges too. But, it is a better option than severing all ties which is so wrong on so many levels. Adopting a child and erasing his/ her history, which is so very, very common, literally kills me. It's so colonialist. Claiming a "love" for the child's culture and country when the parent has no deep connection with it drives me bananas.

Susan

As a Korean American intercountry adoptee who is mixed race, I suffered. Our mother gave us (4) up because we are half white. Being torn from my family which had been intact (mother, grandmother, aunties, sister's and brother), my mother felt we would have a better life with a white family instead of being raised in Korea.

Out of the 4 of us ripped away, only 2 had it better and I wasn't one of them. My adoptive family tried to completely whitewash me. We came over to the USA in 1966 and I spoke only Korean. I was placed in the first grade, 6 months after arriving to the USA. I was not ready for this and lived with prejudice because of being "foreign" in an all white "privileged" school. I hated it! I missed my family terribly and when I asked about them, my sisters, brother and my adopted parents told me they were dead.

No-one from Korean adoption agency ever checked on my welfare, never checked to see if I was okay. Zero follow-up.

I lost my family, my language, my culture.

T

No, I wouldn't adopt transracially or internationally. I couldn't remove a child from his/her people, community or country, deprive them of genetic mirrors, on top of having their legal access to their origins/family, identity, or history compromised.

The only adoption I'd even consider would be kinship adoption IF I were asked to, begged to, but I'd much prefer legal kinship guardianship (no identity reassignment and legal loss of access to history or original records).

Tamieka

No, I don't want to be a part of that cycle that I know can be filled with corruption. It's too complicated knowing what I know and feeling the way I do about my own adoption. I'd rather invest time and money into the families in those countries so that they can keep their children.