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Citizenship Reimagined Through the Narrative of "Privileged Immigrants"

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Abstract. The family has historically been considered the foundational block to society. The familial structure, ideally, establishes the moral groundwork of the nation. Parental figures are to instill the future generation with civic responsibility through moral and loving guidance. The individuals that make up a family, in turn reflect the type of citizens that make up the larger community. The familial archetype, in general, has progressed from one relying on and prioritizing biology to a more inclusive model that recognizes families based not in blood but legal kinship. This research extends an existing idea presented by historian, Barbara Melosh. Through her book, *Strangers and Kin*, Melosh described how adoptive families occupy two spaces: "public and private realms."[1] Despite the private nature of the family, adoptive families are created through public law. Drawing on the theme of duality, this paper intends to explore citizenship through the historical lens of United States adoption, and more specifically international-interracial adoption by United States citizens. The process of adoption is an extremely personal experience and yet it opens an entirely new dialogue for understanding citizenship.

Keywords: *international adoption, interracial adoption, adoptees, family, citizenship, race.*

Citizenship, for the purposes of this paper, must be understood in two parts: legally and culturally. Laws, statutes, and amendments enunciate the rules of the land, but do not guarantee societal acceptance or adherence. The government can prescribe definitions of citizenship, but it has proven at times to be unrepresentative of society's own definitions. Briefly, it is also relevant to mention the meaning of international and interracial adoption. International adoption involves kinships created between individuals of different countries, while interracial adoption brings together a child whose racial makeup differs from their adoptive parent(s). Taken alone, intercountry adoption fails to indicate the often-racial components of the family and interracial adoption gives no hint to the international or domestic reach

[1] Barbara Melosh, *Strangers and Kin: The American Way of Adoption* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 52.

of an adoption.[2] Therefore, it needs to be clarified that in using the terms conjointly this paper specifically studies adoption where the child is both racially and nationally distinct from their adoptive parents. The conflicting identities of international-interracial adoptees, whose outward appearance 'betrays' their cultural upbringing as Americans, reframes the United States' own definition of citizenship as one that relies on the dual notions of American exceptionalism and the American melting-pot. The Janus-face of United States citizenship was exposed in the legal development of adoption, societal guidelines for adoptive parents, and cultural dislocation expressed in adoptees' stories.

Modern adoption within the United States dates back to only a little over a century ago, therefore its historical account is relatively young. With domestic adoption's short existence in United States history, international adoption has an even briefer history that can be traced back to the 1950s. Though this paper is primarily concerned with adoption that occurred between nations, it is important to contextualize the development of domestic adoption in the United States. Following the themes and language that emerged from the growth of adoption creates an important backdrop for understanding how citizenship too was shaped. Additionally, it is relevant to know the existing adoption systems in place as these foreign-born children arrived 'home.' The Massachusetts Law of 1851, often cited as the first modern adoption law in the United States, took the first steps in ending the informal adoption practices of the time. Adoption now fell under judicial supervision where prospective adoptive parents had to be reviewed and biological parents had to give written consent.[3] Other states followed suit and created similar laws, but adoption would not become truly formalized until the turn of the twentieth century, coinciding with the professionalization of the social work field.

Other alternative forms of child care outside the traditional family mold could be argued as precursors to this modern foster and adoption care system. Popularized by Charles Loring Brace's New York Children's Aid Society, the placing-out system served as a way to remove the poor children of eastern cities and relocate them to the idealized western frontier. Children were supposed to develop the American spirit by breathing in the clean air on rural pastures and living in an honest

[2] Jane Jeong Trenka,, Julia Chinyere Oparah, and Sun Yung Shin, *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption*, (New York: Southend Press, 2006), 2-3.
[3] E. Wayne Carp, *Family Matters: Secrecy and Disclosure in the History of Adoption* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998), 11.

Christian home. The reality, however, was that many of these "western frontier" towns were developing cities themselves, equally as crowded and polluted as their eastern counterparts.[4]

Other less formal methods of adoption during the 1800s into early 1900s included the "gray markets" or black markets through "baby brokers," and advertisements in the newspapers. In an 1894 *Boston Globe* newspaper, squatting below the clothing sale column and left of the "Boats-Yachts-etc.," were three listings advertising two baby boys and a girl for sale.[5] If this did not work families could turn to "gray markets," which involved a network of doctors, lawyers, midwives, and clergy.[6] An *Evening Star* article warned parents of the baby brokers that "haunt" hospital waiting rooms in search of young unmarried expectant mothers. These brokers lolled their victims into a false sense of security with promises that their child will be placed in a happy home. Once the mother signed off her rights to her child the broker then turned around to sell the child for $100-$800. Brokers improved their likelihood of sale when they lied about the origins of the child, such as claiming the infant was the son or daughter of a congressman.[7]

Led by elite college-educated women, reforms in child and public health brought new institutions like the Children's Bureau in 1912 and increased studies on child placement practices.[8] Many families during this time were skeptical about the thought of bringing a little "stranger" into their home, which reflected the popular sentiment that children were best raised by biological relations. In November of 1907, the *Mineral Point Tribune's article*, "Three Hundred Babies Wanted," shared a campaign by *The Delineator,* which confessed that to "ask strangers to us to adopt these little equally strangers to us seemed daring indeed."[9]

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[4] Marilyn Irvin Holt, *The Orphan Trains: Placing Out in America* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 44.
[5] "Nothing in New York So Cheap As Human Life!" *The World*, June 27, 1897, accessed October 4, 2018, https://www.newspapers.com/image/3470432/?terms=child%2Badoption&match=4.
[6] Arissa Oh, *To Save the Children of Korea* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 3-4.
[7] "Existing Laws Fail to Prevent the Sale of Babies in Washington," *Evening Star*, July 9, 1939, accessed October 16, 2018, https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1939-07-09/ed-1/seq-27.
[8] Barbara Melosh, *Strangers and Kin: The American Way of Adoption* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 2-3.
[9] "Three Hundred Babies Wanted," *Mineral Point Tribune*, November 21, 1907, accessed October 18, 2018, https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86086770/1907-11-21/ed-1/seq-8/.

A matching "science" emerged to mitigate these qualms and offer validity to these nontraditional families. The matching principle was an attempt by social workers to design "adoptive families whose members [resembled] one another enough to appear biologically related."[10] A number of factors were involved when measuring how well a child would fit in with a prospective family: race, intellect, religion, and gender. News articles like the *Oakland Tribune's* 1929 "Science to Aid Child Adoption," reassured readers of the psychological tests infants received before being placed for adoption.[11] Social workers believed children should be paired with adoptive parents of equal intelligence; this prevented children from being placed in homes that would "expect too much of them" or not enough.[12] This "science" lost favor heading into the 1950s and 60s as adoptive families began crossing national and racial boundaries.

As the United States became a more global society so too did the American family. The United States' entry into World War I and World War II brought new kinds of families. American soldiers during World War II, particularly in Germany and Japan, had relationships with German and Japanese women that led to "Japanese-white, Japanese-black, and German-black GI babies."[13] Of the relationships that were consensual, a number of factors prevented these military men and local women from staying together, such as anti-miscegenation and anti-Asian immigration laws in the United States. What this meant was the often overlooked reality that as soldiers returned home heroes, they left behind women who faced social ostracization for having a child, let alone a "racially-impure" child, as an unwed woman. [14]

By the end of World War II, the United States had gained new global footing. The United States, while waving the flag of democracy, exercised this new power in countries like Korea and Vietnam during the Cold War era. The results of these ideological battles were war-torn-divided nations and the problem of what to do with the thousands of children displaced, abandoned, or orphaned by war. Adding

[10] Barbara Melosh, *Strangers and Kin: The American Way of Adoption* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 51.
[11] "Science to Aid Child Adoption," *Oakland Tribune*, September 20, 1929, accessed September 26, 2018, https://www.newspapers.com/image/103774565/?terms=child%2Badoption&match=5.
[12] Barbara Melosh, *Strangers and Kin: The American Way of Adoption* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 53-54.
[13] Arissa Oh, *To Save the Children of Korea* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 5.
[14] Arissa Oh, *To Save the Children of Korea* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 6.

to this already complicated equation was the fact that overseas military men had sired thousands of children with local women. Back in the States, families looking to adopt increasingly turned towards intercountry adoption because domestically, the demand for children outnumbered the children available for adoption.[15]

Families were also motivated by an American "responsibility" as Christians and citizens of the United States to continue the fight against communist forces by "rescuing" the children most at risk, Korean orphans.[16] This narrative of rescue is an old tune that has been played before and would be played again in subsequent decades for the children of Vietnam, China, Russia, and Romania. Featured in a 1966 news article, Ana Lang, chairman of Hawaii's World Adoption International Fund chapter, argued that because "of their tragic experiences, WAIF children require special tenderness and understanding. We find that most families seeking to adopt a foreign child have just such qualities."[17] Though less explicit, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* appeals to the charitable nature of Americans with their article, "Conditions at Vietnamese Orphanages Shock Doylestown Adoption Agent." The article detailed the "cramped quarters," lack of "mattresses or pads on the beds," and "urine and filth" that littered the floor of the orphanage. The only way for these children to be "saved" was through the "love and attention" in an American home.[18]

International-interracial adoption was not only done for civic reasons. When discussing something so complex it is easy to frame adoption within larger global and historical themes and avoid the emotional and personal weight of adoption, which is less easy to fit in neat boxes and categories. On the simplest level, adoption developed from a desire to be parents. With the civil and women's rights movements of the 60s and 70s "matching" was less of a priority. The popularity of adoption peaked in 1970 and between 1990 and 2005 the adoption rate of foreign-born

[15] Barbara Melosh, *Strangers and Kin: The American Way of Adoption* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 192.
[16] Arissa Oh, *To Save the Children of Korea* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 86.
[17] "WAIF Urges Easier Child Adoptions," *The Honolulu Advertiser*, May 20, 1966, accessed October 20, 2018, https://www.newspapers.com/image/260528989/?terms=child%2Badoption&match=3.
[18] "Conditions of Vietnamese Orphanages Shock Doylestown Adoption Agent," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 30, 1968, accessed October 19, 2018, https://www.newspapers.com/image/182106245/?terms=child%2Badoption%2Band%2BKorea%2Band%2BVietnam.

children tripled.[19] Tens of thousands of foreign children were adopted into new families and given new opportunities in life; that is certainly reason to celebrate, but too many times this endpoint becomes the only thing in focus. When an international-interracial adoptee asks their parent(s) where do they come from, they are pulling at the branch of a much larger tree. Answering the question of a child's origins must in turn address, 'why did I need to be adopted in the first place?'

War is not the only catalyst of intercountry adoption, but it certainly paved the way for a more institutionalized and regulated effort by the United States government. Korea was the first country to receive unprecedented intercountry adoption efforts by United States families. This was in part due to the organizational endeavors of Oregon farmer, Harry Bolt, and his wife, Bertha Holt. The Holts were the adoptive parents of 8 children. They believed it was God's calling that they embark on a journey of "rescuing" Korean orphans, particularly mixed-raced infants, from Korean orphanages. In one of their memoirs, Bertha Holt described Harry Holt's bibliomancy, in which he needed the "Lord's comforting assurance. Then he prayed…picked up the Gideon Bible. In the darkness he thumbed through it and put in his finger and turned on the light. His thumb was on *Isaiah* 43:5"; it read or instructed to "bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth…"[20] Through proxy adoption, Harry Holt, streamlined Korean adoption for parents in the United States; rather than having to fly across the world, adoptive parents could give power of attorney to the Holt Adoption Program to adopt the child for them in Korea, and then ship these children on chartered flights to the United States where they were united for the first time with their new families.[21] Proxy adoption, however, was initially born from military families living overseas and wishing to create families. Meaning, this adoption process wasn't made for mass implementation. Ensuring the security and legal validation of a few military couples looking to adopt abroad required far less regulation than the thousands of families that would ultimately utilize this proxy system for their own family making business.[22]

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[19] Ellen Herman, *Kinship by Design: A History of Adoption in the Modern United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 5.
[20] Bertha Holt, *Bring My Sons From Afar.* Eugene (Oregon: Holt International Children's Services, 1986), 4.
[21] Arissa Oh, *To Save the Children of Korea* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 95.
[22] Cynthia Lowry, "'Mail-Order' Babies Often Losers," *Star-Gazette*, March 9, 1958, accessed October 18, 2018,

There is a common parallel made between military occupation and the rate of illegitimate children born. As theorized by regional historian, Karen Dubinsky, "It's… not a coincidence that most of the countries supplying children have been exposed to American military intervention, presence, or occupation."[23] The mothers of these children, however, have only more recently been given a voice for understanding their circumstances. Korean women experienced extreme poverty after the war and the "decimation of the male breadwinning population." In need of financial support, they looked for employment, but the only places with any money to share were Western military camps. Many of these women had to resort to "questionable employment," in bars or sex work where they were at risk of rape. The mixed raced babies that emerged from either mutual or forced relationships between Korean women and GI soldiers, many of which were American, faced discrimination.[24] The plight of GI babies was a popular headline for many American newspapers, like the *Echoes-Sentinel* that lamented how "Discrimination Plagues G.I.-Sired Children in Asia."[25]

The experience of international-interracial adoptees cannot be fully understood without the story of their birth mothers. From Sangsoon Han's book, *Dreaming a World*, some of these women's stories are shared in the hope that they might reach their children in the United States and give them answers. A Korean mother re-read a passage from her diary, dated June 1, 2006, "It's your seventeenth birthday. I know you're now sixteen in American age, but I insist that its your seventeenth. How can I forget the one year that you were inside of me?"[26] Translated through Han's book, the woman explained the events that led to her child's adoption. As a teenager she had a relationship with a university boy and when she learned she was pregnant she was told to abort the baby. From an abusive patriarchal household, she could not go home as an unwed pregnant girl. When she

https://www.newspapers.com/image/276721943/?terms=child%2Badoption%2Band%2Binternational.

[23] Karen Dubinsky, *Babies without Borders: Adoption and Migration Across the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 94.

[24] Arissa Oh, *To Save the Children of Korea* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 49.

[25] Rita Quade, "Discrimination Plagues G.I.-Sired Children In Asia," *The Bernardsville News*, April 12, 1979, accessed September 20, 2018, https://www.newspapers.com/image/95551698/?terms=child%2Badoption%2Band%2BKorea%2Band%2BVietnam&match=2.

[26] "Let's Meet for Sure," In *Dreaming a World*, ed. Sangsoon Han (St. Paul, Minnesota: Yeong and Yeong Book Company), 21.

found her way to Ae Ran Won, a home for runaway girls, she received support and advice for her baby. Realistically unable to support a child, when she herself "couldn't make breakfast in the morning because there was no rice anymore, or I couldn't go to school because I had no transportation fee," the best life this young mother could give to her child was through adoption.[27]

Other mothers describe experiences of rape, in which case "the pregnant woman was considered to be lucky if the perpetrator decided to have mercy and take care of her."[28] For one unmarried woman, the shame of her pregnancy on her parents who "were born, raised, and married in the same town their whole lives," was an important factor in deciding to place her child for adoption. She specifically chose foreign adoption to the United States believing that she could "contact him when he becomes an adult and hear news about him occasionally. However, that can almost never happen in Korea."[29] These stories contradict the popular notion that mothers "gave-up" their children. The term itself seems to ignore the emotional strife these women felt in relinquishing their children for adoption and in the subsequent years after as they wonder how their children progress in life. They were not passive characters in the overall plot of war, poverty, communism, and patriarchy. The decision to have their children adopted reflected an agency in these women who hoped their sons and daughters would live better lives with adopted families.

In the 1990s, one of the major sending countries was China. The children of China's orphanages were not a result of foreign wars, but rather a gender war. Most children in orphanages were girls due to several cultural and legal factors in China. In an effort to stem population growth, in which there were an average of 6 children per couple in 1965, the People's Republic of China established the One-Child Policy. This law restricted each couple to only one child and was upheld strictly in urban centers. In rural districts, however, officials could be bought to look the other way.[30] In need of a son to carry the family inheritance, and now restricted to one child,

[27] "Let's Meet for Sure," In *Dreaming a World*, ed. Sangsoon Han (St. Paul, Minnesota: Yeong and Yeong Book Company), 27.
[28] Sangsoon Han, "Introduction." In *Dreaming a World*, ed. Sangsoon Han (St. Paul, Minnesota: Yeong and Yeong Book Company), 3.
[29] "Try Hard to Live a Happy Life," In *Dreaming a World*, ed. Sangsoon Han (St. Paul, Minnesota: Yeong and Yeong Book Company), 163.
[30] Leslie K Wang, *Outsourced Children: Orphanage Care and Adoption in Globalizing China* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2016), 32.

many mothers, pressured by cultural obligations, felt that if they had a daughter they would need to send her away or abandon her in order to try again for a boy.

Xinran, a Chinese broadcaster and writer, offered a platform for these mothers in her work, *Message from an Unknown Chinese Mother.* Xinran's travels had led her to many different parts of China where she recorded the stories of women she met. It was through her visits to the provincial areas of China that she learned of "doing girl babies."[31] In the countryside, Xinran was visiting a family whose daughter-in-law was giving birth in the room next-door. Expecting the eventual cries of a baby, Xinran described her confusion at hearing nothing. The baby was a girl and therefore not worth keeping. The practice of "doing girl babies" was a euphemistic expression for female infanticide. Xinran later met the woman who had been in labor and she explained to Xinran that "if the family doesn't have a son, it has no roots. You can't hold your head up, you're good for nothing."[32] The cultural preference for boys and legal repercussions for having more than one child led to a disproportionate rate of female infanticide and "orphaned" baby girls. Having the supply, China need only look to the United States for the demand. During an interview, Xinran asked how a mother could give her child up for adoption, in which the woman replied, "They'll be valued emotionally and physically a thousand times more if they're adopted abroad."[33]

In the United States, international-interracial adoptees are understood as culturally similar and yet racially foreign. When thinking of the term, adoptee, it is usually thought only within the context of family, but international-interracial adoptees occupy a unique position within the framework of society as well. The first step in reconciling with this identity was to review the legal and societal guidelines of intercountry-interracial adoption. December 25, 1966, the *Winona Daily News* featured a story on the newest addition to the Kirk family who arrived just in time for the holidays, "Korean Child Finds Christmas in City." Six-year-old, Kim Woo Ok Kirk, "fits in so beautifully between our two other girls. She is a good playmate for

[31] Xinran, *Message from an Unknown Chinese Mother: Stories of Loss and Love* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 2011), 24.
[32] Xinran, *Message from an Unknown Chinese Mother: Stories of Loss and Love* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 2011), 30.
[33] Xinran, *Message from an Unknown Chinese Mother: Stories of Loss and Love* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 2011), 158.

them," as described by the father, Mr. Kirk.[34] But, before Kim Woo Ok became Kim Woo Ok Kirk, she most likely went through several other names like, "eligible orphan" or "alien child". Kim was one of thousands of other foreign children brought over in the first waves of United States intercountry adoption.

In response to overseas adoption interest, the United States government had to find the legal language to recognize these new bodies, most of which were infants. In August of 1953, the United States Code for Displaced Persons, Refugees, and Orphans granted 4,000 nonquota immigrant visas to "eligible orphans." Following this statement, the act defined an eligible orphan as an "alien child" who has lost one or both parents due to death, abandonment, or separation, and was legally adopted by United States citizens.[35] This Act provided United States entry for adopted children, but under the identity of immigrant, "alien child," and "eligible orphan." There was no requirement, however, for these children to be naturalized. It was not until 2001 that adoptees born outside of the United States were required to become naturalized citizens.[36] This meant legal adoption did not guarantee legal citizenship, in which a separate process was required by the United States government. This disjointed system offered a literal representation of adoptees' struggle for acceptance, in which they might be accepted within the family that adopted them, but were not guaranteed that same recognition by society.

While adoption laws gave legal recognition to foreign-born children and provided a standard structure for overseas adoption, adoption guidebooks helped to translate this legal process and advise families on the private realm of adoption. Adoptive parents not only worried how to navigate the parenting realm of potty training, playdates, and late-night school projects, but also wrangled with how best to explain the story of adoption with their child(ren), what to teach them about the culture they were born in but never to be raised in, and how to respond to bullies when they say 'you were given up because your real parents didn't want you.'

[34] "Korean Child Finds Christmas in City," *The Winona Daily News*, December 25, 1966, accessed November 1, 2018, https://www.newspapers.com/image/414801113/?terms=child%2Badoption%2Band%2BKorea%2Band%2BChina.

[35] U.S. Congress, United States Code: Displaced Persons, Refugees and Orphans, 50a U.S.C. a-1975c Suppl. 1 1952. 1952. Periodical, 457, https://www.loc.gov/item/uscode1952-007050a027/.

[36] Kay Johnson, "Chaobao: The Plight of Chinese Adoptive Parents," In *Cultures of Transnational Adoption*, ed. by Toby Alice Volkman (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 137.

Adoption guidebooks and memoirs from authors who went through the adoption process themselves have been a source of knowledge to many prospective parents. They now serve as an important resource for this study. Numerous adoption guidebooks, pamphlets, magazines, and informative news articles emerged to help these parents and prospective parents prepare for this journey weighted in racial, cultural, legal, political, social, global, and emotional experiences.

This adoption literature informed readers of not only who *could* adopt, but also who *should* adopt. Citizenship was shaped through the social checking of these guidebooks, in which they explicitly and implicitly orchestrated who should adopt, what type of child should be adopted, and how the child should be raised. These guidebooks were often written by adoptive parents who had already been through one or several adoptions and wished to share their knowledge with other parents. The adoptive parents of 12 children, several of which were foreign-born and mixed-race, Carl and Helen Doss, offered a social and legal guide for domestic and international adoption in their 1957 book, *If You Adopt a Child.* They opened the book with a question, "What are *your* chances of adopting a child?" and set racial, religious, and social boundaries. Though adoption created a family of legal rather than biological ties, these families nonetheless must conform to social norms equally expected in blood-kinships. The Dosses clearly stated the type of family that could adopt when they wrote "Let us assume you are a well-adjusted husband and wife unable to bear children of your own."[37] This heteronormativity can be explained in part to the era in which this book was written, the 1950s.

Assumed as well, was the matching of racial or ethnic minorities to children of the same minority. The Dosses advised how a "Mexican couple will find many more Mexican children available in the border states," and if "you are Negro, you can adopt a child almost as soon as an agency can study your home to see which of the many Negro children available will best fit into your family."[38] Though not outwardly saying it, the authors instructed couples to adopt within their own racial and religious group. So how did this affect international adoption? The Dosses must expand, or otherwise contradict themselves, in their limits of who can be a family. They encouraged international adoption, particularly of foreign children who have

[37] Carl Doss and Helen Doss, *If Your Adopt a Child* (New York: Henry Holt and Company), 3.
[38] Carl Doss and Helen Doss, *If Your Adopt a Child* (New York: Henry Holt and Company), 4-5.

American GI fathers and were born in Germany, Japan, and Korea where there was greater prejudice for mixed-race children than in America. The author categorized mixed-raced children under the "hard-to-place" adoptees, which also included minority, handicapped, mentally disabled, and older children.[39] The idea that many of the GI babies were half white rendered international adoption of these children more "palatable" to American families.[40]

The difficulties, according to Carl and Helen Doss, in adopting hard-to-place children were due to their status as "citizens of a foreign country; as such, they are allowed to enter this country only within set quota limits, they must have passports, and they must be naturalized according to regular State Department procedure."[41] There are two things wrong with this account. First, GI babies born in Korea were actually stateless, given that citizenship followed the status of their fathers, who were not Korean citizens.[42] Second, adoption did not guarantee citizenship until February of 2001, under the Child Citizenship Act of 2000. Many parents never naturalized their children because they assumed U.S. citizenship would naturally fall to their children upon formal completion of the adoption.

Only as adults did many adoptees realize they were not full citizens, such as when applying for a passport or going to vote. There were an estimated 35,000 foreign-born adoptees legally brought to the United States but never naturalized. Those adopted in the 1980s have come of age in only the last few decades, and older than 18, fail to fall under the Child Citizenship Act of 2000. Any criminal record, from petty theft as a teen to drug charges as an adult, could mean deportation back to a country where most adoptees cannot speak the language and have no connections to other than being born there. In 2018, the *New York Times* published an article on deported foreign-born adoptees, "Deportation a 'Death Sentence' to Adoptees After a Lifetime in the U.S." One of several stories highlighted was Adam Casper's, who was deported to South Korea at the age of 41 after attempting to apply for a green card. His prior criminal record as a young man prompted his arrest and deportation,

[39] Carl Doss and Helen Doss, *If Your Adopt a Child* (New York: Henry Holt and Company), 5.
[40] Arissa Oh, *To Save the Children of Korea* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 127.
[41] Carl Doss and Helen Doss, *If Your Adopt a Child* (New York: Henry Holt and Company), 73.
[42] Arissa Oh, *To Save the Children of Korea* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 7.

in which he had to leave behind a wife and three daughters.[43] After living in the United States for 38 years, he was sent 'home' to a country that was foreign to him in every way that mattered.

One of the final points in, *If You Adopt a Child,* was how to answer children that asked about their history. To this question, the authors suggested forget and evade; "Forget why the parents gave up their child, remembering only that…it was a good reason."[44] When the child comes to ask about his/her birth parents "you can truthfully" say "'I don't remember just why they had to give you up, but I remember thinking that they had a very good reason." To ask questions about the past meant that these children had "not found security and happiness in their adoptive homes, and who understandably yearn to find it somewhere else."[45] This way of thinking reflected the overall premise that adoption only had room for one family in a child's life. A child could not look for their birth family without rejecting their adoptive one. Similarly, citizenship meant allegiance to only one country. Yet, as evident by recent events like deportations of unnaturalized adoptees, allegiance was a one-sided relationship. Prospective adoptive parents were again and again reassured that to adopt abroad meant "no chance of the mother's ever tracing the child."[46] But equally so, it ensured that a child would never be able to find their birth parents.

When considering the era in focus, it may be historically theorized that to have anything beyond the immediate family would hint to communist sympathies. About three decades after the publication of Carl and Helen Doss' book, another story of international and interracial adoption was shared. The book, *Bring My Sons From Afar,* chronologically follows the adoption experiences of Bertha Holt and her husband, Harry Holt, the founder of Holt International. At the end of her first chapter, Holt recounted the reaction of one Korean mother who, after placing her

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[43] Choe Sang-Hun, "Deportation a 'Death Sentence' to Adoptees After a Lifetime in the U.S," *New York Times*, July 2, 2017, accessed November 10, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/02/world/asia/south-korea-adoptions-phillip-clay-adam-crapser.html.

[44] Carl Doss and Helen Doss, *If Your Adopt a Child* (New York: Henry Holt and Company), 191.

[45] Carl Doss and Helen Doss, *If Your Adopt a Child* (New York: Henry Holt and Company), 192-193.

[46] Art Buchwald, "Right Way to Adopt a Foreign Child," *Tampa Bay Times*, March 25, 1959, accessed October 18, 2018, https://www.newspapers.com/image/314887665/?terms=child%2Badoption%2Band%2Binternational.

child in a Korean adoption center, "thought she could keep track of her baby after he had gone to America. I had to tell her it is a clean break and forever. Poor girl, her baby wasn't weaned yet and she cried and cried."[47] Despite being published thirty years later, Bertha Holt reaffirmed the notion that a child can only ever have one set of parents, and loyalty to only one nation.

International and interracial adoptees, particularly those adopted as infants, were and continue to be raised as "Americans"; they go to American schools, learn American history (often on the Western imperialism of countries these adoptees might have been born in), and speak English like it is their first language because for many it is. As characterized by Kim Park Nelson in, "Shopping for Children," international-interracial adoptees are "among the most privileged immigrants in the United States."[48] This statement was in reference to the Child Citizenship Act of 2000, which granted foreign adoptees automatic citizenship upon adoption. This concept of privilege, however, applied to international adoptees even before this act, in which adoptees could enter the United States on the sole basis of adoption. Once in the country, many adoptees raised in white-middle class families continued obtaining privileges with regard to financial stability and access to education.

For many, international-interracial adoptees only recognized themselves as 'different' when confronted by challenges to their identity as citizens. The frequent questions pertaining to one's racial background, language proficiency in anything other than English, and recommendations for where to get the most authentic food for their perceived ethnicity all served to establish these children as 'other.' Salvadoran adoptee, Patrick McDermott, described this cultural straddling when he explained how questions like, "Are you adopted?" often meant, "Oh, so you're not really Salvadoran."[49] Likewise, the question also worked in reverse; 'Oh, so you're not really American.' Evidence of this cultural dislocation can further be seen through stories like Ami Inja Nafzger, a Korean Adoptee. Raised in a predominantly white community, Nafzger felt lost as a Korean adoptee. She believed moving to Korea

[47] Bertha Holt, *Bring My Sons From Afar.* Eugene (Oregon: Holt International Children's Services, 1986), 13.

[48] Kim Park Nelson, "Shopping for Children in the International Market," In *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption*, ed. Jane Jeong Trenka, Julia Chinyere Oparah, and Sun Yung Shin (New York: Southend Press, 2006), 99.

[49] Patrick McDermott, "Disappeared Children and the Adoptees as Immigrant," In *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption*, ed. Jane Jeong Trenka, Julia Chinyere Oparah, and Sun Yung Shin (New York: Southend Press, 2006), 106.

would solve her feeling of dislocation. Although she fully immersed herself in the culture, going so far as to become engaged to a Korean man in order to better "belong," she only felt more isolated. She related many encounters where her inability to speak or act Korean confounded locals. One Korean man, after realizing she did not speak Korean, "jumped back and looked dumbfounded," and "in a loud voice (in English), 'What you can't speak Korean, but you look Korean!'"[50] International-interracial adoptees are exceptional immigrants, but nonetheless continue to be perceived as immigrants in their adoptive country and foreigners in their native one.

Mei-Ling Hopgood, a Chinese adoptee, summed up the reality of many foreign-born adoptees in her memoir, *Lucky Girl*, when she wrote, "my birth parents were shadows, known to me only in the folds of my eyelids, the curve of my chin, or the shiny dark of my hair."[51] Hopgood admitted that the extent of her knowledge on Chinese culture growing up consisted of chopsticks and the *Joy Luck Club*.[52] For many of these adoptees, parents try to "preserve" their cultural origins, only to receive push back because despite their birth in another nation, many adoptees only know and ever want to know American culture. There is no "preservation" but rather a cultural assignment. The *Journal News* highlighted interviews with intercountry adoptive parents who expressed their desire to make Chinese New Year "a major family tradition," and have their children learn Mandarin.[53] Another article described an adoptive mother's attempt to immerse her eleven-year-old daughter in her cultural heritage with visits to Asian art galleries, eating dim sum, and signing her up for gymnastics. Her daughter's response was to adopt an intense love for Irish dancing.[54]

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[50] Ami Inja Nafzger, "Proud to Be Me," In *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption*, ed. Jane Jeong Trenka, Julia Chinyere Oparah, and Sun Yung Shin (New York: Southend Press, 2006), 238.

[51] Mei-Ling Hopgood, *Lucky Girl* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Algonquin Books, 2009), 4.

[52] Mei-Ling Hopgood, *Lucky Girl* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Algonquin Books, 2009), 25.

[53] "Child: Parents Seek Foreign Adoptions," *The Journal News*, January 27, 1997, accessed October 16, 2018, https://www.newspapers.com/image/163326211/?terms=child%2Badoption%2Band%2Bforeign.

[54] Toby Alice Volkman, "Embodying Chinese Culture: Transnational Adoption in North America," In *Cultures of Transnational Adoption*, ed.Toby Alice Volkman (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 88.

Just as hard as parents try to 'preserve' the cultural character of their adoptive children, so too do adoptive children push hard against these cultural well-meaning endeavors as they try to become American in the critical eyes of their peers and society. As a child Mei-Ling Hopgood recounted the chants and slurs she received as child in school, like "ching-chang-chung," or, "Go back to your country." Hating that she was Asian, Hopgood overcompensated "to prove how American" she was by "making sure people heard me speak my perfect English," and "resisted even hanging around Asians." [55] Young Mei-Ling Hopgood believed that in order to be American she must reject her identity as Chinese. She must adopt the attitude of American exceptionalism, in which the United States is superior, even though her own immigration to the United States validates the melting-pot-narrative trumpeted by America.

Some adoptive parents attempt to avoid the topic of race and culture all together. Instead of acknowledging race and creating constructive ways to talk about something so prevalent in American society, parents opted for a "colorblind" approach. Growing up in a "colorblind" home, Jeni Wright's wish was that her mother "had given…the gift of a simple acknowledgement: that our home may be colorblind but outside sometimes wasn't."[56] International-interracial adoptees not only juggle two distinct identities in terms of race and culture, but they also straddle two different spheres of American life: the family and society. For many adoptees, they are welcomed into a home where love and support are provided despite any racial or cultural differences. Outside that home, however, the reality is less picturesque. As a child, Wright recollected how one day while riding the school bus a little girl "declares that she cannot sit next to me because of my skin color."[57] Living in a "colorblind" home, however, meant that Wright never brought up the incident to her mother.

The growing pains of international-interracial adoptees were often experienced alone. Though considered a "privileged" immigrant, foreign born

[55] Mei-Ling Hopgood, *Lucky Girl* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Algonquin Books, 2009), 78-79.
[56] Jeni C. Wright, "Love is Colorblind: Reflections of a Mixed Girl," In *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption*, ed. Jane Jeong Trenka, Julia Chinyere Oparah, and Sun Yung Shin (New York: Southend Press, 2006), 28.
[57] Jeni C. Wright, "Love is Colorblind: Reflections of a Mixed Girl," In *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption*, ed. Jane Jeong Trenka, Julia Chinyere Oparah, and Sun Yung Shin (New York: Southend Press, 2006), 28.

adoptees grew up usually without an immediate network of individuals with shared experiences and history. As one adoptee put it, "My immigration was quiet and Anglo-sized. First generation turned third."[58] Speaking as a Korean adoptee, Beth Kyong Lo, noted feelings of isolation from society. As adoptees have grown into adults they "encounter racial discrimination without the protection of their families…and, without the presence of their white families" they are "no longer recognizable as American by the white mainstream."[59] This is applicable to many international-interracial adoptees. Raised with notions of American democracy, freedom, and civil liberties, it becomes a cruel joke when these adoptees march out into society and have to constantly validate their identity as Americans, something they were raised with believing they had every right to as citizens. Mei-Ling Hopgood had developed this mantra, "*I'm lucky*"; she reasoned, "I had been raised to believe I could do anything I wanted. I had a close family, a rich life, and the endless opportunities of the great United States of America." [60] Later on she noted how she was "sick of people asking, 'Where are you from?' and…'No, where are you *really* from?'" Feelings of isolation manifested from these questions, but like so many adoptees, Mei-Ling "didn't discuss those feelings with my brothers or my parents until years later." She "didn't want them to think they had done anything wrong. It was my problem, and mine alone."[61]

International-interracial adoption is a history about the human experience. In search of acceptance, citizenship proves to be just one part of this larger quest for belonging. The United States has served as both a cause and solution for international adoptees, whose mothers saw greater opportunity for their children in a country characterized as a melting-pot, despite their countries own tumultuous history with the United States' democratic interventions on their soil. Karen Dubinsky brought up an interesting point about the "powerful and deeply historic

[58] Beth Kyong Lo, "Korean Psych 101," In *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption*, ed. Jane Jeong Trenka, Julia Chinyere Oparah, and Sun Yung Shin (New York: Southend Press, 2006), 167. (167-176)
[59] Beth Kyong Lo, "Korean Psych 101," In *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption*, ed. Jane Jeong Trenka, Julia Chinyere Oparah, and Sun Yung Shin (New York: Southend Press, 2006), 172
[60] Mei-Ling Hopgood, *Lucky Girl* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Algonquin Books, 2009), 7.
[61] Mei-Ling Hopgood, *Lucky Girl* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Algonquin Books, 2009), 80.

symbolism of children---bearers, but never makers, of social meaning."[62] These children are no longer infants, but have come of age in the twenty-first century and they lend insightful and critical new voices to the narrative of United States citizenship.

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[62] Karen Dubinsky, *Babies without Borders: Adoption and Migration Across the Americas* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 3.

[63] Reference to acts such as this one, illustrate the legal language of the era. In trying to understand the citizenship of adoptees born overseas, the legislation established to either help or hinder this process shows the United States own attempts in defining these children. This act in particular describes these adoptees as an "immigrant child," and indication that child is foreign-born. But the act itself was created to ease the adoption process along in which that child would assumedly one day be registered as a citizen.

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This anthology of voices from adoptees offers an important narrative that has been rather unrecognized in the historical scholarship concerning international and interracial adoption. This collection of writings will provide not only a broader dialogue to this paper but also potentially illustrate a little more clearly the constant negotiations adoptees deal with regarding their identities as citizens and "foreigners."

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[64] Carp's book trace adoption in the Unites States along several lines, but one of them mainly being a legal history. His research traces all the way back to the 1800s to the earliest form of adoption, apprenticeships. Though much of his book concerns domestic history, whereas the paper focuses on international and interracial adoption, it is important to understand the development of adoption laws. Carp's work contextualizes the climate or popular sentiment in the United States through the different stages of adoption development in the nation.

[65] Dubinsky provides an important perspective for the "sending" countries of adoption. When considering international and interracial adoption, it cannot be a one-sided story, in this case the United States, because it's a two-sided history. Dubinsky answers an important question: why are there so many "orphans" needing homes in the first place? Her book also describes and historicizes two key concepts: the narratives of rescue and kidnap. In an attempt to understand citizenship through international adoption, it may be relevant to recognize the citizenship adoptees have before arriving to the United States. By following the transferring of children's citizenship status from one nation to another, citizenship may be understood under new light.

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[66] Arissa Oh's work focuses on the Korean adoption experience in the United States. Oh argues that during the Korean War and the years following it were when the beginnings of international adoption really began in the United States. The Korean adoption experience in turn would be echoed in other countries like Vietnam, often following the globalization by United States in their efforts of Communist "containment." As really the first country the United States began global adoption with, Korean adoption also experienced the rudimentary efforts by United States in legalizing the process. In this figuring-out stage, the United States itself must try to define the requirements of citizenship.