



Families With Children from China Summer Newsletter 2010 Austin, Texas

Letter from the Prez...

Ancient Chinese Belief

Chinese folklore says that there are invisible red threads that connect a newborn child's spirit to all the people that will be important in his/her life. As the child grows, the thread shortens to bring these people closer together.

I sit in awe this morning when assessing our projects and plans. Wow. What an amazing time for our families. Sure, anyone can dream big and suggest all sorts of ideas and activities but the actual execution of those events takes a lot of people, communication, and teamwork. The recent growth of our FCC chapter is wonderful and I would like to take a moment to sincerely appreciate the people who have so generously volunteered their time and their heart to make the world a better place for our children.

It's obvious our board of officers have been instrumental in creating this extensive environment. Special thanks go to last year's treasurer Kristi Quadrato who really shaped our financial format and taught us all how to run this small business. This year's officers Deanne Brown, Stacey Cone, Kim Goodman, Dianne Harwood, Pat Morgan and Kellena Page generously give their time and energy in our meetings, emails, the newsletter, and, of course, at the events. While we each have a job description, they seem to intuitively pitch in and carry each other when needed. I love that. It truly is an honor to work with these women.

Abby Turner is our librarian, leads a book group, and coordinated the Jane Brown event for us. Dr. Rowena Fong is our camp co-director and leads the Joy Luck Club 101 event in her home. Angela Meek is our newsletter editor compiling and formatting her 6th issue for us. Em Hardy and Pat Morgan presented the Attachment Workshop for us. Vicki Gargano is our bookkeeper. Sandi Ross helped coordinate the Jane Brown event and designed the fabulous camp animal logos for each class. Robin Davis has signed on to assist with the Girl Scout Troop. Vicki Wang and the UT China Care students will help with childcare for our Mei-Ling and Chris Hopgood event. UT China Care students have been great all year volunteering to help with our large events. Alexa Hinds is the FCC parent liaison with the Austin Chinese Church. Cheryl Dragel writes articles for our newsletter. Kathy Tovo leads a book group. Deanne Brown co-designed and lead the Adoption and Schools Workshop. Tessa Spencer will help with this fall's Moon Festival at Brushy Creek. Steve Ross helped with our bylaw updates and camp materials. Tyla Gilchrist was last year's web master. Julie Kniseley writes newsletter articles for us. David and Beth Hack store Goldie's head. Carol Duncan and Yang Cao narrated the Chinese New Year performances. Becky Roberts sold books and assists with the web site. Lucia Markert orders the Moon Festival moon cakes each year. The moms volunteering with camp include: Sue Browne, Suzanne Bryant, Suzanne Danuser, Robin Davis, Denise Davolt, Carol Duncan, Cathleen Dunphy, Cindy Leyendecker, Betty McCreary, Lucia Markert, Laura Mouw, Elisa Shepard, and Laura Sherman.

Incredible—so many people stepping up and making significant contributions to our community. Our sincere thank yous go to all these volunteers who are making a difference in our children's lives. It matters.

Take care,

Becky

*Becky Harding
FCC Austin
Year of the Tiger
President*

What's Inside

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Mark Your Calendars

An Evening with Mei-Ling Hopgood
Saturday, July 31, 2010

Culture Camp,
August 9-13, 2010

Moon Festival
Sunday, September 26, 2010

Filling the Adoptive Backpack
Monday, October 18, 2010

Austin's Families with Children from China and Adoption
Knowledge Affiliates Present:

An Evening with Mei-Ling Hopgood (Author of *Lucky Girl*), and her Adoptive Mother, Chris Hopgood

Saturday, July 31, 2010

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin
4700 Grover Avenue, Austin, Texas

- 5:00–5:30 pm: Mei-Ling meets with children 5 & under
- 5:30–6:00 pm: Mei-Ling meets with children 6 & up
- 6:30–8:00 pm: Mei-Ling and her mother present adult session

- \$15 for FCC or AKA Members
- \$20 for Non-members
- \$25 for everyone who purchases tickets at the door
- \$5 per child for childcare
- **Parents are welcome to bring a sack dinner for their child(ren).



To register, please go to <http://mei-linghopgood.eventbrite.com/>.

Mei-Ling Hopgood, an award-winning freelance journalist adopted from Taiwan and raised by Chris and Rollie Hopgood in Detroit, Michigan, met her birth parents and siblings at age 23. She recounts this remarkable journey in *Lucky Girl*, and will spend the evening in Austin talking with us about it. Her adoptive mother, Chris Hopgood, will also be there. Please don't miss out on this rare opportunity to ask both Mei-Ling and her adoptive mother questions you may be pondering regarding your own life's journey as an adoptee and/or adoptive parent.

NOTE: If you are planning on attending this event, **please sign up soon so that we may have enough time to provide adequate childcare through the [UT China Care organization](#).**

Harvest Moon Festival

September 26, 2010

FCC Celebrates the Harvest Moon

Our traditional Moon Festival, or celebration of the Chinese Autumn Harvest Moon will be held on Sunday, September 26 from 4:30 pm–7:30 pm at Brushy Creek Regional Park in Cedar Park. In selecting a date, we tried to avoid religious holidays and UT football games while still hoping to see as much of a full moon as possible. This free bring your own dinner in the park event is designed to bring together our membership, and the greater Austin adoption and Asian-American communities. Everyone is welcome, so pass along the invitation!

Moon Festival coordinators Kim Goodman and Tessa Spencer will send more information as we near the date but we can probably look forward to some tea lights on a bamboo raft sending special wishes to the universe, playing in the sprinkler park, drumming, moon cakes, and lion dancers as we celebrate our community.

Filling the Adoptive Family Backpack

October 18, 2010

Adoption Knowledge Affiliates Presents:

Filling the Adoptive Family Backpack—for Back to School and Beyond

Former teachers Deanne Brown and Becky Harding will expand on last year's FCC Adoption and Schools workshop in this AKA presentation. The information and discussion will focus on selecting a good school fit for your family, building strong relationships with your child's teacher, how to give your child tools for handling adoption or race-related issues, and how a parent can be a positive advocate for social change.

AKA meetings are free of charge and open to anyone associated with the adoption triad. For more information, go to <http://www.adoptionknowledge.org/index.htm>.

Logistics:

Adoption Knowledge Affiliates' monthly meeting
Monday, October 18, 2010 at 7 pm
Westover Hills Church
8332 Mesa Drive

The Silk Road Ensemble with Yo-Yo Ma

Monday, March 28, 2011 8 pm

Grammy award winning artist Yo-Yo Ma will be performing at the UT Bass Concert Hall. Recently celebrating its 10th anniversary, the Silk Road Project fosters cultural exchange by uniting artists from Asia, the Middle East and West. Tickets are on sale now: <http://www.texasperformingarts.org/season/yoyoma>. More information on the project: <http://www.silkroadproject.org/>



FCC Chinese Culture Camp Readies for August

The campus of the Austin Chinese Church will be bubbling over with 68 children from China and their siblings the week of August 9–13. While mostly Austinites, some of the children will come from Smithville, Tyler, and San Antonio to participate in this program. FCC Austin's first venture into a community-building camp event will happen at the end of this summer, and it's shaping up to be an incredible experience for the children and adults alike.

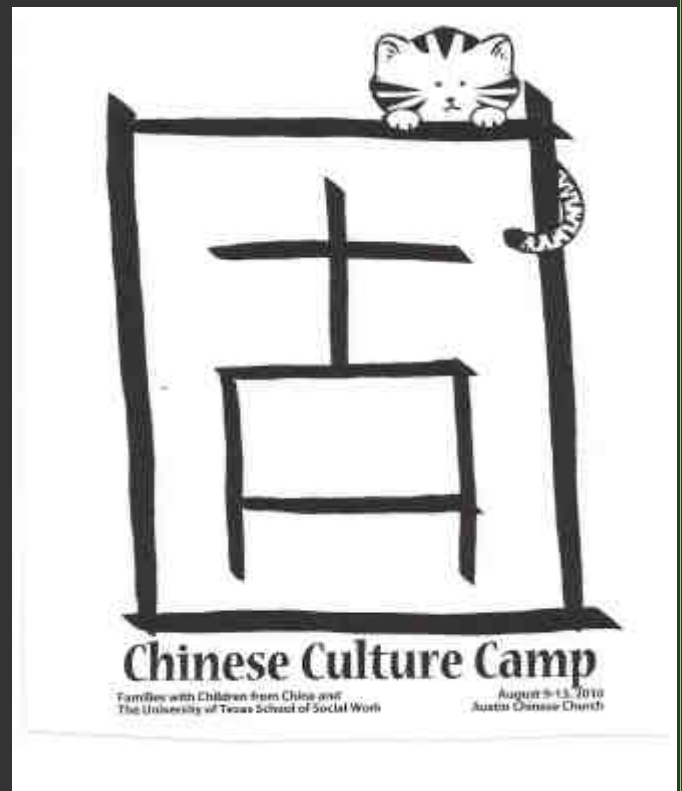
Enrollment closed April 30th yet you can contact co-director Becky Harding to get on the waiting list if someone cancels at the last minute. The students are divided into five classes based on age. The youngest group, the Bunnys, are kids going into kindergarten. The first and second graders will be Monkeys, and the third and fourth graders are Pandas. The Tigers will be fifth and sixth graders, and middle schoolers are the Dragons. Each class has an assigned China Care college student for every 5 kids in the class. These UT students completed five hours of adoption training in April with Co-Directors Becky Harding and Dr. Rowena Fong, as well as therapists Dr. Em Hardy and Pat Morgan.

In addition to having sessions about Chinese language, learning about their adoption journey, activities such as chop stick races, ping-pong playing, jump roping, expanding their knowledge of major Chinese festivals, and performing in the play, *Stone Soup*, the campers will have guest artists from the Austin Kung Fu Academy, April Rain Dance Chinese Dance School, and the Texas Lion and Dragon Dance Team. Kung Fu master Santanu Rahman and student/camper Xiaoman Lancaster will demonstrate some of the Chow Lay Fut style of Kung Fu for everyone. April Rain dancer Rose Morgan will share her solo performance with the group as well as welcoming Linda Cao, an experienced Dragon/Lion dancer who will talk about her years of performing in the many festivals here and on the west coast.

Small group guest artist appearances will include Linda Cao teaching the Dragons some drumming skills, Orpheus Academy of Music's Joyce Wu sharing some examples of western versus Asian music styles with the Pandas, while the Tigers and Dragons will learn about the tea ceremony, shared by Amy Mok from the Asian-American Cultural Center. The Monkeys and Bunnys will play traditional Chinese games and sing songs with Xi Wei Chen, the director of April Rain School of Chinese Dance.

As a service project, Deanne Brown will lead all camp participants, students, and counselors alike in creating two large art quilts. On Friday night, at the celebrational potluck dinner, these quilts will be presented to Linda Pham, the director of Saheli, a local organization for Asian families that promotes abuse-free Asian communities through advocacy, support, awareness, and access to social services.

Sponsors for the camp include The University of Texas School of Social Work, which provided scholarships to the camp for families in need. We also received financial support from Central Market, Great Wall China Adoption, Lotus Travel, and Our Chinese Daughters Foundation.



Noteworthy News

Upcoming PBS Documentaries...

The POV (Point of View) PBS documentary series will present three adoption-related films in the next few months. See <http://www.pbs.org/pov/>.

August 31 - *Wo Ai Ni (I love you Mommy)*, by Stephanie Wang-Breal

This is the adoption journey of eight-year-old Fang Sui Yong who was adopted from China by The Sadowsky family of Long Island, New York: <http://www.pbs.org/pov/woainimommy>.

September 7 - *Off and Running*, by Nicole Opper

Avery is the adopted African-American teenage girl with white Jewish lesbian parents and a fairly typical home life until contacting her birth mother unbalances her sense of self and leads her on a journey of discovery: <http://www.pbs.org/pov/offandrunning>.

September 14 - *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*, by Deann Borshay Liem

This is from the same filmmaker who directed *First Person Plural* and again she returns to her native Korea to search for answers about a possible identity switching: <http://www.pbs.org/pov/chajunghee>.

This ~N~ That...

- The Shen Yun Chinese Performing Arts extravaganza will be performing two shows at The Long Center on Saturday, August 7. This classical Chinese dance and musical show features original music performed by a full orchestra. The show is two and a half hours in length. Children three years and up and their families are welcome to purchase tickets. Ticket holders should arrive an hour before the start of the show. For more information, go to: www.shenyunperformingarts.org.
- Have you noticed the Asian-American character, Tina Cohen-Chang, on the popular Fox television show, *Glee*? The actress is 24-year-old Jenna Ushkowitz, and she was adopted from Seoul, South Korea when she was three months old. Raised on Long Island, New York, Jenna has been performing since she was a child making her Broadway debut at age eight in *The King and I*. She was most recently seen in the musical, *Spring Awakening*. On *Glee*, she has had two solos including an amazing version of *True Colors* that is featured on the *Glee* soundtrack.
- Our FCC Austin chapter is featured in the latest online edition of the Lotus Travel newsletter. Editor Iris Culp recently interviewed FCC Austin President Becky Harding and was thrilled to find our chapter is blooming at a time when most FCC organizations are experiencing a decline in membership and interest. Check out the article at: www.lotustours.net/newsletter/2010/july/FCC-Austin-Highlight.shtml.
- As you know, The Jane Brown workshop was canceled because of Jane's health and currently we don't have any specific plans in place for a rescheduled date. We will certainly keep you posted, as we are committed to bringing Jane back to Austin to share her work with us.
- Our FCC Austin website got a makeover recently and we look good, folks. Huge thanks to board member Kim Goodman who spent some quality time giving us a great new zip to our step. If you haven't already, take a look at: www.main.org/fccaustin/.
- The Adoption and Schools Workshop: Former teachers Deanne Brown and Becky Harding are finalizing the details as of publication time but will share all the information when those are confirmed. They will be traveling to FCC North Texas in September to present the workshop for that membership as well as conducting a revised version for a teacher in-service program in Austin ISD. This workshop features information and discussions about selecting a school for your child, how to establish a collaborative relationship with your child's teacher, some tools your child can use to handle adoption and racism issues, and how to be an advocate for positive change in your school and community.

Girl Scouts

FCC-Sponsored Girl Scout Troop Organizing for Fall 2010

By Deanne Brown



Another exciting first for FCC-Austin is the possibility of a city-wide Girl Scout troop sponsored by FCC-Austin for girls from China and their friends. Robin Davis, Deanne Brown, and other FCC members are in the process of organizing the troop, which would be open to any girl from China and friends of girls from China. Current Girl Scout troop members would be able to retain membership in their home troops and audit membership in this troop. Activities would include current Girl Scout material supplemented by Chinese cultural activities such as calligraphy, language, cooking, clothing, pets that Chinese children might have, foods and gardening from China, and more. Other FCC groups around the country have started similar troops and graciously posted/shared their ideas with Robin. The age range would depend on the response, but so far, about five families have shown interest, with girls' ages ranging from five to seven. Troops with older girls could also begin this year, or the troops could grow as the girls grow. Monthly meetings or activities arranged around members' current schedules would be the general structure, with Deanne Brown serving as the leader, Robin Davis as assistant or co-leader, and other parent/community volunteers to be added. If you're interested, contact Deanne Brown at Deanne_brown@hotmail.com or Robin Davis at robinsdavis@austin.rr.com.

Teacher of the Year

FCC Member Shines at School

Jane Hunter Named Teacher of the Year

Congratulations to FCC member Jane Hunter, a special education teacher at Bridge Point Elementary School in Eanes ISD. Jane was recognized as an outstanding teacher this spring with Principal M. Bradford Wirht writing, "Jane Hunter is graceful and gracious. She works so hard. She is unfailingly positive. She is low-profile in a high-profile job. She manages the details in a job of a million details." Jane and her husband are parents to Michelle, who won a bookmark design contest at Book People in April and an Outstanding Musician award for playing saxophone in the Beginning Hill Country Middle School Band in May. She will be in the Dragon class at FCC Chinese Culture Camp this August.



Michelle, Jane, and Paul Hunter

Family Focus: The Garganos

by Angela Meek and Kellena Page

Vicki Gargano is this year's extremely efficient and knowledgeable FCC Bookkeeper. She adopted her daughter, Samantha Noma LianLi Gargano, five years ago. Samantha is from Yongzhou in the Hunan province. While the people in this area tend to love hot spicy foods, Samantha is not one to go for the spicy dishes. Samantha is taking Chinese language class and Chinese dance class as well as violin. She loves to dance and many times will stop what she's doing to get up and dance to a song she likes.

Vicki states that the best part of parenting is "the love and joy she brings to my life and those of my friends and family. She has brought a wonderful new perspective to my life, making me remember and appreciate some of the simpler things." Vicki's mother, who has several health issues, and whom almost passed away before Samantha joined the family, truly has something to fight for when she's down. Vicki states her mother doesn't remember, but her mom is the one who really inspired Vicki to give Samantha her name. While at the hospital during her mother's health crisis, her mom said, 'What about Samantha?' Vicki's grandfather, who came over from Italy, was named Sam and all thought it was fitting. So Samantha is named after her great grandfather, her grandmother (her first middle name) and has her Chinese name as her second middle name.

Vicki loves being a mom to Samantha but admits there are challenges to single parenting. "There are no down times where you can just say, 'I need to be alone and do something just for me' (even if you don't realize you need that time—which I usually don't). When you've had a bad day at work you have to remember to be careful not to take it out on your child just because they are there and you have no patience left (through no fault of their own)—and yes, I've had to apologize a few times. There is no backup for the daily events of getting your child back and forth to school or daycare or to take care of them if you are sick."

Still, there are many advantages to single parenting. "Well, there was a whole lot less paperwork to do when I adopted her. :) Seriously though, there is not the usual back and forth testing that all kids do," Vicki comments. "For example, when mommy says no I'll just go ask daddy, or vice-versa and I don't have to worry about whose house we have to go to for the holidays without hurting someone's feelings."

Together Sam and Vicki participate in a variety of activities to help Sam maintain her cultural identity. They attend Chinese dance class, Chinese language class and will be attending the upcoming FCC culture camp. In addition, they enjoy their time with Big Sisters from UT China Care."

Vicki is not current planning on adopting another child, but her motto is also "never say never". Vicki says the subject comes up every once in a while, but since singles are currently ineligible to adopt from China -- and that is her adoptive country of choice -- they usually do not spend a lot of time on the subject. Vicki says when they *do* talk about it, she reminds Sam that she would have to share Mommy and that usually puts a stop to the discussion. Plus, she says Sam truly believes that her big sisters from UT are part of her family.



Vicki encourages other singles to adopt. "Once you have done your research on where you want to adopt from, and have searched your heart and you know you want a child, JUST DO IT!!!" Vicki encourages. "Don't wait, don't second guess yourself, don't be like Scarlett O'Hara and say you'll 'do it tomorrow.' I have never thought twice about it since I made the decision... well, okay maybe once for a few minutes at five in the morning after no sleep all night and I had to be at work that day, but I truly believe it was the best thing I have ever done or will do, and have never regretted the decision to adopt, just the time wasted waiting on 'tomorrow'."

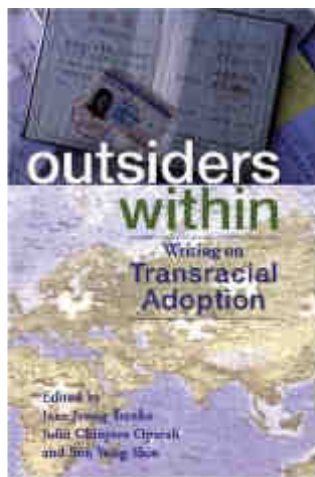
Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption

Book Review: *Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption*

Edited by Jane Jeong Trenka, Julia Chinyere Oparah, and Sun Yung Shin

Review by Cheryl Dragel

Transracial adoption is our children's journey; *Outsiders Within: Writing On Transracial Adoption* offers some stories of those further ahead on the path. It's an incredibly rich collection of 30 analytic essays, memoirs, and poems, along with accompanying artwork and photography, all produced largely by adults of color who were adopted into white families. Contributors were born in countries such as Korea, El Salvador, Vietnam, Australia, and the United States, and their diverse work tells the stories of adoptees of both genders and different races and sexual orientations. Readers already may be familiar with some of the writers: Jane Jeong Trenka, author of the memoir *The Language of Blood*; Tobias Hubinette, a Korean scholar living in Sweden; and Jae Ran Kim, a social work graduate student who writes the blog Harlow's Monkey. The book's six thematically linked sections explore different issues faced by transracial adoptees, from "Where Are You Really From?" to "Speaking for Ourselves."



The use of the word *transracial* in the title reflects the editors' belief that the terms *international* and *intercountry* in reference to children adopted between countries obscure the pivotal role that race has played in their lives... not just in their larger communities but in their families by adoption, as well. Moreover, the editors argue, those terms do not emphasize the solidarity they believe exists with people adopted domestically across racial lines (typically referred to in adoption literature as *transracial adoptees*). The editors' choice of the word *transracial*, therefore, is a deliberate political act meant to emphasize the commonalities between adoptees of color, regardless of their country of birth.

While *Outsiders Within* was written largely by and for transracial adoptees, adoptive parents who read it will receive a rare gift. In a world where so many of the books published about adoption are written by white adoptive parents and professionals within the adoption industry, this book was intended by its editors as a corrective action on the subject: "Our overall goal has been to

provide a counter-narrative to the dominant story, which has been about us but not authored by us. We are not objects but rather subjects in our own histories."

The book calls into question at least two of the binaries that have limited previous adoption discourse: first, the notion that transracial adoptees are either damaged goods or multicultural ambassadors in a colorblind world; and second, that transracial adoption is either a matter of practicality or a humanitarian mission. The collection as a whole reveals a reality far more complex. Addressing the stereotype of colorblindness, Jeni C. Wright writes: "What I had been told about race by my parents could be summed up in three words—love is colorblind. My mom hand-stitched that ideal into the quilt hanging in my childhood bedroom. It is a beautiful ideal but one I had learned the limits of by first grade. [I wish] she had given me the gift of a simple acknowledgment: that our home may be colorblind, but outside sometimes wasn't."

If my experience is any indication, *Outsiders Within* is not a book you'll zip through quickly. I read a few pieces at a time before pausing to give my mind—and heart—a chance to catch up. Reading some of the pieces made me feel I'd been sucker-punched in the gut, emotionally speaking. Shandra Spears, a Native American Ojibway woman adopted by white Canadians, writes in her poem "If I Pull Away" of the painful sense of disconnection she has experienced:

There is no future and no past, only a long, isolated now
 I am not connected to past relations
 I am not connected to future generations
 I am pulled from the flow of time.
 In the story of my life, I am meant to be a pet, or a companion,
 To fill in the missing pieces in people's lives,
 To be a bandage over the wound in adoptive parents' hearts.

...book review continued from page 8

For all the times I was thrown for an emotional loop by pieces about loss, trauma, and addiction in *Outsiders Within*, I was also given many opportunities to seriously engage my brain. Part Two: “How Did You Get Here?” and Part Three: “Colonial Imaginations, Global Migrations” are definite standouts for their intellectually rigorous examinations of the global adoption industry. Tobias Hubinette’s “From Orphan Trains to Babylifts: Colonial Trafficking, Empire Building, and Social Engineering” provides an especially provocative history of international adoption that may challenge some of the assumptions readers, particularly adoptive parents, bring to the issue.

As fellow white adoptive mom Beth Hall, co-author of *Inside Transracial Adoption*, acknowledged, the writing in *Outsiders Within* may make a lot of us uncomfortable, but that’s all the more reason to read it. Compared to other books I’ve read about international adoption, nothing else has offered such an insightful account of what people who were adopted transracially experience. Nor has anything else challenged so many of the assumptions I held as a white adoptive parent of a child born in China. And speaking of our kids born in China, I’m willing to bet that *Outsiders Within* is just one of the first of what will be several books in which transracially adopted adults share their experience of adoption. Some of the children adopted from China undoubtedly will contribute their work to such volumes. On their book covers, I imagine stickers might read: “100% free of ladybugs and red threads.”

Outsiders Within: Writing on Transracial Adoption was published in 2006 by South End Press in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



Multicultural Parenting

By Stacey Cone

Angelina Jolie did it. Three times. But a lot of other people are doing it, too, and were before Jolie got so much publicity. You’ve probably seen, or at least heard about, someone adopting not just internationally, but from multiple countries. More and more families with children from China are also families with children from Ethiopia or Guatemala or another country. It seems to be a trend in adoption communities nationwide.

But how are these families coping with multiculturalism taken to a higher level? Aren’t the special challenges and extra responsibilities of keeping ties and connections to one culture hard enough? Can these families really cultivate separate identities in their kids from their respective birth cultures? Should they? And does it even matter?

Long-time FCC member Erin Whitener is the vivacious, funny, outgoing mother of a biological four-year-old and an adopted daughter from China. They live in South Austin with Whitener’s husband, Wes. The Whiteners have just submitted their final paperwork to adopt, most likely, sibling boys from Ethiopia. And they think they will travel before Christmas to get their sons. Whitener talked about her upcoming adoptions and addressed the questions that many people are asking about building families with children from more than one country.

Whitener summarized her thinking on the subject this way: “This is not a social experiment.” She said her and her husband’s decision to adopt from Ethiopia was a “gut-heart sort of thing” that evolved over years. They didn’t set out to adopt from different nations. “There was no grand plan. It’s just what happened,” she said.

To the people who express skepticism about what they are doing—combining several nationalities in one family—Whitener has a quick reply: “Who are you to say that adopting from one culture is better than adopting from two?” As Whitener explains, it wouldn’t be right for every adoptive family. But she feels personally prepared and uniquely ready because of her own childhood, her background, education, and rearing.

...Multicultural Parenting continued from page 9

Whitener says simply, "I can see a multi-multicultural family working because I was an army brat. I grew up with a lot of different races. It was the 'Little Einsteins' times ten for me every day. I had friends that lived in Germany and Brazil. One of my friends was from the Philippines, and one was an African American. And another was Australian. That was just normal. That's why building the kind of family we're building isn't hard for me to imagine. There was a global feeling to my life from the beginning. So adopting from China and from Ethiopia is not a big jump. It's how I was raised."

The Whiteners plan to give all their kids the education they need to understand and appreciate the diverse cultural and ethnic heritages of everyone in the family. "I always wanted my children to grow up with a sense of being citizens of the world, not just Texans. They'll understand different cultures and be exposed to those cultures. I think we'll be able to give each of our kids the cultural connections and appreciation they need. It's important to us to do that. We want the kids to know we value those cultures."

At the same time, Whitener thinks that her kids will be American. They will grow up in the United States as American citizens. "We'll be sharing the Chinese culture as Americans. And we'll be sharing the Ethiopian culture as Americans. Our children are Chinese and Ethiopian, but they are also Americans. We accept that. We can't get away from that. Our children are going to embrace their birth cultures through American eyes and that's just how it is."

But the Whiteners plan to travel with their kids back to the lands of their births. Hopefully more than once. And they think it would be great if their children want some day to study in the countries where they were born.

The Whiteners have hung close to FCC since the adoption of their Chinese daughter. But two years ago when they knew they planned to adopt from Ethiopia as well, they joined the Ethiopian adoption in Austin, too. According to Whitener, "That group has about 40 people in it. We've gotten to know them." And sometimes people from the Ethiopia group attend Chinese playgroup parties at the Whiteners' house because the Whiteners merge their world and social groups, making the mixing recombination of multiculturalism not just a trend they follow or a principle they admire, but a genuine way of life at the most basic, everyday level.

If you ask Whitener if she is adopting from multiple countries because it's cool and trendy and because people like Angelina Jolie are doing it, she bursts out laughing. "No, no, no, no..." she says. "People like us who are adopting from different countries are following the availability of open countries to a certain extent. Angelina Jolie adopted from Vietnam, but then it closed. Then Guatemala opened and there were a lot of adoptions there. But then it closed. Ethiopia is open right now, so people are looking to adopt there. But we are not at all inspired by celebrities. We were on track to do this way before Angelina Jolie got going. I've never looked to celebrities to plan my life. We feel we need to do this in our guts. We feel it in our hearts. It's who we are. That's why we're doing it."

Whitener is convinced. And she's convincing. Talk to her and you'll know that if anybody can do it and make it work, she can.



Don't forget to check out the Austin FCC website. The web contains the latest event updates, play groups, membership renewal, and invaluable links and other resources.

<http://www.main.org/fccaustin/>

**2010 Austin FCC
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The Attachment Process

By Kathryn Zentner, LCSW

The most important relationship any child will experience during the first five years of life is the relationship with their primary caregiver. During this time attachment and bonding are taking place, and important connections are being formed in the child's brain. Much research has shown that the nature of the parent/child relationship shapes who the child will become and how their personality will develop.

The child who sees their primary caregiver as caring and responsive to their needs interprets:

- Him/Herself as lovable, special, competent, and able to make an impact on the world
- Others as loving, caring, responsive, and trustworthy
- The world as a safe, exciting place to explore

If the caregiver is not able to meet the child's needs, the child may interpret:

- Him/Herself as unlovable and incompetent
- Others as uncaring and untrustworthy
- The world as unsafe and full of threat

This list above outlines the differences in how a child sees him/herself, others, and the world depending on the care they receives in early childhood. A child who is adopted, in foster care, or has had several caregivers, may experience drastic differences in how they are parented. Parents who are very caring and responsive see their child as lovable and competent and the world as safe and loving. These parents do everything in their power to help the child feel safe and secure within the family. However, if the child has experienced trauma and/or his or her needs were not met by prior caregivers the child may have a very different view of the world. It is possible he or she does not feel lovable or capable, and sees the world as uncaring and full of threat. This child is very anxious and uncertain about their place in the world, including their ability to affect the world. Therefore, the child responds to their caregivers and peers in a way that appears dysfunctional or distorted.

For example, if the child feels he is unlovable and incompetent, he is likely to reject or sabotage the adult's attempts to make him feel special and loved. A child who sees others as uncaring and untrustworthy will project an image of self-sufficiency and independence and will reject a parent's attempts to help. A child who experiences the world as unsafe and full of threat will always be on guard and only feel safe if she is in control.

There are many situations that place a child at high risk for experiencing their caregivers as unable to meet their needs. Children are more at risk of developing attachment difficulties if they have experienced a combination of risk factors or the trauma is not confined to an isolated incident.

Parent/Caregiver Contributions	Child Contributions	Environment Contributions
Abuse and/or neglect	Difficult temperament, e.g. hyperactivity	Poverty
Ineffective or insensitive care	Premature birth	Violence: witness or victim
Mental health issues, e.g. postpartum depression, bipolar, chroniclogical disturbances	Medical conditions, including unrelieved pain, colic, chronic ear infections	High stress/chaos in family and/or community
Teenage parenting	Hospitalizations/separations	Multiple moves/caregivers
Substance abuse/addictions	Genetic factors: family history of mental illness	Lack of stimulation
Intergenerational attachment	Congenital or neurological problems	
Prolonged absence: prison, hospitalization, desertion		

The following are symptoms of attachment issues in four different categories. Any of them could be signs of attachment problems. A child may have some but not all of these symptoms. The severity of the symptoms is usually directly related

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to the severity of the relationship/attachment difficulties. However, attachment is not all or nothing—it exists on a continuum. Children who are “anxiously attached” may have a lot of these same symptoms. It is important to note that the above behaviors are coping mechanisms that helped the child survive their early experiences—and/or they are a product of the child’s distorted perception of their world. Therefore, they are part of who the child is and the child will work very hard to maintain them. Usually old-fashioned “consequences” do not eliminate these behaviors. To counteract the early trauma that lead to these beliefs and experiences, the child has to experience something different.

Social	Emotional	Behavioral	Developmental
Superficially engaging and charming	Indiscriminately affectionate	Destructive to self, others, and things	Developmental delays
Difficulty with eye contact	Not cuddly with parents	Cruel to pets and others	Lacks cause and effect thinking
Poor peer relationships	Need to get revenge (paybacks)	Steals and “crazy” lying	Lacks conscience
Lack of cooperative play	Demanding and clingy	Poor impulse control	Abnormal speech patterns
Persistent nonsense questions and incessant chatter	Lack of comfort seeking when hurt, frightened, or ill	Hoarding/gorging on food	High pain tolerance
Fights for control over everything	Excessive dependence or independence	Hyper-vigilance - always aware and “on guard”	Accident prone
Lack of appropriate boundaries	Sense of entitlement	Low frustration tolerance	Learning disorders

Disciplining a Child with Attachment Challenges

Children who have experienced early childhood trauma usually have underdeveloped emotional regulatory systems. This means they typically have more behavior problems because it is very difficult for them to handle situations that are highly stimulating, disappointing, frustrating, confusing or otherwise emotionally intense. When these children surpass their level of stress tolerance they will become dysregulated, and their behavior regresses to that of a much younger child. When this happens, it is imperative that the stress be interrupted by providing a calm regulated environment with a calm regulated adult. More punitive measures, i.e., yelling, threatening, removing privileges, etc. will only make the child more

Discipline Strategies that Work	Discipline Strategies that do NOT Work
Time-in	Time-out
Acknowledging the child’s feelings	Dismissing how the child feels
Saying “How can I help?” or “Help me understand.”	Demanding that the child do it “or else”
Intervening before the child “loses it”	Waiting till you can’t take it anymore
Meeting regressive needs	Expecting the child to always “act their age”
Taking responsibility for your part	Trying to find the biggest consequence possible
Spending one-on-one time with the child	Letting the child watch a lot of TV, video games
“Repairing” the relationship with nurture	Holding a grudge and fearing it will never get better
Modeling handling anger appropriately	Yelling, blaming, shaming
Restitution	Lectures, demanding the child say “I’m sorry”
Calm, soothing environments	Highly stimulating environments
Close supervision, structure	Chaotic transitions
Problem solving, compromises	Too many choices

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dysregulated, because these interventions increase the child's fear. The parent must do their best to "connect" with the child even during these periods of emotional dysregulation. This does NOT mean that the parent backs down and "gives in" to the child's demands. But it does mean that the parent stays with the child and tries to regulate the child with their presence.

Regardless of the child's history, many stressful experiences in a child's life can be successfully addressed by a caring adult. The adult may not have had control over what has happened to the child, but how the adult responds to the child can make a big difference in how he/she helps the child cope. It is important that all parents who have children with attachment issues (whether they are mild or severe) acknowledge that these children need special kinds of interactions to help them heal. We need to help the child change their perception of the world. And, we need to start now—because the longer a child is allowed to live with a dysfunctional belief system, the harder it is to counteract.

Books for parents and caregivers:

- *The Science of Parenting*, by Margo Sunderland
- *I Love You Rituals*, by Becky Bailey
- *Fun to Grow On*, by Virginia Morin
- *Playful Parenting*, by Larry Cohen
- *The Connected Child*, by Karyn Purvis and David Cross
- *Beyond Consequences, Logic, and Control*, by Heather Forbes and Bryan Post
- *Parenting from the Inside Out*, by Dan Siegel and Mary Hartzell
- *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog*, by Bruce Perry and Maia Szalavitz

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And the item at the tail end of the newsletter is about the end of a tail....

It's only appropriate that in the Year of the Tiger, Fursey Gotuaco plays in a tiger sanctuary in Thailand.

And we're not pulling your leg or your tail when we explain that this picture is not digitally enhanced and no tigers (or people!) were injured during the taking of the photo.