

## **Home in Homelessness**

by Michele Carlson

*I used to be the fictive daughter of a Korean family. I know this because once I found a worn black-and-white photograph of me as a baby tucked away, shuffled in with the few other tokens of past lifetimes we tend to keep close. A small wooden chest, still lined by the faint smell of cedar, guarded the photo. It was the type of chest that didn't seem worthy of the memories so distant that you needed something material to hold in your hands to confirm you were indeed there. The edges were so worn and the writing on the back so faint, if they hadn't told me I never would have been sure I was the baby in the photo at all.*

*I used to be the fictive daughter of a Korean family. I know this because I used to live on the prairie. We arrived there in a train of covered wagons that speckled white the sea of deep greens that rolled farther than our iron wheels would ever take us. We staked our claim, built our shanty, ate salt pork, and made dresses out of a spring poplin we bought from the general store. I still miss staring out into the openness with the breeze that was forever blowing my bonnet down my back.*

*I used to be the fictive daughter of a Korean family. I know this because once I tried to hang myself by my own fake rope that was 8,320 kilometers long. The rope was braided of cords pulled from the graveyard of broken headphones I have stashed under my bed. I wanted to guild it for theatrics, but instead I spray-painted it teal. I had begun to tire of the way the rope held up my forty-inch-waist pants, the size also for theatrics. I thought I needed that much rope, but apparently it was too long to hang anyone with.*

The creation of narratives is a custom often practiced within the transnational adoption community; the process of filling in the gaps of memory or holes in an adoptee's often unknown pre-adoption history. That work to build or expand pasts hinted at in the sparse notes on official adoption papers or the rare photograph that might come with an adoptee from his or her pre-adoption life. Yet these narratives are suggestive of what is produced in the adoptee from the practice and discourse of Asian transnational adoption that repeatedly positions the adoptee as a foreigner who must negotiate multiple histories, families, and nations. This positioning is rooted in loss, trauma, and compensation, beginning in the pre-adoption space and will follow the adoptee into adulthood to become what I suggest is a racially melancholic relationship or, simply put, a love-and-hate relationship between the birth homeland and the new adopted home.

**[insert image 1]**

The practice of transnational adoption has a history of being positioned within a rhetoric of legendary rescues and mythic Western saviors—often donning the label “American humanitarianism.” It is an agenda layered with the residue of imperialist and colonialist legacies, embodied in a need to help “over there.” Under the rubric of humanitarianism, questioning the motivations and practices of improving the living conditions of developing nations’ children is an inappropriate one. Good is being done. Yet part of the Asian transnational adoptee paradox lies in the understanding that such countries as South Korea and China are no longer considered Third World, let alone war-torn. As adoptions from these countries continue to increase, a critical examination of the processes, motivations, and discourse surrounding these practices is essential. A blind faith in the performance of the heroic Western savior speaks of colonialist assumptions that are still deeply embedded in the American psyche. These tendencies, coupled with an urgency to build family and nation in the United State continue to drive the way

transnational adoption is positioned in larger political, social, and economic contemporary discourses.

**[insert image two]**

For children adopted from China, this can begin with the Going Home Barbie doll, a special-edition doll Mattel updates annually.<sup>1</sup> Only 6,000 nonsellable Barbies are made annually. Eager parents will not find this toy at any of the local toy stores or online; it is given as a gift only to families adopting Chinese orphans who have gone to China to pick up their child and stay at the White Swan Hotel in Guangzhou.<sup>2</sup> Upon entering their room they will find a Going Home Barbie waiting for them on their pillow. The gesture, coupled with a note that reads, “This souvenir is presented by Mattel (HK) Ltd. to adopting parents of Chinese orphan children,” suggests adoptive parents are being rewarded for a good deed done through the process of adoption placing the adoptive parents neatly into the position of having saved a child—regardless of whether the position is welcome.

Going Home Barbie represents new beginnings, promised through plastic and cardboard representations of the adoptee’s new life and new home. The home depicted here is the archetype of the nuclear family’s American dream, white picket fence and all. A *mise en scène* that attempts to replicate a specific version of normativity—the white, upper-middle-class family; a visual icon of assimilation and citizenship created by one of the largest American toy manufacturers—that in and of itself speaks to the economic underpinnings that haunt the practice of transnational adoption. And for the female adoptee, what could be a better way to aid the smooth transition into a new family and nation than to create just for her one of the most historically recognizable and mainstream icons of American standards of normativity and femininity?

Going Home Barbie's plastic promise of family and belonging, easily wrapped into a cardboard box, embodies the logic of the adoptee's smooth assimilation into a new family and nation. In striking contrast to almost every other form of U.S. immigration, the speed at which a transnational adoptee moves from being a Korean orphan to American citizen is unprecedented, averaging just one year. Transnational adoptees can spend little to no time in their new home as figurative second-class citizens. It is a version of the American dream only made possible through transnational adoption; the so-called privileged position of not having to typically earn citizenship, as they are in a sense reborn with it to a new home, family, and nation.

Like the dream promised in Going Home Barbie's synthetic narrative, such assumed first-class citizenship is not as it seems, as the adoptee is technically reborn, or *naturalized*, versus literally being born a U.S. citizen. One who is naturalized is granted access to all the same rights and privileges as someone whose citizenship is delivered via an official U.S. birth certificate, yet the process of naturalization requires a relinquishing of a birth nation by the adoptee in exchange for U.S. citizenship. Fixed notions of loss and difference are embedded in the act of having to relinquish something in order to belong and are positioned as fundamental to the adoptee narrative. Neither erasure of cultural memory nor designation of first-class citizenship can ever fully be obtained, as naturalization itself is a constant reminder that the adoptee has not and will never truly belong.

The frailty of belonging and impermanence of assimilation haunts more than just the legal and political portions of the Asian-transnational adoptee experience. "Gotcha Day" is a term that has become common within the adoptive community to address the day the adoptee and his or her adoptive parents physically united as family.<sup>3</sup> The day is often an important part of the adoptee experience, sometimes even standing in for an unknown birth date. A Gotcha Day

can be arbitrarily decided by the family, yet is typically the day the adoptee arrived as an official member of the new family.<sup>4</sup> Web-based discussions generally agree that Gotcha Day, though special, does not call for large festivities, as a birthday traditionally warrants, but rather for a quieter celebration. The most common manner to acknowledge the day is to give a small present or hold an intimate gathering of the immediate family. Suggestions even include visiting orphanages, scrap-booking, and letter-writing to fictitious birth families in Asia.

The quiet celebration is confined to the walls of close family. The day is not announced: No brightly colored invitations go out at school; no balloons are tied to the mailbox that might wave and flap at arriving partygoers. Adoptive parents express concerns for nonadopted siblings for whom no Gotcha Day exists or the fear of bringing up hurtful pasts and difficult questions. Though well intended, the hushed nature of this day highlights the necessity for the adoptee to assimilate into the new family (and nation) in order for this remodeled nuclear family to function. Days that announce and reiterate the inherent differences of the adoptee from the rest of the family would in fact deflate this masquerade. Moments like this that celebrate an inherent difference, within the framework of the notion of sameness (as Gotcha Day often serves as a surrogate birthday), ultimately serve to reemphasize disparate narratives. Language of love, want, and desire the adoptive family performs is always overshadowed by a looming sense of difference.

As the child grows, the frailty of this belonging begins to manifest in the way the adoptee is positioned against her or his birth country. Personal questions soon emerge from curious outsiders intrigued by the notion of adoption:

“What do you think your life would have been like if you’d stayed in Korea?”

“When are you going to find your birth parents... your real parents?”

“Have you been back?” And if your answer is No, various responses follow: “Oh, when do you plan to go?” or “Do you think you’ll ever be ready to go back home?”

Such questions share several common threads: an understanding that something is missing, that it can be found, and that the person must be seeking a more (implied) authentic culture. The assumption that the adoptee experience is not legitimate is followed by an intuitive presumption that only one’s literal birth land is truly authentic. The complexity of the Korean adoptee paradox is that the language of transnational adoption and assimilation begins by asking for an erasure of past cultural memories the adoptee may not possess. Throughout adoptees’ lives they will then be constantly positioned against the actual past they were persuaded to forget. Through the constant connecting of the adoptee’s identity to such words such *arriving*, *going back*, *find*, and *real*, a sense that something is missing is an inherent result in the story and, consequentially, an expectation that it must be found develops.

\*\*\*

*I am moving. I am fairly certain the movement is flying. I cannot tell for sure but I know that it is not rolling, even at a high speed. I cannot sense the ground. There is a vibration that makes a sound somewhere between a hum and a roar, and it is dark. Cool. On second thought, it is cold, almost freezing. The type of cold you do not recognize until it has a moment to set in and suddenly it hits hard, somewhere deep in your body with a force that makes you almost convulse against the shock of it. The dark settles to a blue-black filter over the eyes, like sunglasses in a dimly lit room. I can see only in silhouette. There are crates stacked high to the ceiling. I cannot actually see the ceiling, but I assume the crates reach it. They are those generic-looking, unmarked plywood crates holding unknown cargo going to an unknown place. It’s almost reminiscent of the scene in a so-called blow-up action film in which the deal goes down and the*

*room is anxious to erupt. It is a maze of generic crates you can tell holds tenderly packed, precious cargo; the uninteresting casings that protect the England's Royal Scepter of the Dove or the Sovereign's Orb are meant to look unimportant as not to alert anyone that the Royal Crown Jewels are being transported out of the country.*

*Wandering through the labyrinth of unidentifiable crates, I come to a clearing. It is a small clearing between the walls of jewels packed within plywood boxes full of foam peanuts and velvet pouches. Something is in the middle of the clearing. I squint. My eyes adjust and I see the silhouette of a basket lined with a white blanket and trimmed with ribbon and baby blue plaid ruffles. It looks out of place yet familiar, comfortable. I know it though I have never seen it before. I walk toward the basket without apprehension or the fear one should have in a cargo plane in the dark. I look in the basket and discover a baby. The baby also is unafraid and seems to wait patiently. We will arrive soon. I look closer. There is a note tucked carefully, safely between the child and the white lining. I do not read the note.*

For most overseas adoptees little to no knowledge of pre-adoption life exists, particularly of birth families. Within transnational adoption, the pre-adoption space is often seen as a void or an absence: a mystery, lightly seasoned with a few weakly scented facts that in and of themselves provoke more questions than answers. Adopted children piece together a history based on an image and copies of adoption papers that inherently incite questions, imaginings, and perhaps even longings. These stories and narratives serve to compensate, if not replace, the unknown and unanswerable questions that haunt adoption. An attempt to fulfill a need to position the *What if?* questions in a comprehensible light: *What if I hadn't been put up for adoption? What if my birth parents had raised me? What if I grew up in Korea and not the United States?* In many ways

these narratives also are attempts to deflect, or even cope with the idea that these questions may never be answered.

These stories go only so far in the construction of an adopted identity and often produce a desire and urgency for something more tangible and concrete. The most promoted and popular enactment of such a desire is the return of the adoptee's indigenous culture as delivered through the burgeoning post-adoption services. Though this "return of culture" manifests in many forms, discussed in detail below, they carry a compensatory undertone rooted in the recovery of something lost that ultimately positions the pre-adoption space as one of loss and trauma—as the act of *returning* inherently carries an imbedded sense of loss. I suggest for adoptees their own potential desire to ask questions and seek answers about their pre-adoption history is not a purely organic process. However, its focus is aided, directed and even determined by adoptive parents and broader societal misunderstandings and preconceived ideas of Asian American identity formation. What is of particular concern is the way in which adoptive parents and society predetermine the space of pre-adoption as a place of trauma that inevitably continues to ground the adoptee's story as one of loss and melancholia.

The adopted child's birth country is often the one fact that is actually fixed in the pre-adoption narrative, as names, birthdates, and the like often can be difficult to verify. From the beginning of the adoption process there is a sense that culture should be a key player in the psychological and emotional development of the adoptee, beginning with the initial colonial-esque desire to help children of other cultures "over there" to the political confirmation that culture is an imperative part of the adoptee's growth. Toby Alice Volkman, cultural anthropologist and adoptive parent, states in her essay, "Embodying Chinese Culture," the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the 1993 Hague Convention on

Intercountry Adoption, states: “Due regard shall be paid to the desirability of continuity in a child’s upbringing and to the child’s ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background.”<sup>5</sup> At least some connection to the adoptee’s birth heritage is imperative.

**[insert image 3]**

Since the 1990s, heritage camps, or culture camps, have become the predominant and most widely accessible version of post-adoption, culture-based programming and are strategically designed to offer the transnational adoptee a “cultural immersion” into her or his birth culture.<sup>6</sup> Lessons on all the categories exist that typically define culture: cuisine, dance, art, music, folktales, and language. Children consume, learn, and perform elements of their birth culture chosen by adoptive parents and the camp’s staff. Korean culture camp attendees learn Tae Kwon Do, cook kim chi, and count to ten in *hangul*, the Korean language. The birth heritage becomes represented and embodied in a popular food dish, dance move, or sweet-sounding tune. Staying true to the blanket of omissions that conspicuously drape transnational adoption, much is left out of this cultural lesson. These selective elements of culture begin to stand in for political and economic histories that are as much a part of the adoptee experience as dance, music, and food might be.

The portions of the adoptee’s birth culture that are acceptable, or seen as necessary to consume, teach, and practice, point also to the desire to maintain traditional structures of normativity, family, nation, and kinship. Exposing adoptees to such selective portions of their birth culture demonstrates the urgency to regulate culture to practices that seemingly empower or offer agency under the veil of positivity, but would not run the risk of disrupting, or threatening, a smooth assimilation. Now comes the conscious decision to teach the more celebratory aspects of culture—eclipsing the inconspicuous but pointed omission of the more complex and often

difficult political and social histories of Asia, Asian America, and the practice of transnational adoption itself. I suggest this drive to focus on learning and performing an adopted “birth culture” over more difficult aspects of history and identity is aided, directed, and even determined by a broader misunderstanding of Asian American identity formation, one that has a long legacy of positioning the Asian American subject against their distant Asian birth lands.<sup>7</sup>

This ever-present call for Asian Americans to perform their own “Asian-ness” is addressed by comedienne/actress/author Margaret Cho in her 2000 hit stand-up comedy performance *I’m the One That I Want*. Cho reminisces on her 1994 short-lived television sitcom, *All American Girl*. It was the first of its kind to have Asian Americans as principal characters. Cho recalls how the producers of the show hired her an “Asian coach” to improve her on-camera performance as an Asian American. In true comedic fashion, this rendition of Cho’s memory is filled with exaggeration and over-dramatized accounts of being taught to take off her shoes when entering a house and learning to eat with chopsticks that she could later put in her hair. Ultimately, Cho was not Asian American enough to play an Asian American on television. Yet from her comedy performance it becomes clear that Cho actually was not Asian enough to satisfy what producers anticipated their audiences would identify as Asian American. Cho so poignantly exposes the continued legacy of positioning Asian Americans in relation to their ethnic roots in a far-away motherland, a practice that ultimately works to fix Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners, even within their American homes.

The depiction of Asian Americans in popular media points to a recurring practice of viewing Asian Americans through an Orientalist lens, one that is suggestive of a lingering need to position them as perpetually foreign. It is evidence of a legacy that guides, and even directs, the way the West continues to understand and consume the East. Recall that for the Asian

adoptee, the process of adoption is, in and of itself, part of what ensures the speedy transition from foreigner to first-class citizen—albeit one that requires a clean break from the past, with insurance that comes in the form of a new name, family, and naturalization. And yet throughout the adoptees' lives, they will be constantly reminded they are not, in fact, first-class citizens. From the multiracial family to the structure set in place that conflates Asian Americans with representations of Asia and Orientalist Asian tropes, adoptees are reminded that the past, their birth culture, must be constantly performed.

The Western mainstream misunderstanding of Asian American identity formation is also evident in the way African American and Asian American culture camps are structured. Colorado Heritage Camps, Inc., which is one of the few camp organizations that offers an African American camp, ministering to children adopted from both African countries, the Caribbean, and domestically adopted African American children. The theme for 2007 is “Art and Soul,” which will focus on music, dance, creative writing, and food from Africa, the Caribbean, and America. This camp also specifically offers lessons on hair and skincare that is geared toward parents.<sup>8</sup> Hands Around the World, another post-adoption organization, also offers an African American session, but this organization pre-selects a specific African country from which to cull culture. Regardless of what African country each session's camper might be adopted from, they all learn the pre-chosen country's culture. What is unique about this camp is that they offer a class on African American history, typically ranging anywhere from the antebellum South to the Civil Rights movement. In 2006 the session was titled “Pearl of Africa” and focused on cultural aspects of Uganda and the American historical era of Reconstruction.<sup>9</sup> Here, campers were taught snippets of “African-ness” and “African American-ness.”

Comparatively, Asian heritage camps are never positioned as Asian American. They do not learn about Asian American history, which has a long and often buried historical, political, and legal legacy in the United States. Anne Cheng suggests a legacy is in place that allows for the so-called colloquial misunderstanding of Asia and Asian America.<sup>10</sup> Evidence of this pattern is illustrated in the logic of the culture camps and stems from the misunderstanding of Asian America as synonymous with “all things Asian,” packing the negotiation of multiple intersections of difference and identity into one neatly packaged box—a misunderstanding that continues to reposition the adoptee as foreigner and disconnected from home. The ability to simultaneously reject the call for this particular identification with these representations of Asia becomes frustrated as these performances are often called for within the context of the adopted family.

The permission to consume Asian-ness hinges on it being positioned against and within white heteronormativity and its corresponding practices of family building, considering the majority of Asian transnational adoptees are adopted into white families. Many heritage camps allow and support the attendance of adoptive children’s siblings, but the entire family is a growing trend. According to the Colorado Heritage Camp’s website, its mission statement promotes the attendance of the entire family:

... These camps provide an opportunity to share in a common experience that fulfills a sense of community and individual identity. It is our hope that every adopted child will leave a heritage camp knowing more about who they are and where they came from, and that every member of the family will have a better awareness of and sense of pride in their adopted child’s birth heritage. The camps let children and families relish in being part of a larger group “just like themselves”.<sup>11</sup>

Often community and family are interchanged on heritage camp websites, recognizing the most important part of adoptees’ assimilation into their new home (and ultimately their new nation) is

through the family. Kamp Kimchee, a culture camp in Minnesota, also heralds a mission statement that focuses on positivity. Its aim is to create an environment that provides and teaches positive experiences for the adoptee.<sup>12</sup> However, a focus on positivity works on several levels to eclipse the complexity of the adoptee experience and inherently presumes a troubled subject. The goal of positivity and the need for happy endings work to avoid the lived experience of the adoptee's life, leaving little room for personal contradiction, ambivalence, and the potentiality for a package of so-called messy knots that make up the entanglement of the adoptee's many disparate identities.

Conversely, the camps also can become a venue for adoptive parents to interact with "their child's culture." Sociologist Sara Dorow suggests in her research on the cultural economy of transnational adoption, the camps also serve as a type of bonding experience with the child, but played out vicariously through the images, representations, and performances of the birth country.<sup>13</sup> Pointing back to evidence of the compensatory nature of the post-adoption voice, Dorow suggests that not only are adoptive parents compensating for the perceived loss of the birth culture, but also that they were more the cause of that loss.<sup>14</sup> But this language of loss goes only so far because making up for this particular loss is possible as long as it does not threaten the structure of the family. When examining the camps' websites that advertise such cultural immersion, one can see images of adoptive parents cooking what are presumably *pahn jahn*, a traditional Korean dish, in what looks like a makeshift kitchen.

**[insert image 5]**

The walls are decorated in Americana: wooden cut-outs of flags, hearts, and banners all patterned in the familiar red, white, and blue stars and stripes imbue a sense of nostalgia and familiarity. The use of the bicentennial flag spread against the rustic, unfinished pine walls of the

cabin reference an earlier time of pioneers bravely charting unknown territories. Here is a reassuring setting for the modern pioneering family, exploring new cross-cultural transnational families.

The context of culture camp, coupled with the frailty of citizenship and belonging, suggests this nostalgic scene is not only reassuring for adoptive parents, but also serves as a gentle reminder for the adoptee of where his or her home actually is. The easily identifiable, loaded symbols and colors that adorn the bare walls are conspicuously hung to represent the adopted family and nation. These are a mnemonic signal that home is not actually in the birth culture the adoptive parents are paying for the adoptee to learn, or the culture with which adoptees are assumed to inherently identify. This image hints at the dominating idea that the adoptive child will inevitably be unable to resist the call of the motherland and needs these images as a constant reinforcement that home is truly with the adopted family and nation.

For the adoptee, this positioning of the Asian homeland does not offer realistic options to engage it as a place to seek lost biological families or rebuild severed kinship—it is simply mythic. It is the idea of a homeland based on the western representation of Asia and ruptured notions of authenticity taught by Asian coaches and culture camp counselors. Inscribed within the rhetoric of rescue, immigration practices and post-adoption services, Asian transnational adoptees are constantly asked to identify with and simultaneously reject their Asian birth cultures. If Asian American adoptees are always the foreigners in their homes in America and they are simultaneously positioned to search for a homeland embodied in a myth, then where do they actually find home? What is at stake for adoptees when they are positioned, as perpetually looking for home, is that they will ultimately never find it—not in the Korean mythic motherland

or in the familiar space of the adopted home. Home becomes embodied in phantom memories and a permanent feeling of displacement. It is yet another reminder they will always be foreign.

Yet Asian American adoptees have found ways to negotiate this perpetual foreignness. Not found on the lists of post-adoption services, but rather on websites built by adoptees that offer a personal and critical engagement with the topic of transnational adoption: In Third Space and the infamous Transracial Abductees or “chat-style” websites, such as Myspace.com, Yahoo groups, online journals, and blogs. Negotiating a Yahoo Groups page is a similar experience to writing an email because the pages are primarily text with spaces for the user to write one another and read past postings from others in the group. The Internet offers adoptees a type of community with whom they can dislodge more visually rooted signifiers, such as race and gender, which might typically determine or complicate these adoptees’ identities. Members discuss anything from current events to the latest celebrity scandal. They also share heart-wrenching and overwhelming stories of racism, meeting birth parents, and any of the other endless experiences they have had as a transnational adoptee and as a person negotiating any myriad forms of difference and identity. Anonymous or otherwise, these stories are offered to the group, to the public whom they have or may never meet, a faceless community of which they are deeply committed to and for which they have become responsible.

The virtual space is not a substitute for birth parents or unknown pasts. It does not repair or prevent racist or discriminatory exchanges. It is not a place to shed or reject subjects’ positions, as one’s body is still the one performing within this virtual space. Nor can it replace a physical community with those who are always looming, waiting for one to log out. Yet it does offer adoptees one more space to shape: a place where a potentiality exists to form a group identity, a stake in shared experiences, and the tool of community with those who are similarly

building and searching; a space that is less fraught with so-called authenticity, the prevailing model for post-adoption services. Though purely virtual, this is a space they have built on their own that has the potential to be unlike what one would negotiate in their physical world. These spaces are built in the hope fellow adoptees will collect the necessary tools to find their way home, and if already at home, that they will use these tools to build something new

## Notes

1. Mattel donates its Going Home Barbie every year to the White Swan Hotel in Guangzhou, China. October 3, 2004.
2. China's strict adoption policies require at least one adoptive parent to travel to China to escort their adopted child to the United States. The U.S. consulate that specialized in overseas adoption is located next-door to the five-star White Swan Hotel, thus hosting over 4,000 Chinese adopting families per year.
3. The origins of the term "Gotcha Day" are unknown, but it has worked its way into the fabric of many adoption communities, specifically overseas adoptions. There is even a rumored national Gotcha Day, though I was unable to verify an exact date.
4. Other dates have included the date adoption papers were finalized (known as the finalization date), the day the adoptee first met adoptive parents, and naturalization dates.
5. Toby Alice Volkman, Ed., *Cultures of Transnational Adoption*, Duke University Press, 2005, 93.
6. These camps are created and run predominantly by adoptive parents who seek to offer their adoptive child a connection to their birth culture and rely heavily on donations and volunteering from other adoptive parents, the adoptive community and camp alumni. Camps are also offered by adoption agencies for those using their services, such as Holt International Adoption Services, the pioneer and largest transnational adoption service in North America.
7. *All American Girl*, the first nationally broadcasted sitcom to depict an Asian American family as its principal characters, was produced as part of a wider multiculturalism-rooted urgency to see more persons of color on television and in the media. This urgency worked to celebrate difference within the framework of "sameness," or heteronormative structures—family, school, or the office—and included *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, *Hanging with Mr. Cooper*, and *Living Single*, amongst others, that were all created or running in the mid-1990s.
8. The Colorado Heritage Camps, Inc. <http://www.heritagecamps.org/afam.html>
9. Hands Around the World.  
[http://www.handsaroundtheworld.com/camp\\_list.cfm?culture=African%20American](http://www.handsaroundtheworld.com/camp_list.cfm?culture=African%20American)
10. Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief (Race and American Culture)*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001, xii, 271.
11. The Colorado Heritage Camps, Inc. <http://www.heritagecamps.org/index.html>
12. Kamp Kimchee homepage. [www.kampkimchee.org](http://www.kampkimchee.org)

13. Sara Dorow, *Transnational Adoption: A Culture Economy of Race, Gender, and Kinship*, New York, University Press, ix, 331.

14. Dorow. Op cit. 240–244.

---

1. Mattel donates its Going Home Barbie every year to the White Swan Hotel in Guangzhou, China. October 3, 2004.

2. China's strict adoption policies require at least one adoptive parent to travel to China to escort their adopted child to the United States. The U.S. consulate that specialized in overseas adoption is located next-door to the five-star White Swan Hotel, thus hosting over 4,000 Chinese adopting families per year.

3. The origins of the term "Gotcha Day" are unknown, but it has worked its way into the fabric of many adoption communities, specifically overseas adoptions. There is even a rumored national Gotcha Day, though I was unable to verify an exact date.

4. Other dates have included the date adoption papers were finalized (known as the finalization date), the day the adoptee first met adoptive parents, and naturalization dates.

5. Toby Alice Volkman. *Cultures of Transnational Adoption*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005. 93.

6. These camps are created and run predominantly by adoptive parents who seek to offer their adoptive child a connection to their birth culture and rely heavily on donations and volunteering from other adoptive parents, the adoptive community and camp alumni. Camps are also offered by adoption agencies for those using their services, such as Holt International Adoption Services, the pioneer and largest transnational adoption service in North America.

7. *All American Girl*, the first nationally broadcasted sitcom to depict an Asian American family as its principal characters, was produced as part of a wider multiculturalism-rooted urgency to see more persons of color on television and in the media. This urgency worked to celebrate difference within the framework of "sameness," or heteronormative structures—family, school, or the office—and included *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, *Hanging with Mr. Cooper*, and *Living Single*, amongst others, that were all created or running in the mid-1990s.

8. The Colorado Heritage Camps, Inc. <http://www.heritagecamps.org/afam.html>

9. Hands Around the World. [http://www.handsaroundtheworld.com/camp\\_list.cfm?culture=African%20American](http://www.handsaroundtheworld.com/camp_list.cfm?culture=African%20American)

10. Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race, Race and American Culture*. Oxford [England]; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. 69.

11. The Colorado Heritage Camps, Inc. <http://www.heritagecamps.org/index.html>

12. Kamp Kimchee homepage. [www.kampkimchee.org](http://www.kampkimchee.org)

13. Dorow. Op cit. 240–244.

14. Ibid.