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Wedding Citizenship and CultureKOREAN ADOPTEES AND THE GLOBAL FAMILY OF KOREA

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Kim, Eleana

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Eleana Kim

On a hot August afternoon in a bucolic setting on the outskirts of Kwangju, South Korea, a palanquin was hoisted up and brought to the site of a canopy tent, under which a table, laden with food, alcohol, and two live chickens, rested. An elderly Korean man intoned directions into a microphone and an interpreter called out the translation in English. Around fifty Koreans, the women dressed in Korean *hanbok*, surrounded the tent, and all eyes were on the heavily made up bride as she was helped out of the palanquin, her face turned down into her hands, elbows raised to either side of her head. She and the bridegroom knelt on opposite sides of the table, rising awkwardly to kowtow several times, pouring and ceremoniously sipping alcohol from carved out gourds—and thus endured the elaborate ritual of a traditional Korean wedding ceremony.

In this pastoral location, the authenticity of the ritual performance was made conspicuous by tennis shoes and sports sandals peeking out from beneath the *hanbok* (which were poorly fitted—some too large and some too small for their wearers) and by men in tank tops and shorts looking on from a distance. As the spectators stood on tiptoe and craned their necks to observe the careful gestures of the bride and groom, their gazes were frequently interrupted by the aggressive movements of television camera crews. Some onlookers were elbowed out of the way by camerapeople getting into position, another was hit in the head more than once by a camera being wielded on a cameraperson's shoulder.

This was not, by any means, a typical Korean wedding—in fact, it was not even a legitimate union between a man and a woman.¹ The presence of the cameras and their intrusiveness on the experience of those watching suggested that the real intended audience was elsewhere, on the other side of the lens. The audience here was being captured as part of the same spectacle—for ultimate consumption by the Korean public.

In fact, the “wedding” was staged for a group of overseas Korean adoptees, invited and hosted by the South Korean government under the auspices of the Overseas Koreans Foundation (OKF), a division of South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The roles of bride and groom were played by Korean adoptees, and the onlookers were, for the most part, other adoptees or, like myself, camp counselors.² It was the seventh day of a ten-day program in which thirty adoptees, ranging in age

from sixteen to thirty-four and hailing from North America, Europe, and Australia, participated. On this day, perhaps aggravated by the heat, frustrations had mounted, and the presence of the media only made things worse. Later, some complained to me that they felt like “animals in a zoo,” made a spectacle of as they were transported from location to location on what one adoptee called “the orphan bus,” emblazoned with a banner that read “2001 Summer Cultural Awareness Training Program for Overseas Adopted Koreans” [*kukoe ibyang tongp’o moguk munhwa yeonsu*] in Korean and English.

I begin this article with a story from the 2001 OKF summer program to suggest how the attempts and gestures of the South Korean state to grant “Koreanness” to overseas Korean adoptees come into conflict with the desires and experiences of adopted Koreans themselves.³ The OKF program was in many ways an attempt to wed Korean adoptees to “Korea,”⁴ an invitation to the “motherland” so that they might, as offered by the president of OKF, “begin to feel the breath of Korea’s rich culture.” The OKF program was cohosted by Global Overseas Adoptees’ Link (GOA’L), a four-year-old adoptee-established organization that in January 2002 received NGO status from the South Korean government, and by Bridge of Adoptees from Chonnam Kwangju (BACK), an independent volunteer Korean organization headed by a local businessperson. It occupied the participants with activities that included trips to ancient palaces and courses on Korean “traditional” food and customs, thus introducing them to a folklorized vision of Korean culture.⁵ Attendees were largely discouraged from experiencing contemporary urban South Korean life, aside from one afternoon of sightseeing in Seoul, several hours at Korea’s largest amusement park, and a presentation of the ROK’s military prowess at the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). One day of the program was devoted to the third annual GOA’L conference, where issues such as search for and reunion with birth families and the human rights of adoptees were addressed. Although the OKF participants constituted the majority of the conference attendees, they were not involved in the conference proceedings or presentations.

The wedding of Korean adoptees to Korea has both political and affective dimensions that are mutually informing. Transnational Korean adoptees have recently been legally incorporated into the “global family” of South Korea as part of the cultural and economic “globalization” policy (*segryehwa*) nominally inaugurated under former president Kim Young Sam and expanded under president Kim Dae Jung (see S. Kim 2000). OKF, established in 1997, is the prime government agency for incorporating overseas Koreans (*chaeye tongp’o*) and has as its mission “to serve as

the spokesperson on behalf of overseas Koreans worldwide. We recognize their immense contributions, which have provided a tremendous boost, not only to the Korean economy during the 1997 economic crisis, but also the morale of Koreans everywhere” (Overseas Koreans Foundation 2001). Overseas Koreans are welcomed back as part of a global economic consolidation project as well as to participate in Korea’s global reputation. Recently gaining recognition as “overseas Koreans” in 1999, adoptees are now also eligible for F-4 visa status, which allows them, as overseas Koreans, to stay in Korea for up to two years with rights to work, make financial investments, buy real estate, and obtain medical insurance and pensions.⁶ Yet this recognition of their political and economic citizenship disregards the difficulties of negotiating the “cultural citizenship” of Korean adoptees in South Korea and elsewhere.⁷

The ritual ceremony described above, I argue, reveals how Korean adoptees’ “identity,” existing as it does between available diasporic categories, both in the West and in South Korea, is brought into visibility at moments when the motives of the state come into contradiction with the lived, felt experiences of adoptees in their “birth country,” as they unearth their pasts, recover embodied memory, and confront the “elsewhereness” of their “authentic” identities. Encounters with the South Korean state thus become awkward weddings of “culture” and “citizenship,” where stagings of identity, orchestrated by the state, provoke unintended and unanticipated effects among adoptees, opening up the possibility for resistant practices and alternative senses of belonging. This article offers a preliminary examination of the dynamics between the South Korean state and Korean adoptees, based on participant observation conducted in the summer of 2001 at the OKF program and in September 1999 at the first Gathering of the First Generation of Korean Adoptees. I examine these two sites to demonstrate how a collective adoptee consciousness is being elaborated in active relation to the South Korean state, provoked by “disidentification” with hegemonic versions of being “Korean.”

The camp was a government-sponsored “motherland” tour and the Gathering an adoptee-organized biannual conference that has planted the seeds for what is emerging as a self-consciously global movement. Despite this important difference, both sites provide lenses onto the complex ways in which Korean adoptees encounter “Korea.” Moreover, they demonstrate that the diversity of Korean adoptees’ experiences frustrates attempts at broad generalization. Not only do differences among them cut across personal histories and nationalities, they also transgress boundaries of class, race, gender, and sexuality, as well as religion, generation, and region.⁸

Adult adopted Koreans negotiate a complex relationship to Korea in a globalized economy that has made it possible for them to recognize

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their own ethnic identity in new ways, both individually and collectively. This identity is also being reformulated by the South Korean state in light of a broader political and social transformation that places Korean adoptees in an ambiguous position—being at once reminders of a difficult past and beacons of an ideal, global future (see Hubinette 2002). This essay also explores this dialectical relationship by posing questions about cultural citizenship and national belonging for a diaspora that is being newly (re)valued by the South Korean state.

Disidentification

Muñoz (1999) employs the concept of *disidentification* to reference a strategy of cultural survival in which subaltern performances of difference become “rituals of transformation” that render visible the boundaries of symbolic meaning and the constructedness of naturalized social categories. From a less psychoanalytically inflected perspective, Lowe (1996) writes that “disidentification expresses a space in which alienations, in the cultural, political and economic senses, can be rearticulated in oppositional forms. It allows for the exploration of alternative political and cultural subjectivities that emerge within the continuing effects of displacement” (103–4). I draw upon both Muñoz and Lowe (extending their discussions of minoritarian cultural politics in the United States into a transnational context) to argue that it is precisely in the moments of “disidentification” with the official narrative of the South Korean state that the “adoptee” as a problematic social category becomes visible.⁹

Against the attempted enrollment of adoptees into the mythic national narrative or into an ahistorical folklorist spectacle, Korean adoptee “auto-ethnographies” and what I call “sites of collective articulation” (E. Kim 2001) constitute individual and group visibility through expressive forms and social practice. I interpret these practices as inscriptions of an unofficial history of adoption from South Korea, one in which histories of dislocation and displacement reveal the possibilities for counterhegemonic reimaginings of social relations. It is through translocal practices that Korean adoptees are constructing and questioning their “roots” against the autochthonous master narrative proffered by the Korean state.

Ritual performances produced by the South Korean state, like the wedding ceremony, encourage Korean adoptees to participate in enactments of Koreanness, yet they also produce a conflicted sense of cultural belonging, often provoking feelings of inauthenticity and alienation—and sometimes active resistance. Moreover, the welcoming embrace offered to Korean adoptees by the South Korean government is also a stifling one,

one that requires “forgetting,” in order to present adoptees as harbingers of the global future of Korea.

For many adoptees who go to South Korea, the past weighs heavily, whether as something to actively explore through birth family searches or as something to defer. Many confront their individual histories and understandings of cultural identity and belonging in ways that they may never have done before. This sense of belonging is, in some ways, connected to “Korea” as nation-state and ethnic-cultural paradigm, but it is also produced out of a disjuncture from “Korea.” The social memory of transnational Korean adoptees is necessarily fractured, diverse, and deterritorialized. And, as Korean *adopteeness* is increasingly articulated by a collective, global, and deterritorialized community, collective histories, constructed through shared storytelling, constitute a kind of “disidentificatory” practice out of which Korean adoptee cultural citizenship emerges.

For most of the participants, the OKF program was an opportunity to come to South Korea, to meet other adoptees, and to share their stories. For some of them, it was a chance to seek information about their birth families or to try to meet their foster parents. The program, however, was geared toward “cultural training.” Under pressure from her superior, the director of the program laid out very strict rules of attendance and curfews, making many participants, who were adults in their twenties and thirties, feel infantilized. Not a few participants, therefore, felt their desires were frustrated or ignored by the camp organizers, who planned an exhausting and tightly packed itinerary that kept them occupied in “cultural training” activities for twelve to fifteen hours a day. Because of the tight schedule, groups of adoptees often stayed awake until four or five o’clock in the morning to socialize in a relaxed atmosphere and to share their personal stories.

According to the OKF Web site, its intention was “to promote Korea’s rich cultural heritage, and to give the resident Koreans abroad a chance to explore their motherland and gain better understanding of Korea through language study, cultural training and touring. Through such training, [OKF] aspire[s] to help Korean adoptees understand and appreciate their Korean identity” (Overseas Koreans Foundation 2001). The program thus constructed the adoptees as tourists, with an emphasis on their lack of cultural competence over an acknowledgment of their intimate and embodied ties to Korea and to their biological families. Moreover, the statement above points to an underlying assumption that Korean adoptees have a “Korean identity” that they need to “understand and appreciate” and thus to a central tension between opposing notions of identity as either biologically given or culturally achieved.

In addition, the program became an opportunity for the Korean

media to dramatize adoptee stories, to spectacularize their lack of cultural knowledge, and to highlight the Korean government's efforts to welcome adoptees back to their "motherland." The media became a problematic presence, underscoring for many adoptees the instrumentalizing logic behind the program itself. Indeed, the "adoption problem" in Korea is one that the major broadcasting stations have exploited in recent years. The increasing numbers of adopted Koreans returning to South Korea every year are particularly vulnerable to the voracious media appetite for melodramatic content, especially issues surrounding family separation, cultural loss, and transnational contingency.¹⁰

For some adoptees, traveling in a group that clearly marked them as "tourists" made asserting their rights to Koreanness very important. During the trip to the amusement park, one adoptee from France was talking animatedly with other French-speaking adoptees as they were being harnessed into an adventure ride. The ride attendant, clearly curious about their cultural backgrounds, asked if they were Japanese or American. I was about to answer that they were from France, when the French adoptee, fluent in French and English and competent in basic Korean, pointed to himself emphatically and asserted, in English and Korean: "I'm Korean! *Hankuk saram!*"

In encounters between adoptees and "Korea," a play of authenticity and difference merges and collides with discourses of nationalism and globalization, creating a range of contradictions, in the midst of which, I argue, an increasing number of adoptees are finding a place to inhabit and make claims to being "Korean." Conferences and roots tours serve as sites for performances of "culture" and also for the articulation of multiple losses—of birth family, of cultural "authenticity," of psychic wholeness, of personal history and memory, and of legitimate citizenship. These counterdiscourses oppose the facile attempts of the state and adoption institutions to imbue adoptees with "cultural roots" or diasporic "identities." "Korea" as the site of primary dislocation thus also becomes a site of conflicting identifications. Through these encounters one can begin to see the ways that the Koreanness of Korean adoptees is being conjured, appropriated, and incorporated, and how their complicated histories both comply with and resist those appropriations. Adoptees' disidentification from the construction of Koreanness offered by the South Korean state produces a counterhegemonic production of Korean adopteehood, and the proliferation of "sites of collective articulation"—activity in cities around the world and on the Internet—constitutes alternative locations for the production of Koreanness, Korean adopteehood, and for the emergence of a collective history.¹¹

The Global Movement of Korean Adoptees (I)

The history of adoption from South Korea spans five decades, which makes South Korea's the longest continuous foreign adoption program in the world. Harry Holt, an evangelical Christian and logging magnate from Oregon, became a legendary figure in Korean adoptee history when he and his wife, Bertha, adopted eight GI babies in 1955. Largely because of their efforts, both the Korean and the U.S. governments hastily passed legislation to facilitate the rescue of these children (Sarri, Baik, and Bombyk 1998). The Holts soon established the Holt Adoption Agency (now Holt International Children's Services), which continues to be the leading agency for transnational adoption today. Following the first wave of mixed-race children came full-blood Korean "orphans," relinquished in large part due to extreme poverty, a lack of social service options, and a staunchly patrilineal, "Confucian" society that places primal importance on consanguineous relations, especially on the status that comes with bearing sons. According to Altstein and Simon (1991, 4), South Korea allowed "almost unrestricted adoption" of orphaned and abandoned children from the 1950s through the 1970s.

Whereas the women who relinquished their children in the 1960s and 1970s tended to be poor factory workers, by the 1980s, as South Korea's economic boom took off, unmarried college-age women were giving up their babies. Today, a trend in teen pregnancies has supported the supply of adoptable babies. No doubt, factors such as South Korea's rapid industrialization, uneven economic development, patriarchal attitudes about women's sexuality, residual gender ideologies in contradiction with liberal sexual practices, and the recent IMF crisis serve to perpetuate the social conditions that contribute to the abandonment or relinquishment of children in South Korea.

Between 1955 and 1998, over 197,000 South Korean children were adopted in South Korea and abroad, with around 150,000 having been sent overseas. Approximately 100,000 of those adopted were sent to American families, the rest adopted into European families. In the United States, South Korean adoption accounted for over half of the total international adoptions during the 1980s and early 1990s. In 1989, with most countries sending less than one-tenth of 1 percent of live births abroad, South Korea was sending 1 percent of live births (Kane 1993, 336); at its peak, this totaled over 8,000 children in one year alone.

North Korea had already criticized the South Korean government for its liberal adoption policies in the late 1970s, and the government subsequently took steps to reduce the numbers of foreign adoptions by instituting the Five Year Plan for Adoption and Foster Care (1976–81), which

included measures to promote domestic adoption (Sarri, Baik, and Bombyk 1998). Then, when South Korea achieved international recognition and honor as the host of the 1988 Summer Olympics in Seoul, it also received negative scrutiny from the American press for exporting its “greatest natural resource,” its children. Reportedly bringing in \$15 to 20 million per year, adoption in South Korea had become a business and a cost-effective way of dealing with social welfare problems (Herrmann and Kasper 1992; Sarri, Baik, and Bombyk 1998).

Due to growing ignominy in the eyes of the international community, the government soon announced a plan to gradually phase out adoption, implementing a quota system to reduce the number of children sent abroad by 3 to 5 percent a year. In addition, state policies in the early 1990s encouraged domestic adoptions through tax incentives and family benefits and gave preference to foreign couples willing to adopt mixed-race or “special needs” children. An eleven-year decline in transnational South Korean adoption was reversed with the IMF crisis, which caused a concomitant crisis of overflowing orphanages. In 1996, approximately five thousand children were placed in state care, and that figure was projected to be double in 1998, leading the Ministry of Health and Welfare to announce that it “has no choice but to make changes to recent policy which sought to restrict the number of children adopted overseas” (C.-k. Kim 1999).

Adoption from South Korea has proven to be extremely sensitive to economic fluctuations and concerns over the nation’s international reputation. As recently as July 2002, following the successful cohosting of the 2002 World Cup games, the government announced a series of measures to further bolster the nation’s image that included a plan to end overseas adoption (Shim 2002). It is too soon to determine whether this new plan will, in fact, lead to the end of international adoptions from South Korea or whether it, too, will be set back by economic pressures, as has been the case with other such plans over the past four decades.

What is certain is that South Korea, with the lowest social welfare spending of any OECD country (S. Kim 2000, 26), holds aspirations for advanced-nation status that render its continued reliance on foreign adoption problematic. Economic and material realities suggest that these periodic abatement plans will continue to be shortsighted and ineffectual unless adequate resources are developed for the welfare of women and children. Other problematic hurdles to the curtailment of adoption are related to the deeply embedded patriarchal ideologies of Korea—the social stigma associated with single parenthood, the low status of women, and the “Confucian” rejection of nonagnate adoption—and they render the choice of single motherhood in Korea a hazardous or wholly unfeasible one for most women.

Domestic adoptions have been on a slow yet steady increase since 1995, with 1,726 adoptions by South Koreans in 1999, yet South Korean adopters can only partially alleviate the problem of seven thousand children in need of welfare intervention each year (Jang 2000). Public education campaigns encouraging greater receptiveness to domestic adoption have been instituted by adoption agencies in South Korea, and increasing openness among parents of adopted children has helped to reduce some of the stigma of adoption in South Korea. Foreign adoptions from South Korea have dropped to around 2,000 per year, yet the nation continues to rank third in the world—after Russia and China—in the number of children adopted by Americans annually.¹² The international movement of two thousand South Korean children is now matched by a reverse movement of 2,000 or more Korean adult adoptees who return to South Korea every year.

The Global Movement of Korean Adoptees (II)

With generations of adopted Korean children having come of age since the 1950s, elaborations of a distinctive “Korean adoptee” identity have begun to emerge over the past few years. Many are now excavating their own pasts and critiquing assimilationist models to ask questions about kinship, social relations, biological ties, and “family” ideology. Against the dominant discourses provided by Korean, American, and Korean American communities, they are actively exercising a Korean adoptee “voice” in the process of naming and constituting what one Korean American adoptee has dubbed a “fourth culture” (Stock 1999). Their experiences as “pioneers” of transnational adoption have made them valuable resources for rethinking adoption policy and practice. Some individuals and groups are participating in the current and future practice of Korean and transnational adoption as advisers and consultants to agencies and parents or as mentors for younger adoptees. And some adoptees are now adopting children from South Korea themselves, building multigenerational Korean adoptive families.

The “fourth culture” of Korean adoptees is one based on a common core experience of being adopted and Korean. Yet the balance of these two categories of identity varies among individuals, and for adoptees at both the Gathering and on the OKF tour, other vectors of identity, such as regional commonalities, seemed more relevant than being either Korean or adopted. Nevertheless, the potent pull of “roots” has drawn a significant number of Korean adoptees to sites such as these to begin to explore questions of kinship, ethnicity, and identity.

The ability of overseas adopted Koreans to imagine themselves as part of a transnational community of adoptees and as “Koreans” has only recently been made possible through global flows of communication and media and also through the direct intervention of the state, which has begun to publicly acknowledge adoptees as part of the modern “global family” of Korea. Transnational flows and circulations have created more opportunities for adoptees and biological families to find and meet each other, with electronic registries and the Internet providing faster and more efficient means of tracking and disseminating information.

In addition, over the past decade, the Internet has facilitated the growth of organized groups of adult Korean adoptees around the world. They are beginning to elaborate a counterhistory to the official narrative of adoption produced by the South Korean state. Since the early 1990s, at least a dozen adult adoptee organizations and support groups have sprung up worldwide—in Europe, Australia, the United States, and South Korea. Along with numerous listservs, Web sites, newsletters, magazines, and literary anthologies, these “sites of collective articulation” provide spaces for the voicing and exploration of shared historical origins and common experiences with assimilation, racism, identity, and dual kinship. Adoptees of Korean descent are producing and managing a growing sense of collectivity from the available cultural and ethnic categories. They are performing their own form of cultural work on the borderlands “beyond culture” (Gupta and Ferguson 1992) and asserting their position in a global “ethnoscape” (Appadurai 1996) constructed out of discourses of Korean diaspora and transnationality.

Developing out of a common history and a growing globalized consciousness, this “imagined community” (Anderson 1991) negotiates and brings to light a complicated and troubled relationship to “Korea” as nation-state, culture, and place. Common feelings of disorientation and alienation from Korean culture are expressed by adoptees who go back to Korea, and desires for “authentic” personhood (Yngvesson and Mahoney 2000) frequently surface in adoptee activities of self-narration. These narratives suggest that the ideal of building bridges, of being “flexible citizens” (Ong 1999) or postcolonial hybrid subjects may be more compelling in theory than it is in lived practice (see Maira 1999). Transnational Korean adoptees have historical, biological, and ethnic connections to their country of birth, yet, for many of them, those connections are abstracted from their everyday lives, having been raised in majority white cultures in American and European Caucasian homes. A concern with identity and loss emerges in much adoptee artwork, in which expressive practice enacts a recuperative (re)production or (re)creation of a memory of Korea that has been severed or forgotten (E. Kim 2001).

The Korean adoptee “movement” has been both a community-building project and a political one, exhibiting concerns with both cultural struggle and social policy. Sites of collective articulation and the searches for self and identity through different aspects of adoptee experience contribute to the production of what Teshome Gabriel refers to as “a multi-generational and trans-individual autobiography, i.e., a symbolic autobiography where the collective subject is the focus. A critical scrutiny of this extended sense of autobiography (perhaps hetero-biography) is more than an expression of shared experience, it is a mark of solidarity with people’s lives and struggles” (cited in Xing 1998, 93). The Gathering and the OKF program help to illuminate some of the translocal conjunctures that form the broader context for the emergence of Korean adoptee heterobiography, constituted by their discursive and symbolic practices.

The Gathering

In September 1999, over four hundred Korean-born adoptees from thirty-six U.S. states and several western European countries congregated for three days in Washington, D.C.¹³ Heralded as the “first significant and deliberate opportunity for the first generation of Korean adult adoptees to come together,” the Gathering of the First Generation of Korean Adoptees, or simply the Gathering, as it was called by participants, did not purport to advance a specific political or ideological agenda but rather was described as “a time for us to celebrate that which we all share . . .” (Gathering 1999; ellipsis in original). Restricted to adoptees over the age of twenty-one and their spouses or partners, with some spaces reserved for “adoption researchers” and adoption agency “observers,” the Gathering was one of three major international public events of 1999 that, together, represent a growing Korean adoptee presence and a self-conscious production of what Fraser (1992) calls a “counterpublic.”¹⁴

The Gathering was touted as the first conference organized by, and exclusively for, adult Korean adoptees. For many there, it symbolized an important moment of self-determination in which they asserted their autonomy from families, agencies, and governments—institutions that, since their relinquishment, had decided their fates and mediated their realities. The framing of adoption as an accomplishment was continually emphasized in the opening remarks of the conference, often with a sense of wonder, pride, or gratitude. No doubt, these dominant representations exclude the negative experiences that many adoptees have endured due to displacement, anti-Asian racism, and the social stigma that accompanies transracial adoption.

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The title of the conference, “The Gathering,” carries with it connotations of communalism, nonpartisanship, and quasi-religiosity, underscored by the Korean translation that accompanied it, “da hamgae” (*ta hamgge*). Translated as “all together,” this phrase is suggestive of a collective voice, or chorus, singing in unison. As articulated by Susan Soon-Keum Cox—then vice president of public policy and external affairs for Holt International, conceiver and primary organizer of the conference, and herself a Korean-Caucasian adoptee who was adopted in 1956—the intention of the conference was to “focus on us,” that is, the adoptees, for whom the “connection to the birth country is forever.”

This connection to the birth country for individual adoptees, however, has been fraught and difficult and only recently acknowledged by the South Korean state. For some adoptees, their actual experiences in South Korea have been marked by perceived rejection, outright discrimination, and painful alienation. After returning to their birth country, “Korea,” for many of them, becomes demystified as a place of nostalgia or “home,” as they come to accept that they are, as one American adoptee put it, “genetically Korean, but culturally American.” At the Gathering, “Korea”—as nation-state, as “culture,” and as memory—was diversely articulated by government officials, adoption agency professionals, and adoptees. An essentialized Koreanness was being drawn upon by all of those constituencies but in very different ways, bringing out conflicting interpretations of whether or not Korean adoptees are “Korean” and, if they are, how they are.

The Global Family of Korea

In tandem with this recent proliferation of adult adoptee activity, the Kim Dae Jung administration has demonstrated a remarkably open attitude toward adoptees—through policy reforms, public recognition of Korean adoptees in South Korea, and official statements such as at this conference. A symbolic break occurred in 1998, shortly after President Kim’s inauguration, when he invited twenty-nine Korean adoptees to the Blue House and offered them an unprecedented public apology. Along with visa rights extended to adoptees, the opening of the Adoption Center in Seoul in 1999 indicates the government’s interest in openly addressing the public stigma of adoption in South Korea.¹⁵ This recent recognition of overseas adopted Koreans has been credited in part to the advocacy and encouragement of President Kim Dae Jung’s wife, First Lady Lee Hee-ho. At the Gathering, First Lady Lee, presented via video and speaking in Korean with English subtitles, provided a matronly face for the symbolic

“motherland,” embracing adoptees as a source of pride for adoptive parents, Korean culture, and the South Korean state.

Her video address emphasized the ethnic roots of Korean adoptees, exhorting them to “forget your difficult past and renew your relations with your native country in order to work together toward common goals based on the blood ties that cannot be severed.” Lee emphasized the role of adoptees in the future of South Korea which, as she stated, is “developing day by day to become a first-rated nation in the twenty-first century. It will be a warm and reliable support for all of you.” Drawing upon a globalization ideology coupled awkwardly with metaphors of nurturance, her message was embedded in an economic discourse in which the South Korean nation continues to aspire to First World status. In this narrative, South Korea, which may have been unable to take care of its own in the past, is now capable of incorporating and “supporting” its abandoned children.

South Korean ambassador Lee Hong Koo echoed the First Lady’s sentiments, adding that the role of Korean adoptees would be to build a bridge “between the country of birth and the present country of citizenship.” These statements reveal a significant proactive shift on the part of the South Korean state in defining the ambiguous position of Korean adoptees with respect to “the country of birth and the present country of citizenship.” The distinction between the two seems to posit an opposition between the birth country—to which, as Susan Cox stated, “the connection . . . is forever”—and the adoptive country in the West, which is the contingent, “present” one of citizenship rather than of blood. The birth country thus stands as an “authentic” source of Koreanness, an inalienable tie that binds Korean adoptees to the nation and, more overtly now, to the state.

The rhetoric of “success” that echoed throughout the opening plenary session was undoubtedly influenced by the elevated class status of these adoptees, as indexed by their college educations and professional occupations.¹⁶ Ambassador Lee noted in his speech, “You demonstrate the capacity to transform oneself from humble beginnings to success.” In many ways, then, adoptees would seem to reflect the same progress and development model offered by the narrative of South Korea’s miraculous and meteoric rise: out of a colonial past through the devastation of war to its ascendance as a newly industrialized “Asian Tiger,” boasting the world’s eleventh largest economy in 1996. These expressions are tokens of a larger national project that seeks to interpellate and co-opt adoptees as overseas Koreans to be integrated into a modern, hierarchically structured Korean “family,” even as the state and adoption agencies frequently discourage or frustrate adoptee searches for their biological families. This

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national project indicates a desire to construct certain overseas Koreans as productive links between South Korea and the global economy, writing them into a narrative of neoliberal capitalism that excludes “other” Koreans—women, biracial Koreans, and nonaffluent diasporic Koreans in the global South (see Park 1996). These adopted children, now adults, are framed as cultural and economic bridges to the West, as representatives of Korean culture, and as potential mediators of global capital. The position of the Korean adoptee vis-à-vis the state thus reveals the competing discourses of nationalism and globalization for a modern, industrialized nation dominated by U.S. economic and cultural imperialism.

What emerged during the conference, however, was a disidentification between the rhetoric of the South Korean state and the lived experience of adoptees, who feel disconnected, culturally foreign, and ontologically displaced in South Korea. What constitutes their ties to South Korea is precisely those memories of the “difficult past” that Lee Hee-ho exhorted the adoptees to “forget.” Unearthing those memories is part of the process of return, search, and reunion for many of these adoptees. As Lisa Lowe points out, “*political emancipation* through citizenship is never an operation confined to the negation of individual *private* particulars; it requires the negation of a history of social relations” (1996, 26–27; emphasis in original). The “forgetting” of personal and national trauma is encouraged not only in American multiculturalist ideologies but also in the recent attempts by the South Korean government to produce a homogeneously “Korean” yet heterogeneously dispersed “family” based on shared ancestors, or “blood.”

Against the narrative of “success” and “achievement” that characterized the opening plenary session, the adoptee-centered workshops complicated the meanings of that “success,” with attendees sharing intimate and painful memories of Korea, their childhoods in America, and the negative experiences of living in a white culture—with a “white” name and family but an Asian physiognomy.¹⁷ The experiences of adoptees in South Korea, as expressed in a workshop I attended,¹⁸ reflected a sense of disappointment in the failure of the fantasy of “home” to live up to reality. For some it was a very painful time, as they faced their pasts, confronted their feelings about being adopted, and worked out complicated issues about race, ethnicity, and culture. Many expressed amazement at finally being in a place where they looked like everyone else, but also spoke of the difficulty of not “relating” to Koreans or Korean culture. Others had more positive experiences, with one attendee insisting that one or two trips would not be enough; he had been back to Korea six times, because “you have to go several times to understand your relationship to [Korea].”

Overwhelmingly, across all of the workshop groups, adoptees expressed feelings of discrimination from Americans and feelings of rejection from

both South Koreans and Korean Americans. The perception of being “looked down upon” was linked by adoptees to interactions with South Koreans who treated them as objects of pity. Other adoptees mentioned meeting South Koreans who were surprised at how well they had grown up, for they had only heard sensationalist stories about sexual abuse and slavery of adopted children by foreigners.

A survey of participants at the Gathering found that 40 percent of respondents said they identified as Caucasian in their adolescence and perceived Asians as “the Other” (Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute 1999). For adoptees who grew up isolated from others like them and who identified primarily as Americans, therefore, racial discrimination posed a particularly difficult form of double-consciousness. Even the most empathetic parents were perceived as unable to fully relate to the experience of racism, thereby intensifying feelings of alienation and racial difference. Some described it as a pendulum swinging back and forth between “Korean” and “American” sides. Many agreed with one attendee’s sense that “Koreans reject the American side, Americans reject the Korean side,” adding that “Koreans reject the adoption side. For them, I [have] no family, no history.”

Adolescent adoptees who were encouraged to make connections to their Korean “heritage” by their adoptive parents often rejected those attempts, feeling that the culture pushed on them was “overdetermined,” as if they were “the only ones with an ethnic identity.” As one adoptee said, “Kids just want to fit in and be normal,” and many agreed that they felt most comfortable in “mainstream” white culture. Another adoptee described her identity as being “about culture, and your culture is not your face—but you’re pinpointed for that all your life.” But the recognition of a broad historical and cultural shift was clear; as one adoptee stated, an “international identity is emerging,” and another informed his cohort, “Don’t you know? Asian people are ‘in’ now.”

Much of the cultural work emerging at sites such as the Gathering is centered on the articulation of double-consciousness, as well as a double-orientalizing move, one based on reified understandings of “culture” and “nation.” Adoptees who may feel alienated from Korea as well as from “traditional” Korean or Korean diaspora communities often Otherize “Korea,” even as they attempt to understand what it means “to be Korean.” So, while many adoptees used the metaphor of a pendulum to describe the experience of swinging between Korean and American “sides,” there is also a tendency to speak of being “Korean” in ethnicized and essentializing ways. At the same time, however, the Korean state is invested in a self-orientalizing project that is tied to tourist discourses and its own vision of itself as an “Asian Tiger” (see Ong 1999).

This double-orientalizing move complicates any easy interpretations of Korean adoptee articulations of identity as subaltern interventions and instead calls for an investigation of the dialectical relation between these practices and the dominant notions of being Korean in the diaspora and in South Korea. Louie (2000) writes about the Chinese American youth on “roots” tours to China, arguing that the tours raise “tensions . . . between historically rooted assumptions about Chineseness as a racial category and changing ways of being culturally, racially and politically Chinese (in China and the diaspora)” (655). Adoptees, occupying an ambiguous and troubled place in the Korean imaginary, raise similar tensions. As reminders and remainders of South Korea’s Third World past, the “illicit” sexual practices of Korean women, and American cultural and economic imperialism, they are the specters of a repressed history, one on which the official narrative of South Korean modernity utterly depends.

Yet adult adoptees now occupy a peculiarly privileged position in the context of the global economy. Having been reared in predominantly middle- to upper-middle-class white families, adoptees may lack cultural “authenticity,” but this is seen as a necessary loss in return for the benefits of material wealth, “success,” and the opportunities afforded by the West. In this way, international adoptees may be considered literal embodiments of the contradictory processes of “globalization.” The play of identity and difference that characterizes Korean transnational transracial adoption is one in which Koreanness is a national, political, and cultural discourse that seeks to interpellate adult Korean adoptees into a productive role in the global economy, and one that Korean adoptees face when they encounter other overseas Koreans and especially when they return to South Korea.

At the district office of Kangdong-gu, Seoul, South Korea, a conference room was set up for a special citizenship ceremony. A cameraperson from the Educational Broadcasting System (EBS), who’d been following the group everywhere, was joined here by other camera crews from other major stations. I was asked to explain to the adoptees that the reason they were invited was to receive an identification card and a certificate of honorary citizenship (*myeonggyekumin*) to Kangdong-gu, an outlying district on the eastern edge of metropolitan Seoul. The adoptees were welcomed by the mayor of Kangdong-gu, who, in his ardently delivered speech, went so far as to suggest that each adoptee consider Kangdong-gu to be his or her “hometown” (*kohyang*).¹⁹ “If you get lost, you can tell people that you are from Kangdong-gu.” They should, he said, feel free to contact the district office if they had any problems while in Korea. Another counselor, who lives in the district, whispered to me, “They can’t even

help the people who live here—how are they supposed to help them [the adoptees]?” Each adoptee was ceremoniously given a certificate and an ID card with his or her picture and Korean name—neither of them were official documents but rather symbolic artifacts intended as a gesture of welcome to the adoptees.

A volunteer representative for the adoptees, a college student from Massachusetts, then rose and gave words of appreciation to the mayor on behalf of the group. She was overwhelmed with the show of generosity and broke down in tears. As the event was wrapping up, a twenty-year-old male adoptee from France, now living in Seoul, asked if he could get information at the district office about changing his visa status but was told to contact the office at a later time. The group was invited out to a celebratory dinner/karaoke party, and afterward I asked two American adoptees what they thought of the ceremony. One of them, echoing the sentiments of the woman from Massachusetts, said in earnest, “It was so nice of them. I can’t believe it. They really didn’t have to do this.” The adoptee from France and another from Italy offered starkly different impressions. They were deeply offended and compared the ID cards to toys, agreeing with each other that “they are treating us like children.”

Perhaps due to the stifling summer humidity or to their poor construction, the Kangdong-gu ID cards, laminated pieces of cardboard with passport-size photos pasted on, started to break apart within a few days. By the end of the trip, the adoptees, despite differences in age, nationality, personal histories, and individual concerns, had come together to express collective outrage at the program organizers and the Korean government. After a lengthy meeting from which counselors were prohibited, they appeared as a united group, confronting the camp organizer with a list of demands. They felt that their camp experience had been co-opted and abused by the South Korean government, primarily through the media. They demanded to have a meeting with the president of OKF to present their concerns about the program. Many felt that they had been misinformed about the program, which had initially advertised on its Web site that assistance would be provided for birth family searches. They were thoroughly cynical, believing that “it’s all about money.” More than one adoptee said, “This is about the media and the World Cup. They’re using us to show how great adoption is.”

There was a strong sense of solidarity within the group, overcoming latent rifts due to cultural and linguistic barriers between the English-speaking and French-speaking adoptees. Yet some did exhibit ambivalence, expressing their gratitude to the Korean government for hosting the trip and to the director and counselors for their efforts and their friendship, whereas others were incensed enough to threaten to leave the group

entirely. One adoptee from Chicago told me that the program was the first time he'd felt like he "fit" among a group of people, and for many of the adoptees on the trip, for whom this was the first time they had met other adoptees like themselves, it seemed to be a very memorable, if not a transformative, experience.

An Internet group was set up shortly after the trip ended, and there has been talk of a transatlantic reunion as well as of coordinated trips back to Korea. A lively exchange has been maintained, full of information and advice about, among other things, living in Korea, language programs, job announcements, adoptee conference updates, how to talk to one's adoptive parents about the desire to search, and the difficulties of dealing with racism and discrimination in Korea and at home. An adoptee from Chicago has started an adoptee organization there and is networking with other Korean adoptee organizations.

The Diasporic Futures of Korean Adoptees

Korean transnational adoptees present a challenge to anthropological categories of diaspora and hybridity that are used to describe transnational subjects marked by dislocation and/or deterritorialization. Perhaps most similar to "exiles" or "refugees," adoptees are distinct because of their emigration as children. The aspect of agency that grants a measure of rational choice to the exile, even under extreme duress, is, arguably, of a lesser degree and kind for the adoptee. Adoptees' connection to "homeland" is often embodied yet disconnected from practical consciousness, and they often lack any images or documents of their preadoption pasts. For this reason, in many Korean adoptee cultural forms, including the program for the Gathering, preadoption photos and documents are fetishized and present a talismanic aura. Often they are displayed as a juxtaposition of "before" and "after" photographs, outlining a trajectory from one location to another, from one name and possible identity to another.

Gupta and Ferguson (1992) discuss the power of imaginary "homelands" for diasporic or exiled peoples: "The relation to homeland may be very differently constructed in different settings. Moreover, even in more completely deterritorialized times and settings—settings where 'home' is not only distant, but where the very notion of 'home' as a durably fixed place is in doubt—aspects of our lives remain highly 'localized' in a social sense" (11). The first Gathering and the OKF program, I argue, were local sites that encouraged the exploration of subjectivity and group identity, mediated through available discourses on cultural citizenship and belonging. For adult adoptees, located at the borderlands beyond "cul-

ture,” Korea presents a problematic site of identity, memory, and desire, and for adoptees who have returned to their country of birth, the common experience of demystification, largely due to negative experiences with Korean ethnocentrism, leaves many with a stronger feeling of loss and of being without “home.”

In discussing issues of national identity with an adoptee from Germany and one from France, I asked, rather naively, if they couldn’t imagine themselves as being both Korean and German, or Korean and French, as I try to imagine myself as both Korean and American. The French adoptee asserted, “You need to be situated in a nation. It’s too idealistic to think that you can live in between. You need to be sure in a concrete reality.” As the cases of the OKF camp and the Gathering indicate, hybridity, or dual belonging, is often felt to be an uncomfortable in-between state that is an undesirable, or even untenable, location. Unable to be fully “French” in France or even “American” in the United States, they are likewise unable to be fully “Korean” in South Korea or in the Korean diaspora. For another young French adoptee who declared, “I don’t like France and I don’t like Korea,” the question still remains, “Where can I go?”

A possible answer to that question might be that “home” is where you make it. Based on this research, I argue that, as Lowe (1996) attests, “Displacement, decolonization and disidentification are crucial grounds for the emergence of . . . critique” (104) and for the emergence of alternative histories. And as Barbara Yngvesson suggests, the potential for a “cosmopolitan, counterhegemonic consciousness among adoptees” is latent in the proliferation of discursive activity and shared social practice (2000, 305). Sharing stories and imagining community is, like the production of “public intimacy” in the disability community that Ginsburg and Rapp (2001) describe, a form of “mediated kinship” that, in this case, offers a critique and remodeling of both kinship and national belonging in South Korea and elsewhere.

Public recognition of adoptees in South Korea has also come about through the work of adoptee activists in Korea who have mobilized for greater awareness and sensitivity to adoptee issues. GOA’L is now recognized as an NGO in Korea, and the newly appointed chair of its board of directors is a member of the South Korean National Assembly. Adoption is a recurring political issue of major significance, and the continuing concern with South Korea’s global economic and political position may result in more attention to the role adoptees can play in bolstering the nation’s international reputation. In addition, an interest in overseas Koreans in general has been growing in South Korea, with special “diaspora” showcases in art exhibits and film festivals that seem regularly to include

Korean adoptee work. There are a number of Korean adoptee artists living and working in South Korea, performing their own interventions and producing activist media related to their experiences in South Korea and as adoptees. Some Korean American adoptee groups also articulate a self-conscious bridge-building role between South Korea and the United States, thus echoing the rhetoric of the South Korean state.

This increasing visibility of Korean adoptees in South Korea and in the world carries with it the ambivalences and contradictions inherent in political representation and the concomitant dangers of co-optation and appropriation, especially since transnational Korean adoptees are being courted by the South Korean government in unprecedented ways and with unclear motives. As adoptees are further accepted into the “global family” of Korea, their complex histories, as the events of the OKF program suggest, may become reduced to spectacles of national and cultural alterity, thus denying a history of violence and displacement in favor of homecoming and national reunion.

Adoption from South Korea is central to understanding South Korean modernity. It continues to be a part of its “postcolonial” history that is at once repressed yet crucial to understanding how the official narrative of South Korea’s “economic miracle” and “struggle for democracy” erases the violence of the military regime and ignores the draconian development and misogynistic population policies that produced South Korea’s “successful” capitalist transformation. As Chungmoo Choi (1997) writes, “Assuming South Korea to be postcolonial eludes the political, social and economic realities of its people, which lie behind that celebrated sign ‘post’ of periodization, without considering the substantive specificity of Korean histories” (349). My work is also, therefore, concerned with the “substantive specificity of Korean histories,” in particular, a history that has bodied forth in the past several years with the unexpected and unprecedented return of over 2,000 adoptees to South Korea every year, a previously unimaginable scenario for adoption agencies and the government.

Adoptees and social activists in South Korea have criticized the state’s continued reliance on international adoption as a social welfare policy solution (Sarri, Baik, and Bombyk 1998) and its complicity in the perpetuation of gendered inequalities. Birth mothers—often working-class women, teen mothers, abandoned single mothers, sex workers, and victims of rape—represent the most subordinated groups in an entrenched patriarchy and misogynistic state welfare system, and are brought into the public gaze with the arrival of adoptees and their desire to locate their social and biological connections.

Adoption from South Korea resulted from the initial crisis of orphans and mixed-race GI babies during the Korean conflict and continued as a

product of rapid economic and structural transformations, as a consequence of Cold War population and development policies intended to build national “stability.” Adoption flourished as a profitable enterprise in the 1970s and 1980s, during a period of political repression and massive social unrest. As adult adoptees organize a political voice, their collective counter-memories—composed of individual memories (and lack of memories) of Korea, often tragic and painful preadoption histories, and return trips to South Korea—are important articulations of personal and national history that demand further investigation.

Moreover, transnational Korean adoptees challenge dominant ideologies that conflate race, nation, culture, and language in the definition of what it means to be “Korean,” and this distinctive subject-position potentially disrupts facile culturalist and nativist assumptions about belonging and identity. There are a number of competing claims to the adoptee’s Koreanness—from the state, adoption agencies, adoptee groups, and adoptee artists—wherein nostalgia, “authenticity,” and “tradition” are mobilized in the production of Korean “culture” and “identity.” These claims have important ramifications for other internationally adopted individuals and adoptive communities who are themselves negotiating the vexing question of cultural heritage.

As the cultural work of Korean adoptees demonstrates, Korean adoption has as much to do with reimagining kinship as it does with recasting diaspora. Transnational families are becoming commonplace in many areas of the world, and the deep ethical ambiguities of adoption are increasingly being publicly explored in transnational adoption communities, including that of Korean adult adoptees (see Volkman in this issue for a discussion of the Chinese adoption community). Korean adoptees, with their adoptive families and their biological families, are building “superextended” families (Roe 1994) and also a sense of kinship among themselves. This community, based initially on common experience, is extending into one based on solidarity and shared experience. Recognized as Korean, they are making claims as Koreans, but with a difference.

Notes

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1. Folk weddings such as this one have long been out of fashion in Korea where, since the 1960s, syncretic “modern” wedding forms involve Western-style unions of individuals rather than the symbolic joining of households and patrilineages. There was a resurgence of traditional-style weddings in South Korea in the 1980s, yet even so a number of the South Korean counselors at this wedding ceremony were fascinated by the performance, as they had never witnessed one before. See Kendall 1996.

2. The counselors were all native Koreans who spoke English, some of whom were volunteers for GOA'L. We were all paid nominally. As the only Korean American counselor, I was frequently asked to perform as a Korean-English interpreter and was relied upon by the director of the program to make announcements to the adoptees in English. There was also a Korean-French interpreter.

3. I place “Koreanness” in scare quotes as an indication of the inherently unstable field of reference it attempts to denote. For reasons of style, however, I will use the term without quotes in the remainder of the paper.

4. “Korea” in this article designates an idealized concept of South Korea as a cultural entity, geographic region, and national political unity. I use “Korea” in quotes to indicate a reified notion that conflates place, culture, and identity and use South Korea (without quotes) wherever possible to indicate the specificity of the South Korean state and its bounded geopolitical territory.

5. There have been a proliferation of “motherland” tours for adoptees in recent years, and the 2001 OKF camp can in no way be deemed representative. Some, especially those organized by adoption agencies, make birth parent searches central to the program; others, like this one, focus primarily on “culture” or language training.

6. Unlike other overseas Koreans, however, adoptees must be able to prove that they were born in Korea by providing documentation from their adoption agencies.

7. For a discussion of anthropological theories of cultural citizenship, see Siu 2001. Siu writes, “Cultural citizenship extends the conventional understanding of citizenship as a legal-juridical category to include the qualitative and differential experiences of citizenship in everyday interactions and situations” (9).

8. There are clear differences in experience and racial formation between European adoptees and their North American counterparts that cannot be adequately addressed in an article of this length.

9. Certainly, overseas adoptees experience “disidentification” from the hegemonic cultural and racialized scripts in the countries where they were raised, and this alienation most likely contributes to the desire to connect to “Korea,” to locate an “authentic” identity. This essay, however, focuses on the local encounters between adoptees and “Korea,” and can only suggest the relationship between their feelings of alterity in majority white societies of the West. For a comprehensive study of cultural identity issues among Korean adoptees in Minnesota, see Meier 1998.

10. Reporters are a significant source of information and assistance for adoptees searching for their birth families. They can help adoptees who are

unable to navigate the bureaucratic channels due to language barriers. Newspapers run advertisements with identifying information and television news programs show brief clips of adoptees on their searches. It seems to be a mutually beneficial arrangement, for if the reporter can find the adoptee's biological family, he or she has clinched a story (see Adolphson 1999).

11. At the second Gathering, it was reported that "some participants started thinking that they were part of their adoptive country, and then they discovered the Korean culture. Today, they realise that they do not associate with being neither Korean nor their adoptive country [*sic*]; they begin to associate with people in Korean adoptee associations" (Sloth 2001, 30).

12. In 2002, however, this trend was broken by a significant increase in the number of Guatemalan children adopted into the United States, while South Korean adoptions, under the quota system, remained steady. For the first time, Guatemalan adoptions exceeded those from South Korea.

13. The large majority of the four hundred participants were from the United States, with around a dozen adoptees from European countries. For this reason, the perspectives of adoptees in the United States tended to dominate the discussions. The Oslo Gathering in 2002 was primarily attended by European adoptees, mostly from Scandinavia.

14. The other events were the Global Overseas Adoptees' Link (GOA'L) Conference in Seoul and the Korean American Adoptee and Adoptive Family Network (KAAN) Conference in Los Angeles. Both are annual conferences that are now in their fourth year. Fraser writes, "Subaltern counterpublics have a dual character. On the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as bases and training grounds for agitational activities directed toward wider publics. It is precisely in the dialectic between these two functions that their emancipatory potential resides" (1992, 110).

15. In December 2002, Roh Moo Hyun was elected to succeed Kim Dae Jung as South Korea's next president. The presidential elections were overshadowed by increasing tensions between the United States and North Korea following North Korea's announcement of its clandestine nuclear weapons program, and were accompanied by massive anti-American protests in South Korea over the acquittal of U.S. military personnel who killed two Korean schoolgirls in a traffic accident. Many believe that Roh's successful campaign capitalized on South Koreans' anti-American sentiment and widespread opposition to the Bush administration's handling of the North Korean situation. Roh's election signals popular resistance to the paternalism that has characterized the relationship between the two nations since the Korean War. Adoption from South Korea to the United States has always depended on a close political alliance between the two countries, and the recent tensions and shifts in this relationship will undoubtedly have significant effects on adoption policy and practice.

16. According to a survey of the Gathering participants, 70 percent had graduated from college, 24 percent had graduate degrees, and 15 percent were enrolled in university or postgraduate work.

17. It is important to note that although most adoptees at the conference were raised by white, middle-class families, there was a great deal of diversity with respect to color, racial identification, class, and sexuality.

18. The adoptees were divided into six groups according to the years in which they were adopted, with a seventh for adoptees' spouses and partners. I sat

in on one session, a group of over fifty adoptees who had arrived between the years of 1967 and 1970.

19. Of course, the adoptees, all having been born in Korea, have their own *kohyang*.

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