



Newsletter 17, July 2010

ADOPTIONS, FAMILIES, CHILDHOODS

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Introduction

One of the firsts activities carried out by those who later create AFIN was the conference *La adopción y el acogimiento: presente y perspectivas* on the 4th of October 2004 at the Universitat de Barcelona, one of the first meetings in Catalonia and Spain about international adoption.

However, it has probably not been remembered by this, but for the fact that it gathered around the same 'table' both scientists and researchers, professionals and technicians, administrators and solicitors, members of Adoption Agencies and family associations and families themselves, in order to exchange experiences and knowledges.

This attempt to inter-relate the voices of those who participate from different fields in issues as complex as adoption and fosterage, that initially 'scared' those who believed it was complicated and inconvenient to gather a group so heterogeneous in terms of interests and actions. Nevertheless, it ended up being one of its principals goals, taking into account the assessment received from those who assisted.

Those results and repercussions confirmed the benefits of a format that has been used again on the I International Forum of Childhood and Families *De Filias y Fobias: del parentesco biológico al cultural* on September/October 2006, on the International Conference *La adopción internacional entre el 'allá' y el 'aquí'* on February 2008, on the conference *Efectos de la Institucionalización en la Infancia* on March 2009 and on the International Conferences *La 'integración' de la adopción internacional* on May 2010, organized by AFIN, always giving positive results and experiences to those who assisted and/or participated.

'Giving the voice' to different experiences, thoughts, opinions and situations in relation to adoptions and fosterages in particular or to families and childhoods in general, is also one of the purposes of the AFIN's Newsletter.

This Newsletter 17, written by Jennifer, a young lady who was born in China and adopted by a family from the USA that took part in the AFIN Conference on May 2010, is an example of this. The [Newsletter 13](#) was also at the time and example of this, in which an adoptive mother shared her experience in relation to children's literature about adoption.

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La Integración de las personas adoptadas internacionalmente: perspectivas personales.

7-8 May 2010

Reflections on being and becoming an adult transnational adoptee in the USA

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Dear AFIN Readers,

This essay, "The Smell of Magic - Magic Mondays: 8 Chance Encounters That Changed My Life," is about Jennifer's experiences growing up as a Chinese adoptee in the United States.

Original Publication Date: December 7, 2009 at www.ChineseAdoptee.com

Dedication:

AFIN, Adoptantis, CORA, CRIA, Dr. Diana Marre, Gobierno de España, La Voz de los Adoptados,
UAB

And

To Glorious Maeve, my sister in the Emerald Isle, with love.

To my fellow One World CO-Bloggers, who each inspire me with their own unique brand of magic, giving me the courage to carry on and to "bloom my best" where I was planted, no matter what.

And to my mom, the Goddess who never knew she was...

(Mom, you were mistaken - You did make a difference, you did matter. I love you. I'm so proud that you were my mom.)

"The Smell of Magic, Magic Mondays"

by Jennifer Bao Yu "Precious Jade" Jue-Steuck

8 Chance Encounters That Changed My Life:

1. At age 2...seeing the beautiful poet & artist Janet Jue, a Goddess from Los Angeles, sitting in (*of all places*) my birthfamily's living room in the Republic of China. Just moments before meeting Janet, birthmother (from JIANGSU Province, China) was about to bestow her blessing on an Australian couple to take me to Australia. Little did I know that the *Goddess* from California was going to become my mom!

2. At age 4...bumping into and being swung round and round in circles by a laughing little boy who had just landed at Los Angeles International Airport from Seoul, South Korea. This toddler became my charismatic baby brother, Chris.

Photo: Christopher Jue-Steuck (Jennifer's brother) arriving from Seoul, South Korea at Los Angeles International Airport (1982)



3. At age 8...spotting Santa in my chimney with cousin Colette way past our bedtime on Christmas Eve.

Photo: Jennifer with Chris and grandmother Betty Steuck, Orange County, California (1983)

4. At age 20...discovering, for the first time in my life, an adoptee in class. She was adopted from Korea, and was also an undergrad at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts (a place with very few Asians and Asian American students at the time). She approached me because she was going through a phase when she was exploring her "Asian" identity. I had already explored that terrain and yearned to be seen as "Jennifer," which, in my mind, was so much more than just my "Asian face" and ancestry. We later became fast friends, spending hours chatting into the wee hours about our lives, our adoption experiences, the complexity of our various identities, our dreams of a future when Asian adoptees could be seen and represented on the big screen as real people, as we saw ourselves (instead of being defined by how others saw us -- *Madame Butterfly*, *Miss Saigon*....*gaaaaaaggg!!*).

5. At age 24...sitting, by chance, beside a young Chinese adoptee and her mom on the NYC MTA subway. I explained I was adopted, too. "She's beautiful," I stood to exit the subway car at 59th Street. Her mom beamed back a smile, "So are you." Merging into the midtown Manhattan crowd above ground, I felt like an angel had just spread its wings and kissed me.

6. At age 28...meeting Maeve, age 4, a Chinese adoptee in Ireland. While sharing ice creams and crossing a street in southern Ireland, Maeve slipped her small hand in mine and wouldn't let go. We've been sisters of the heat ever since.

Photo (left to right): Maeve & Jennifer sharing ice creams in County Cork, Ireland (2006)



7. At ages 28-29...first time 'meeting' fellow peer-aged ADULT Chinese adoptees!!! They were NOT easy to find, and in fact, I wasn't even sure if they existed!!

(Through books, friends and a worldwide search, I "met" Dr. Amanda Baden, Dr. Mei-Mei Ellerman, Devorah Schwartzbaum Goldstein, Miss Chris Atkins. We realized there was no group for Chinese adoptees of all ages, created by Chinese adoptees...so we launched Chinese Adoptee Links International: www.ChineseAdoptee.com)

Photo (left to right) in ENGLAND: Chinese adoptees Jennifer Jue-Steuck (USA) y Adele (United Kingdom), Spring 2010, UK



8. Today...Meeting YOU.

Photo (left to right) at CASA DE ASIA, BARCELONA: Dr. Diana Marre, Ana Kay (UK), Jenna Cook (USA), Danya Sauerhaft (USA), Leigh Barton (USA), Linda Goldstein Knowlton (USA), Jennifer Jue-Steuck (USA), Amy Chang (USA y Madrid), Beth Sauerhaft (USA), March 2008



CASA DE ASIA, BARCELONA, March 2008

CASA DEL MAR, BARCELONA, March 2010



CASA DEL MAR, BARCELONA, 8 May 2010

Today is full of magic. It's magical because we met. May your week be filled with love, lavished with magical moments that nourish your spirit and nurture your soul.

Special thanks to author Susana Saladini for inspiring the title, *"The Smell of Magic, Magic Mondays."*

What chance encounters have changed your life?

NAME: Jennifer Bao Yu "Precious Jade" Jue-Steuck

NATIVE PROVINCE: Taipei, Taiwan & Jiangsu, China (birthmother's native province)

ARRIVED IN THE USA: Dec 1979/Jan 1980

GREW UP IN: Laguna Beach (Orange County, California), Branch Pond Lake (near Acadia National Park, Maine), Paris (5ème, 7ème, 16ème arrondissements), Cambridge (Massachusetts), NYC (8 years in Greenwich Village & Columbus Circle)

LOVES: Making new friends on airplanes, dancing, writing, musicals, travel, riding trains, majestic old train stations, trees, animals, perfume, the color purple, fresh fruit & cheese platters, dim sum, dumplings, warm cookies, ice cream, noodles (of any kind!), architecture, 'expotitions,' sudden epiphanies, letters, libraries, the sound of waves, pilates, yoga, afternoon naps at the beach, lying upside down listening to opera music, star gazing

DEFINING MOMENT: When my (adoptive) mom, my best friend, was diagnosed with stage 3C ovarian cancer. Watching your mom die and knowing that you can't do anything to save her changes your perspective forever. (I was 19. Mom lost her cancer battle at age 58.)

JENNIFER'S CURRENT PROJECTS: *Inspiration Ice Cream: Tips for Blooming Your Best!* (a book in memory of mom) *Leaving Grand Central* (Middle Grade novel) *Adoption Pride* (non-fiction Ph.D. Dissertation)

EDUCATION: University of California at Berkeley, NYU's Tisch School of the Arts & Harvard

WHY THIS "ONE WORLD" BLOG WAS BORN: "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." - Helen Keller

"I dreamed of a place where different generations of Chinese adoptees
and friends could come together to have a conversation,
to share knowledge,
to empower and inspire one another with our stories
through a group blog for CAL (Chinese Adoptee Links) International.

*My wish for you, dear reader,
is that this blog blesses you with new thoughts
(perhaps here you'll find just the words you needed to lean on),
connects you to others (including role models, of all ages),
and inspires you to bloom your best (!)
wherever you are planted,
no matter what your background is or how you came to be part of our family,
the human family.
Thank you for your contributions to our global 'ONE WORLD' community."*

~ Love from Jennifer of Laguna Beach, Orange County, California, USA

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