

CHINA'S CHILDREN: ADOPTION, ORPHANAGES, AND CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

ROUNDTABLE

BEFORE THE

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**CHINA'S CHILDREN:
ADOPTION, ORPHANAGES, AND
CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

MONDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2002

CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE
COMMISSION ON CHINA,
Washington, DC.

The roundtable was convened, pursuant to notice, at 2:30 p.m., in room SD-215, Dirksen Senate Office building, Ira Wolf (staff director) presiding.

Also present: John Foarde, deputy staff director; Jennifer Goedke, Office of Representative Marcy Kaptur; Susan Weld, general counsel; and Tiffany McCollum, U.S. Department of Commerce.

Mr. WOLF. I would like to welcome everyone to this roundtable of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. We have three excellent representatives of various groups to describe their own experiences on this important issue of adoption and orphanages in China.

Today we have Nancy Robertson from the Grace Children's Foundation, Dr. Dana Johnson from the University of Minnesota, and Susan Cox from Holt International Children's Services.

Let me just turn this over for a minute to John Foarde, the deputy staff director of the Commission, because he is the member of our staff who worked to put today's roundtable together.

Mr. FOARDE. Thank you, Ira.

Nancy, Susan, Dana, thank you so much for coming and sharing your views with us today. I am also particularly pleased that we have a very useful statement from an organization called Families With Children in China, represented by David Youtz, here today, and a number of other friends that are here to listen and learn about children's issues, particularly adoption, orphanages, and children with disabilities.

I will turn this back to Ira. Thanks.

Mr. WOLF. Nancy, why don't we start with you?

Please, go ahead.

**STATEMENT OF NANCY ROBERTSON, PRESIDENT AND CEO,
THE GRACE CHILDREN'S FOUNDATION, NEW YORK, NY**

Ms. ROBERTSON. Thank you. My name is Nancy Robertson and I am representing the Grade Children's Foundation [TGCF]. We are based in New York City. I am delighted to be here today.

Thank you Ira Wolf and John Foarde and thanks to the Congressional-Executive Commission on China for including me in this

timely roundtable discussion on China's children, adoption, orphanages, and children with disabilities.

I am honored to speak on behalf of the Grace Children's Foundation, an organization that has as its priority the educational, medical, and humanitarian needs of the children in Chinese orphanages.

Although some of the focus of today's events revolves around the issues of human rights and legal reforms within the People's Republic of China [PRC], my input will not serve to advocate for, or pontificate on, these topics.

My presence and peripheral involvement in the political and social changes taking place in China revolves around one specific clientele, one specific special interest group: abandoned children in Chinese orphanages and foster homes.

The story of the Grace Children's Foundation really began on Christmas Eve, 1994. My husband Brooks and I arrived in Hong Kong earlier that day, just as the sun was rising, and flew on to Shanghai. We had begun the incredible journey to adoption and our daughter, Grace.

Christmas carols were blasting in the background when we arrived at the hotel and I was so excited I could barely contain myself. Brooks was steeling himself until the right moment, guarding me from any possible disappointment.

We went to China without an agency, which at that time was permitted, pretty much by the seat of our pants. We arrived at the hotel and we were informed that we should unpack and freshen up and that our daughter would be there in 2 hours. I smiled to myself as we rode up to the room in the elevator. All the while, I was thinking this is it, we are finally here.

Then I panicked like I never have before. I told Brooks that I had changed my mind. He looked at me and said, "What do you mean?" I had been the driving force. Although he was very eager, it was I who pushed everything along. I became terrified at the last minute, I imagine, much like a woman about to give birth. All right. That was great, but I want to go home now.

I shut myself in the bath and contemplated what I had done. What if I ruined my marriage? This all sounded good, but what would be the reality? What if I did not like her as much as I thought? What if she did not like me? I dressed. The phone rang and the messenger said, "Hello, Mrs. Robertson. Your baby is in the lobby." I said, "Send her up."

Send her up? What was this, room service? I panicked further and propelled Brooks to the front door, pushing him through the crack saying, I cannot do this. You go and explain that I cannot do this. Then I shut the door.

Then I got hold of myself. I squared my shoulders, opened the door, and walked out into the corridor. There I saw Brooks holding the most beautiful person I have ever seen. He walked toward me and handed her to me and I said, "I love you, Grace." From that moment until this, I cannot imagine my life without her. On that Christmas Eve I saw in her eyes all of the children.

Inside the People's Republic of China there are thousands of children living in orphanages and foster homes. The overwhelming majority of these children are girls. Few possess more than the most

basic clothing and many of them struggle with treatable medical problems.

Without formal schooling or the crucial anchor of family, these orphan children face a lifetime of struggle for even the most basic employment. These are the children who wait.

The Grace Children's Foundation, through its programs and relationships, has been allowed passage through what has traditionally been a wall of privacy in the orphanages.

In 1994, Nancy and Brooks Robertson adopted their daughter Grace in Shanghai. Like other adoptive parents, they were moved by the plight of the orphan children who remained behind, most of whom have little chance of ever being adopted.

The Robertsons and like-minded parents held discussions through 1996 about the creation of an organization with a mission to improve the conditions under which these children live.

The parents' group formed an organization that was incorporated in January 1997 as the Grace Children's Foundation. Since its founding the Grace Children's Foundation has been singularly dedicated to bettering the lives of the children who wait.

The Foundation acknowledges that the Chinese Government and its people have a plan to alleviate the dire circumstances of the children. It is China's plan and they are the architects. The Grace Children's Foundation and others are some of the builders on the team.

The Grace Children's Foundation works in cooperation with representatives of Chinese orphanages and other governmental and quasi-governmental organizations who welcome the concepts and provided access into the orphanages.

This professional credibility has allowed TGCF to work with the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the China Charity Federation which, since April 2000, has joined with the Grace Children's Foundation to assist in all three areas of the Foundation's work.

In 2002, TGCF received permanent status as a publicly supported charity. This type of cooperation, fostered by a focus on children, leads to better relations between the United States and China. If our two nations can cooperate on meeting pressing human needs, we can build on that and cooperate in other areas.

Over the past 5 years the Grace Children's Foundation, with the support of individuals, foundations, corporate sponsors, medical facilities, educational institutions, and merchant donors has created pilot programs to support the orphans of China.

The Grace Children's Foundation's health initiative has brought 10 orphans to the United States for life-altering surgeries. The children and their caregivers were provided transportation through an ongoing partnership with Northwest Airlines and its Friend of China Program.

The first five children from the Luoyang and Beijing Children's Welfare Institutes were brought to the United States in April 2000 to the University of Virginia Medical Center where they received craniofacial surgery.

In January 2001, TGCF and Medical City Dallas Hospital and the North Texas Hospital for Children made possible the treatment of five more children from Shanghai Children's Welfare Institute by surgeon Jeffrey Fearon, M.D., who has since become the chair of

our Medical Advisory Board for the Foundation. All 10 of these surgeries resulted in permanent and dramatic improvement.

In August 2001, TGCF began its work with Orbis International to link the orphan children to adequate ophthalmic care in China. The Foundation is preparing for four more children from the Tianjin, Chengdu, and Luoyang Children's Welfare Institutes to receive highly specialized treatment in orthopedics, ophthalmic, and craniofacial care at Children's Hospital of New York Presbyterian, St. Luke's Roosevelt Hospital, and NYU Hospital for Joint Disease in November 2001.

All of the above medical staffing—the children who have come to the United States have benefited from the services of 15 physicians and dozens of adjunct medical personnel—surgery facilities, housing, food and transportation were donated to the Grace Children's Foundation.

One of the children coming to New York this year is a little 5-year-old girl from Tianjin. She has been waiting a lifetime to have an operation for severe scoliosis. TGCF is preparing for her medical care and foster care. We await her arrival with much enthusiasm.

Of the 10 children who were taken care of in United States hospitals 7 have been adopted, and the other 3 are now in foster or specialized care in China.

One of the children who came to the United States for surgery now lives in Richmond, VA with her adopted family, and recently visited New York. She is now 5 years old and lives with her mother, father, sisters, and brother. She helped to unveil the aircraft at the launch of Northwest's Friend of China Program when we left from Shanghai on our first medical mission to UVA in Charlottesville.

When I carried her up the stairs to the aircraft, I whispered in her ear that she would never be lonely again. I know that her life is good and she has brought so much joy and happiness to everyone who knows her.

TGCF is currently collaborating with American-based Chindex International, Inc. and its newly formed foundation, American Education and Health Foundation, in Beijing. The combined effort has yielded a rotating medical service to serve the orphan children directly in China at United Beijing Family Hospital, which is owned by Chindex.

American medical personnel from across the United States who have been touched by the plight of the orphan children have pledged their support to travel to China on a rotating basis with services in orthopedics, internal medicine, craniofacial, cardiac care, etc.

With core medical staff residing in China, the children's care is ongoing rather than episodic. AEHF believes, as we do, that “. . . improving the health of people in other countries makes humanitarian, strategic, and moral sense.”

We are also grateful to Jennifer Weippert, who has joined Grace Children's Foundation with her “The Red Thread” project. The proceeds from Red Thread's beautiful gift baskets directly benefit the children coming to the United States for surgery.

I am not going to speak about our Education Initiative in any detail for time's sake, as we are still working out the details at the

moment and we are looking toward a collaboration with Half the Sky Foundation to expand their base, which is infant and toddler. So, we are looking toward going K through 8.

Brown University student Yaniv Gelnik, who is here today, has just returned from a month in China, where Brown University's Medical School and Education Department are solidly behind both of these programs.

In an ongoing effort through its Humanitarian Aid Initiative, the Grace Children's Foundation, with sponsorship from United Cargo, has sent hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of donated clothing, shoes, bedding, wool, and fleece accessories, and other necessities to the orphan children in China.

We won an award for an 8-minute film, "Children Who Wait," last year. I was honored to carry the Olympic torch, sponsored by Chevrolet and Coca-Cola, on December 23, 2001, representing the Foundation's work.

The reason I mention this is that Coca-Cola has just generously arranged for an Olympic torch to be passed at the end of this year from The Grace Children's Foundation and all the children, actually, to the Minister of Civil Affairs, Doje Cering, in Beijing in a ceremony to thank the Ministry for the outstanding work they have done on behalf of the adopted children from the United States and the children who wait.

The Grace Children's Foundation is well situated to help China's orphans immediately and into the future in a way that bridges the complex divide that often separates China and the West.

The positive, though unintended, diplomacy these children have generated is remarkable. In what other venue between our two countries do we continuously work with a feeling of hope and accomplishment? No one who has had the privilege of meeting or working on behalf of these orphan children has remained untouched by their spirit and poise.

The children have unwittingly become Ambassadors—bridges, actually—between our two great nations. The hope they represent, the cooperation between representatives of our two countries that they have engendered, the mutually acknowledged respect for the life they embody, they continue to serve as catalysts for understanding, compassion, and respect between our countries.

I have been truly honored to stand with these children and see the love, beauty, and inextinguishable courage to work hand-in-hand with those responsible for their care and well-being, to realize that true diplomacy and hope can be borne out of such meager beginnings.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Robertson appears in the appendix.]

Mr. WOLF. Thanks very much.

Dr. Johnson.

STATEMENT OF DANA JOHNSON, M.D., INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION CLINIC, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA HOSPITAL, MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Dr. JOHNSON. My name is Dana Johnson, and I am delighted to be here today representing the International Adoption Clinic at the

University of Minnesota, which is the first, and is now the largest, medical facility devoted to the health and developmental needs of international adoptees.

For thousands of Americans, the distance, and sometimes abstruse debate on human rights in China, has taken literal human form in an abandoned Chinese child placed for adoption in their family.

Since the promulgation of the 1991 adoption law which first permitted international adoption, over 28,000 Chinese children, overwhelmingly girls, have been placed in American families.

This surge in Chinese adoptions can be accounted for, in part, by the increasing availability of Chinese children during an era where principal referring countries such as Korea have limited the number of children available for placement.

However, a variety of factors has fueled this growth, including the historic preference of Americans for adopting girls, availability of children at an earlier age than many other countries, acceptability of single parents, and an intense interest in Chinese culture by many adoptive families.

Over the past decade, adoption paperwork, fees, and in-country processing have been standardized, with few surprises awaiting families when they arrive in China. Another fact that stands in stark contrast to adoptions in other countries is that there is little evidence of corruption in the adoption process.

Officials at the China Center for Adoption Affairs take their work very seriously and diligently attempt to match the characteristics of the adoptive family with those of a potential child. They have been anxious to improve the process of child placement, welcomed input from adoption professionals, and have taken suggestions to heart.

Since 1998, my staff and I have spent significant time in eight social welfare institutions in China and have spoken to adoptive families who have visited dozens more. My overall impression is that directors and caregivers are extremely committed to the children and their care. Facilities are continuing to improve and there is a clear desire to do as much as possible to provide an optimal outcome.

The medical conditions afflicting Chinese adoptees are those seen in international adoptees worldwide. Latent or active tuberculosis infection, hepatitis B, and intestinal cutaneous parasites are the most common infectious diseases. Hepatitis C and syphilis are quite uncommon, and HIV infection has yet to be reported in an American Chinese adoptee.

As in most countries, the most common medical problems are deficiencies in micronutrients such as iron, iodine, calcium, phosphorus, and vitamin D. Chinese adoptees also share with many international adoptees a significant risk for being under-immunized against common childhood infectious diseases.

One problem that does occur more commonly in Chinese adoptees is a higher risk of having an elevated blood lead level. Each year, I review 2,000 adoption referrals and see 300 children for post-arrival examinations from around the world.

From this perspective, I strongly feel that officials in China attempt to place children who are healthy as possible. This impres-

sion is so strong that I have recommended adoption from China to family members. I have a niece, Sydney Ling-Ling Johnson, and also have close friends who have adopted from China.

The glowing reports on international adoption must be muted in the case of domestic adoption in China. In researching this area, I have relied heavily on the work of Dr. Kay Johnson, who is a professor of Asian Studies and Politics at Hampshire College in Amherst, MA, and the adoptive parent of a Chinese child.

Abandoned, disabled children of both sexes have been the traditional inhabitants of orphanages in China. However, in times of adversity, the Chinese preference for male children shifts the gender balance of abandonment clearly toward infant girls.

Most contemporary Chinese view the ideal family as a boy and a girl. However, traditions of property transfer, continuation of the filial line, and care during old age, essentially ensure that the rate of abandonment for healthy girls will dramatically increase during times of misfortune.

Until the early 1990s when international adoption began directly infusing financial support, social welfare institutions in China were chronically under-funded. The influx of abandoned girls forced orphanage directors to balance the marginal existence of the majority of children in their care with the costly medical needs of a small number of children who were critically ill.

Under these circumstances, they are forced to practice triage, as do orphanages around the world. Unfortunately, the placement of abandoned girls in adoptive families in China remains subservient to the goals of population control.

Despite the limitations imposed by the law, Dr. Johnson's work has identified a very strong desire of Chinese couples and singles to adopt healthy infant girls to complete their ideal family.

Such adoptions are generally not through official channels, and may total between 300,000 to 500,000 per year. These adoptions are more common in rural areas and involve girls more than boys.

The major problem encountered by Chinese families adopting outside the legal framework is official recognition of their child, which ensures access to such entitlements as education and health care.

As noted by Dr. Johnson, the plight of these unregistered children is ironic, since China has insisted on guaranteeing that Chinese children adopted abroad have full citizenship and fully equal treatment in their adoptive families.

A disproportionate percentage of children who reside within social welfare institutions are those abandoned because of primary medical disabilities. While many of these children have conditions that are easily treated within a sophisticated medical system, they pose enormous problems for families who have neither access, nor financial resources, to pay for this care.

Therefore, even though the one child policy exempts children with disabilities, Chinese families with handicapped children face powerful forces that encourage abandonment.

I have participated in a number of training courses in China and observed significant progress in pediatric rehabilitation over the past 6 years.

A driving force behind this change is Deng Pufang, the eldest son of the former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping. During the Cultural Revolution, he was persecuted so vigorously that he sustained a severe spinal injury and since then has been wheelchair-bound.

Due in large part to the prominence of his family and his position as the president of the Chinese Federation for the Disabled, it is common to see ramps, handicapped restroom facilities, and redesigned streets and sidewalks that have eliminated curbing at crosswalks.

Secondary disabilities may prove even more daunting for institutionalized children. Less obvious than a cleft lip or club foot, these problems have been brought about by a lack of a nurturing environment during the early formative years of life.

Secondary disabilities affect both normal and disabled children within the orphanages and may include irreversible deterioration in growth, cognitive, language, and social skills, as well as emotion regulation.

I am pleased to serve on the board of an organization that is attempting to directly prevent the development of secondary disabilities within social welfare institutions.

Half the Sky Foundation, named for the Chinese adage, "Women hold up half the sky," is an organization committed to helping the children who remain in China's orphanages do more than merely survive. Their mission is to enrich the lives and enhance the prospects for these forgotten children by providing infant nurture and early childhood education centers inside orphanage walls.

To fulfill this mission, Half the Sky, in cooperation with the China Population Welfare Foundation and the China Social Work Association, creates and operates two programs: Baby Sisters Infant Nurture Centers and Little Sisters Preschools.

The Baby Sisters Infant Nurture Centers employ Half the Sky-trained nannies from the local community to cuddle, love, and provide orphan babies the physical and emotional stimulation essential to the normal development of brain and physiological well-being.

In Little Sisters Preschool, Half the Sky-trained teachers use a unique and progressive curriculum that blends principles of the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education with contemporary Chinese teaching methods. By the end of 2002, Half the Sky will be offering services to over 1,200 children in eight institutions.

From my perspective, few countries have made as much headway over such a short period of time in improving conditions for institutionalized children and providing an array of interventions for those who are disabled.

International adoption benefits not only those who are placed, but also those who remain, by improving conditions within orphanages. The adoption process itself goes as smoothly as it does anywhere in the world, and outcomes from the perspective of adoptive parents and adoption professionals are overwhelmingly positively.

Finally, the increase in officially recognized domestic adoptions, following revision of the adoption law in 1999, offers hope that domestic adoption will be supported and that those homeless children welcomed into Chinese families outside the letter of the law will

enjoy the full rights and privileges guaranteed in China's own Constitution.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Johnson appears in the appendix.]

Mr. WOLF. Thank you very much.

Susan.

**STATEMENT OF SUSAN SOON-KEUM COX, VICE PRESIDENT,
HOLT INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES, EUGENE, OR**

Ms. COX. Good afternoon. I want to thank you for the opportunity to be here today. My name is Susan Soon-Keum Cox. I am vice president of Public Policy and External Affairs for Holt International Children's Services. We are located in Eugene, OR, and we helped to pioneer intercountry adoption from Korea in 1956.

I am also a founding member of an organization called The Advisory Council on Intercountry Adoption. It is a collaboration of organizations that are interested in and concerned about issues of intercountry adoption.

I am going to speak today about what I see as a variety of parallels with Chinese adoptions and Korean adoptions. I think there are many things within our history that can be learned.

In the beginning, in 1956, when adoptions began from Korea, there was no road map. There was no previous history. There was no way to know how adoptions were going to really affect the lives of the children, except that for the children who were orphaned as a result of the war, intercountry adoption was their only hope for survival.

I was adopted in 1956, and I was the 167th child to come through the process. Since that time, more than 200,000 children have been adopted worldwide. Of those children, 150,000 are Korean, and 100,000 of those children have come to the United States.

So for those people in the 1950s who worried about such questions as: Could these children mainstream? Would this be a process that would work? I think that we have proven that intercountry adoption can, in fact, be a viable opportunity for children to have a family.

However, intercountry adoption should never be the first line of defense for children. It should be a viable solution when children are not able to stay with a birth family, when they cannot be reunited with a birth family, or when domestic adoption is not possible. Those priorities really do need to be given attention.

Everything about adoption has changed since my parents adopted me in 1956, with a couple of exceptions. One, is that it continues to be highly sensitive as an issue, both in the sending and receiving countries.

It is also a perfectly acceptable opportunity for children to have a family. However, what we know now, but we did not know in the beginning, was that you cannot completely separate a child from his or her culture and heritage.

In the 1950s, the most important criterion was that children somehow be acclimated to the country and culture of their adopted

family and nationality. But what we have learned is that those things happen by osmosis.

The greater opportunity and the greater challenge, is to help children stay connected to their country and heritage. That is one of the things about Chinese adoption that has been so positive.

From the beginning, families who have adopted children from China embraced the culture and ethnicity of their adopted children, and they themselves adopted that for their own family, not only for the child that they were adopting, but for the rest of their family as well.

One of the things that I think is important to acknowledge, is that as China emerges into the global consciousness, there really are lessons to be learned from the Korean experience.

Both countries share an impressive record of achievement in positioning themselves in the world marketplace, and they also share a shadowy history and reputation regarding a variety of human rights issues.

I think that overseas adoption is a social practice that is highly visible, and it is sometimes controversial on both sides of the ocean. Nearly 30,000 children, primarily girls, have been adopted from China.

Compared to the overall population of China, this is an inconsequential demographic. However, it is also misguided and a loss of an important opportunity to minimize the impact of that population on the social and cultural future of China, as well as the social and cultural context of the families in the United States who adopt them.

I believe that intercountry adoption, from the beginning, has been a bridge between cultures, countries, and people, and no other population of adoptive families have promoted that to the same degree as families adopting from China.

Adoptions from China began at the same time that people in households around the country were also accessing the Internet and staying connected to each other through virtual communities. This had a dramatic impact on the way adoptive families related to themselves, to each other, to the children they were adopting, and to the agencies who were facilitating their adoption.

As those children have come home, the results have provided enormous opportunities for those children who were adopted in provinces throughout China to also stay connected with each other.

While intercountry adoption is a bridge, it is very important that we are careful that it does not become hostage to political agendas. It is easy for that to happen.

Frankly, one of my concerns about U.S. implementation of The Hague Convention, with the central authority and the accrediting authority both being at the State Department, is that in some ways this could become a political agenda as part of foreign policy. It is very, very important that the adoption community remain focused on making sure that that does not happen.

A couple of examples of how this is possible would be, in Romania, when they were trying very hard to receive MFN [most-favored-nation] status. There were a number of congressional offices that were relating the number of children being placed for

intercountry adoption in the United States with Romania's application for most favored nation tariff status.

The European Union has restricted intercountry adoption from Romania for political reasons. Consistently, we need to be careful that that does not happen as a matter of practice.

Other agendas that affect intercountry adoption, and particularly from China, are those who feel so strongly as anti-abortion activists and the role that forced abortion has had within China with respect to the one-child-per-family policy.

The ongoing false stories about adoption as a way to obtain body parts to be used for children in this country continues to be a part of adoption around the country, around the world. That is a reality that I think has to be addressed. It is another indication of how highly sensitized we need to be about adoption.

Another lesson that Korea certainly learned about intercountry adoption was how ambushed they felt in 1988 when they hosted the Olympics. I do not believe that anyone there expected that Korean adoptions would become so highly front and center in the news media.

Everyone from the "Today" show to The Progressive magazine talked about the largest export from Korea not being Hyundais but babies. In anticipation of hosting the Olympics in the future, I think it is imperative that China both prepare for, and expect, that kind of scrutiny for themselves.

The other things that have had a very positive influence on adoption activity or child welfare policy in Korea has been the emergence of domestic adoption. While that is not a traditional way for families to come together in Korea, as families in Korea have observed international adoptions, it has helped them to better understand that relationships of families who come together through adoption are as pure and true as those who come together by birth.

It is also necessary that we recognize that centuries of tradition cannot be overcome or changed in a couple of generations. We must be patient and acknowledge baby steps forward rather than huge leaps, where sometimes you fall down and you go backward.

From the beginning of adoptions from China, there have been stories about what will happen to these children when they want to go back to China and look for their beginnings, the question of adoptees, not only international adoptees but every child who wants to know, "where did I come from." For international and interracial adoptees, you have the added nuances of, "who do I look like," and "who am I really?"

Being the bridge between two cultures and nationalities is very often a challenge, and it has been assumed that, because so many of the children who have been adopted from China were abandoned, that the opportunity for search and reunion in their future does not exist. I predict that there will be a variety of ways that that happens.

It was the very same thing that was thought about Korean adoptions, that children were abandoned, there was no way to know, where did they come from and who were they connected to.

But as someone who has that history myself, I can also tell you that, as late as 40 years later, you can find a birth family. That

was my experience, although I did not believe it was possible for me when I was growing up.

Another thing that is important to remember, is that even if an adoptee cannot be reconnected to his or her birth family, the wonderful thing is that you can always stay connected to, and be reunited with, your birth culture and heritage. That is a legacy that families from China and the adoption community have worked very hard to preserve.

In conclusion, I would just like to say that at the heart and center of all the activity and attention that is given to adoption are the adoptees themselves and their life experiences. Chinese-American adoptees will be greatly influenced by the collective energy and tension that has been a part of how adoption from China has developed and emerged.

By the time China hosts the Olympic Games, many of the adoptees will be old enough to have, and voice, their own opinion about their birth country and their adoption.

It is not possible to predict precisely what those thoughts will be. But if the Korean experience is any indication, they will be a voice that the world should be prepared to hear.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Cox appears in the appendix.]

Mr. WOLF. Thank you very much.

Is there a difference between China and other developing countries relating to conditions in orphanages and conditions for abandoned children, or is the situation in China, basically the same as in many Third World countries?

Dr. JOHNSON. Well, let me answer this by saying that the answer to your question is yes and no. Yes, in the sense that whenever you have institutional care for children it imposes a certain level of disability on kids, irrespective of where they are.

Just a lack of consistent caregivers is an important issue. Unless you have a home environment, wherever you are going to have an orphanage you are going to find those same problems.

However, the conditions in orphanages relate directly to the economic status of the country, so in China you are going to see a wide variation in how things are going. If you get out into the rural orphanages where there is not very much money in the provinces that have not participated in these huge economic turnarounds, then you are going to find situations where the kids are not being taken care of very well. If you go to the orphanages in the big cities, the situation is much, much different.

I think the other thing that makes a huge difference in how kids are cared for within institutional care settings is the attitude of the caregivers. The first time I was in Romania in 1993, things were very gray, life was tough, and the caregivers who would come in to take care of the children had enough problems at home dealing with their own families and their own economic situation that they really did not have very much left to give to the kids.

That has not been my experience over in China where people are economically better off than they have been for a long time. They are happy. The Chinese orphanages, in general, have a higher caregiver-to-child ratio. The people are able to give much more to the kids in the orphanages there.

Ms. COX. I would just add that I have had the experience of visiting orphanages in a variety of countries, and what Dana says could not be more true with regard to resources. But it is also hugely affected by whoever is the director of the orphanage. How they feel about the children, how they feel about the importance of care has a huge impact on the way those children are treated.

Typically, orphans in any culture are not considered very worthy. Unfortunately, that is reflected very often in the kind of resources that are given to any institution. Private institutions are likely to have better support.

Mr. WOLF. One of the issues that the Commission has focused on in this first year has been religious freedom in China. One of the subjects raised has been the role of religion in society, especially in China where the government-provided social safety net has rapidly disappeared.

Many people are trying to encourage the Chinese to allow more freedom of religious practice and freedom for religious groups to help provide those social services. What is the linkage, if any, between orphanages in China and religious organizations, or is there no linkage at all? Are orphanages run by churches, by mosques, by Buddhist temples?

Ms. COX. I think, traditionally, humanitarian efforts have been established by religious organizations and churches throughout the world, and that certainly has not been as much of a possibility in China. But I also think, with regard to religious freedom, it is so important that you do not connect that priority or that policy with children's issues. When you do that, it becomes very tenuous.

I believe personally, when you talk about adoption and abortion in the same sentence, that you so polarize the conversation that you are not really able to make much progress in any direction. I feel the same way with regard to religious freedoms.

Mr. WOLF. Who runs the orphanages that you have visited and you have worked with? Who owns the property? Who pays the salary of the workers?

Dr. JOHNSON. As far as I understand, the Social Welfare Department does that. It is a government-sponsored program. Many of them wound up being within orphanages that were originally opened by religious organizations, but I have not been in any that are being run by religious organizations, although there are a number of NGOs, as well as organizations in this country that have provided support, principally in the area of rehabilitation, to orphanages.

Mr. WOLF. All right. Thanks.

John Foarde.

Mr. FOARDE. Thank you.

My first question is for you, Nancy Robertson. Are there other NGOs like The Grace Children's Foundation from other countries that are doing the same sort of work in China?

Ms. ROBERTSON. Are there other agencies such as ours from other countries?

Mr. FOARDE. From other countries.

Ms. ROBERTSON. Yes, there are. There are a number of them emerging from Great Britain. I think Good Rock is one. I am familiar more with organizations from the United States that are doing

incredible work in China, much like our work, more than I am of those from outside. But I think Great Britain is probably the leader behind the United States.

Mr. FOARDE. So at least from the United Kingdom.

Ms. ROBERTSON. Yes.

Mr. FOARDE. Are these organizations also working in the same sorts of areas that you are, for example, your health initiative or your training initiative? Are they doing the same sorts of things or are they doing different things?

Ms. ROBERTSON. I have read a number of pieces of literature recently from organizations which are humanitarian in their scope and we use the same words over and over again. Yes, we are trying to do the same thing.

Mr. FOARDE. Dana Johnson, how much improvement would you say that there has been since the inauguration of the China Center for Adoptions Affairs [CCAA] in the mid-1990s as opposed to the situation before CCAA was established?

Dr. JOHNSON. I think, with the development of the China Center on Adoption Affairs and under the direction of people that have brought it into maturity, certainly the process of adoption is much better understood, there is more certainty about what is going to happen.

I think that the one problem that still faces families who are adopting from the United States is the waiting period, and that is just because adoption from China is very, very popular.

It would always be nice to have a bigger staff at the China Center for Adoption Affairs. But I think, on the whole, things have gone extremely well since the Center was set up.

Mr. FOARDE. I heard both you and Susan say that the procedures and the hoops that you have to jump through to complete an inter-country adoption from China have improved a lot in 10 years.

One of the things that this Commission does is makes recommendations to the U.S. Congress about possible legislative solutions to problems. I am wondering if you are seeing any problems on the United States end of intercountry adoption with China that there might be a need for Congress to act on. For example, Immigration and Naturalization Service [INS] regulations, or fees and procedures, or anything of that sort. I would welcome your comments on that.

Ms. ROBERTSON. I would like to make a comment on that. As those of us who undertook the experience of adoption, many of us have gone on to help other families, in friendship, to do this. I have been privileged to help many—several hundreds, actually—to create this journey.

The one major obstacle on this end is the INS, that is the extraordinary process, in terms of the wait period to be cleared, and oftentimes, the fingerprint process alone. I have actually spoken with the INS and gone to the INS in New York, where they have been terrific about listening. They have a great dialog with families with children from China. They are always open and willing to receive our suggestions.

But there are definite, very clear devices that could be put in place to help expedite the process from our own end and set an ex-

ample of knocking out big chunks of bureaucracy that are simply not necessary.

Again, I think a great stride was the citizenship issue, which is now retroactive. When my daughter, Grace, was adopted in 1994, we had to apply for her citizenship and it was a complete fiasco. It took me three tries to get the amount of the check correct in sending it in. It was really a mess. Now it is much better, but there definitely could be improvements.

But I would like to say something about what you are asking, in terms of the system, before this last question. I think that the adoption system in China is far and away superior to any other system in the world, including our own. It is very straightforward, it is very detailed, but it works. It is an extraordinary system.

Whenever I counsel any friend or family member who might want to take this journey, I always say to them before they begin, to trust the system that you are about to walk into, because this is going to be your friend until you get your child. The system must provide proper protection for you.

Mr. WOLF. Jennifer.

Ms. COX. I would like to comment on the automatic citizenship. While that seemed like a wonderful breakthrough, what has not happened is that INS has not created a mechanism or procedure for that to really kick in.

So, while officially once a child arrives from another country he or she should be able to count on automatic citizenship, he or she still has to apply for a passport or some other procedure, and it has been over a year. So, that is certainly something we would like to see happen.

And another process is the Hague Convention. While we have certainly been on that journey for a long time, it has been almost a year since the regulations have been in the drafting process at the State Department.

There certainly has been wonderful opportunity for public input, but, we have been waiting since last spring, when we first felt that the draft regulations would be available to the public for final review. So, anything that you could do to urge that along would be important. Thank you.

Mr. FOARDE. Let us come back to the Hague question in the next round. Thank you.

Mr. WOLF. Jennifer Goedke works for Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur.

Ms. GOEDKE. I want to thank you all for being here, and also for doing this work. I am sure it is heartbreaking sometimes, but hopefully, more often, very rewarding.

I have a few questions just to get some facts down. Of children that are placed in orphanages in China, what percentage are adopted domestically, what percentage would be international, and what percentage never make it out of the orphanage? I know it is probably difficult to get concrete numbers, but if you have a best guess.

Dr. JOHNSON. Well, the numbers are sometimes hard to obtain, particularly for domestic adoptions, since so many of them are unofficial. In the year 2000, there were, I believe, 8,000 official adoptions that came out of institutions.

Those included both domestic and international adoption, because the law was revised to make it a little bit easier for domestic adopters to adopt children out of institutional care settings.

The total number of official adoptions in that year was about 53,000. So, the majority of kids did not come out of institutional care settings, where probably official recognition of adoptions had kind of skirted the law before that.

If you look at the number of unofficial domestic adoptions in China, it may be up to 300,000 a year. Again, the families face the sometimes daunting obstacles within the government to get those children officially recognized as their kids.

Ms. GOEDKE. I think you had also mentioned, Dr. Johnson, about the foster program within China. Could you give us a little bit more detail on that? Is it mostly state-run? Is there more done unofficially?

Dr. JOHNSON. Well, I cannot tell you with absolute authority what is going on with the foster care programs. The ones that I am aware of are set up by the individual institutions and sometimes by the adoption agencies who are operating there.

Sometimes kids wind up in foster care. In foster care, there are a wide variety of situations where the child is in the institution during the week, but goes home with a caregiver on the weekend, or some children who are in permanent foster care, like we would look at here.

So, there are a wide variety of experiences. Many times it is done unofficially, with a caregiver falling in love with a particular child and taking that child home, or it is done more officially as a way of expanding the number of kids that each institutional care setting can take care of.

The parents who are involved in foster care tend to look at that as kind of permanent placement, unless that child is destined for international adoption. Many times—again, these are kind of anecdotal experiences—the kids that wind up in foster care are truly the kids who need to be there. They have been in the institution for a long period of time, they may have various handicapping disorders, etc.

So, I see a lot on the very basic, interpersonal level of caregivers and kids, a lot of interest in getting them into other kinds of care settings besides the institution, but how that plays out in official policy and official programs, I cannot tell you.

Ms. COX. I can describe that. Holt has established several foster care programs because we believe that children do better in families than they do in orphanages, no matter how high the quality of care. It also has the impact of helping people understand about new child care practices. It often helps to elevate the nutrition of a particular family.

What is often a resisting factor in countries is that orphanages do not really want to have their children go into foster care because they believe that will limit their capacity. So, it is an ongoing struggle, but once foster care begins, it really does help to promote a variety of good child welfare practices.

Ms. GOEDKE. I think in Dr. Johnson's testimony he said that no child who has been adopted into the United States has been tested positive for AIDS or HIV. What percentage of the children that are

in state institutions or others, are there either permanently or long term with diseases like this, or with other long-term disabilities that may never be adopted either domestically or internationally?

Dr. JOHNSON. I do not think anyone has any numbers on the number of children who are within institutional care settings that are positive for HIV. There certainly will be some, but all kids are screened. As far as I know, none have been placed with families that are HIV positive.

In terms of other disabilities, a very large percentage of kids in institutional care settings have disabilities. Two-thirds of the kids who are there long term may have significant disabilities.

Ms. GOEDKE. Thank you.

Mr. WOLF. Susan Weld is the general counsel for the Commission.

Ms. WELD. I am interested in what goes on on the unofficial level in different parts of China. The children who are called "black" children because they have been born out of quota and just shopped around to somebody else in the village or in the neighborhood. What becomes of them? What does it mean? Is there any way to get them registered? Is there any effort to allow those who have lived in some long-term basis in a family to be registered with that family and make themselves proper citizens of China?

Dr. JOHNSON. Well, according to Dr. Kay Johnson's publications, when she did the survey she found about two-thirds of the families were able to gain official recognition for their kids.

They did that either by getting the good will of the officials in their areas, or paying small fines. About a third of them had to pay extraordinarily high fines, up to 1 to 2 years of income, and some were forced to pay the fine and accept sterilization as well. In some situations that she mentioned, even after doing that, the kids still did not receive official recognition.

Now, the one thing that gives me some hope that this is going to change is, first of all, the adoption law change in 1999, which was not as liberal as was originally desired. It still imposes some restraint on families adopting kids outside of institutional care settings.

But the fact that so many kids were recognized above and beyond the number who had been recognized in the decade before, I think, shows at least some unofficial official recognition that this kind of thing needs to be done.

Ms. WELD. One of the cases I dealt with back when I was practicing law, was a family had found a foundling in a province in the south, and they themselves had relatives in this country and wished that foundling to be adopted into this country.

But there was no legal way, apparently, that one could have an unidentified child in China and have it adopted. Is that still the case under the regulations of CCAA, or whatever exists? Do any of you know?

Ms. COX. I believe they are identified adoptions, but they still have to go through CCAA.

Ms. ROBERTSON. They do not encourage you. I had a very interesting thing happen. That is, we were told that a particular child that someone had fallen in love with—had actually met on one of our medical missions to the United States—that they were to ask

for the child in this way: we would like a 5-year-old boy. He could come from Luoyang, and he could have a club foot. They got the child.

It was very formal. It is not wrong or right, it is simply the way that China's Government is asking us to conduct this. They want control of these children. They are their children and we must comply.

It is appropriate to behave with decorum. The family did this, and they adopted the child. So, pre-identification is frowned upon, but it is acceptable.

Ms. WELD. Thank you.

Mr. WOLF. Actually, I would like to follow up on that question. Do you know if the Chinese Government has a set of standards to make decisions on which children will be allowed to be adopted?

Ms. ROBERTSON. Do you mean the children in the institutions?

Mr. WOLF. Yes.

Ms. ROBERTSON. Well, there are state-run institutions and there are non-state-run institutions. There are children in different parts of China who are considered unadoptable, minority children who are not necessarily in the pool for adoption.

Mr. WOLF. Well, I guess I mean within that pool, are 3-year-olds more likely—

Ms. ROBERTSON. I think that is more about your age. I think it is more about a parent's age. There are not strict cutoffs, and both of these panelists could tell you more specifically about regulation within the adoption community. But, again, I do not think it is a really steadfast kind of approach. I think many families who adopt from the United States usually prefer babies.

After a certain point, when a child is no longer a baby, but rather an infant, its chances of being adopted are greatly diminished. What we are doing in the case of The Grace Children's Foundation is concentrating on those children who more than likely will not be adopted.

It is unrealistic to think that any great number of older children will come from China adopted. It is just simply not going to happen. There are vast numbers of children there. So, our purpose is to try to help these children find a way in their own communities and become valuable citizens. It is very unstructured in that way. There is so much not up to us—them or us—involved in this process.

Mr. WOLF. I do not know if you have an answer. We are demanding, the Chinese are supplying. Are there rules as to how the supply works?

Ms. COX. There are very clear policies that vary from province to province. Very often, what happens is that an agency—and there are many, many of them—licensed to place children from China has a relationship with a particular province, institution, or orphanage and so they work to get child information, to learn about children who are free for adoption.

Those children then go through the process at the CCAA, but their initial information is developed by the facilitators from the United States or people who are actually in China working on adoptions.

Mr. WOLF. All right. Have any of you noticed over the years changes in the environment as there were political ups and downs in the United States-China bilateral relationship?

Ms. COX. Do you remember the 1999 bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade? That had huge implications with regard to the people in China and how fearful they were of what that would mean for adoptive families waiting for their kids.

Obviously, the adoptive families had the same concerns. There were many, many letters that went by e-mail and fax, trying to ride this fine balance of not being unsupportive of our own government, but also being sensitive to the incident that had happened.

We sometimes forget that what is written in e-mails and chat rooms go all around the world. It is not as if it is only seen by people within our borders.

Certainly during the Olympics in Sydney when there were a couple of commercials that were done with regard to an adoptive family coming off the plane with an Asian child—it could have been China, Korea, Vietnam. It was an Asian child, but not easily identifiable—one woman said to another woman, “You are going to be a wonderful mother.” The other person responded, “Yes, I know. You will be, too.”

The chatter all over the Internet was, “oh, my goodness, this is terrible. People in China will think that all adoptions are gay adoptions and they will shut the process down.” Well, predictably, there was a reaction to that, but, in fact, we brought it on ourselves.

When there was the human rights story about the “dying rooms,” every time there is something that happens outside the context of adoption, adoption will still be affected. That will only increase in the future.

Mr. WOLF. What about you, Dr. Johnson? Have you seen in your visits and your work, when there is a political downturn, any change in the way you are received, or your ability or your colleagues’ ability to do your work?

Dr. JOHNSON. No. We go to places where it is a person-to-person type of contact, and stay out of the official realm of government. We have seen no change in how we relate to people there.

Mr. WOLF. John.

Mr. FOARDE. Susan, I want to come back to the whole question of the Hague Convention, but this time sort of looking at the Chinese official attitude toward it.

Before I do that, it is probably useful, for some people in the audience who do not know what we are talking about, and perhaps for the record as well, to say that we are referring to the Hague Convention on Cooperation With Respect to Intercountry Adoption.

This is one of a great many Hague conventions that are supervised generally by the Hague Conference on Private International Law in the Netherlands. This particular convention is one that the United States finally became a party to, and we finally got legislation to implement. You mentioned a moment ago some of the problems, for example, the delays in doing the regulations for our own participation in the Hague Convention.

But I would ask you now to talk about the attitude of CCAA, and the Chinese Government, generally, in ratifying the Hague Convention. I guess they have signed it, but ratifying the Hague, and

what it would entail, if you think that it would improve inter-country adoption between, say, the United States as a party to the Hague Convention and China, if it were to be a party.

Ms. COX. Everyone is waiting to see what happens with the United States and what the regulations look like.

I believe that it would absolutely be to the benefit of people in China to go ahead with the ratification process as well because they consistently ask, at an unofficial level, when you visit with people from CCAA, can you give us a list of who are the good adoption providers and those who are not, and there are hundreds of agencies licensed to do adoption in China. Certainly, they have the ability to say “we are only going to work with these agencies who we believe provide the best service,” or whatever criteria they select.

They simply find it difficult or impossible to really close that door very much. The Hague Convention itself will provide criteria that will help limit the number of agencies that are able to do inter-country adoption. For that reason alone, China would benefit from that.

Also, because the numbers from China are so large—they are consistently within the top three in terms of the number of placements a year—it would help to bring them into a global context where the process is elevated and monitored.

I think everyone is waiting to see what Korea will do. They truly are the 800-pound gorilla with regard to how many numbers of placements there have been. Then, certainly, the United States. We are by far the largest receiving country. All of those issues will be improved if the Hague Convention could move forward.

Mr. FOARDE. Do you see in the Chinese officials that you talk to a real interest in membership in the Hague, and any sort of forward thought about what legal or regulatory changes will need to be made to be an effective partner in the Hague Convention?

Ms. COX. There are both unofficial and official conversations and dialog that take place. I was in The Hague in 1999 when a representative of the Chinese Embassy, in a big flourish, came and signed the intent to ratify. It was greeted overwhelmingly as a positive step forward.

But the most important thing that they already have in place is a strong central authority. In fact, it is something that the United States really does not have yet. So, I do not know that there will be that many changes. Dana talked earlier about how they have done a really stellar job of the adoption process from the beginning.

When you consider Romania, that started out with huge numbers and what has happened there, when you look at Cambodia, how fast the numbers grew and how that is now at a standstill, China really did do it right from the very beginning. They established a system which is very closely mirroring what Korea has done. There is a strong system of checks and balances that promote private/public partnerships and transparency. So, the process in China really is very good and it could only be improved by being a party to the Hague Convention.

Mr. FOARDE. You alluded a little earlier to the importance of a central authority, which is sort of part of the Hague Convention scheme for each member country.

Ms. COX. Correct.

Mr. FOARDE. But I am interested, in the short time we have left, if you can say anything about the relationship with CCAA as a central authority.

Ms. ROBERTSON. John, could you just tell everyone what CCAA is?

Mr. FOARDE. The China Center for Adoption Affairs.

Ms. ROBERTSON. I know. But the people in the room here do not know what CCAA is.

Mr. FOARDE. Right. The China Center for Adoption Affairs.

Ms. ROBERTSON. Right. That oversees all adoptions.

Right.

Mr. FOARDE. So how does CCAA get along with the provinces and provincial authorities? That is my real question.

Ms. COX. I think that there has been tension in the past between, is this going to be with the Ministry of Justice, is this going to be at the Ministry of Civil Affairs. But what I understand, this time it is a pretty solid system that is working well.

Provinces have an opportunity to direct their own programs locally, but then it is all under the umbrella of the central authority. I believe it is a system that works quite well, as evidenced by the numbers of adoptions that take place each year.

Unfortunately, the United States does not have a similar body. If there is a problem, if there is corruption, if there is simply a question, for example, about INS regulations, there is no one to go to in the United States to determine who is a good provider and who is not. Very often, the people that you call are the Better Business Bureau, because there simply is no one else. So, the central authority is a concept that other countries have that we have yet to adopt.

Mr. FOARDE. Very useful. Thanks.

Mr. WOLF. Jennifer.

Ms. GOEDKE. I just have one more question. Ms. Cox, you were saying that adoption should not be the first line of defense. A lot of times we look at this as solving a problem instead of addressing this as a problem itself.

Knowing that there will never be one law or one magical wand that will be waved to change the situation, what do you think are some of the either cultural causes of the high number of children who are in orphanages or looking to be adopted? Is it cultural, is it regulation? What is the main cause?

Ms. COX. I think the number of children in orphanages is directly related to poverty and the inability of parents to care for their children. A similar circumstance in the United States would be the number of children in foster care and the inability of their parents, for whatever reason, to care for them.

For many children, especially those in institutions, the other priorities really are not viable. Intercountry adoption is likely to be the only possibility for them to have a family.

However, it is absolutely critical that there be a dedication to help reunite children with birth families, to promote domestic adoption in that country, and to realize, at least in the beginning, that those adoptions may well be in secret.

In addition to all of the moral and ethical reasons to make this be true, it is also the fact that no adoptive parent wants to look at his or her child when they ask them the question, "why was I adopted," and not be able to say, "because if it were not for adoption you would not have had a family." I think that is the fundamental truth that every adopted child wants to know in their heart.

Ms. GOEDKE. Thank you.

Mr. WOLF. Susan.

Ms. WELD. I have a couple of more questions. One problem with HIV is that it kills off parents and leaves children without support. One of the areas where that has been happening is Henan Province where the disease has been spread by unsanitary blood selling operations. Is the Chinese Government trying to make provisions for those children? I have also read that there is a disinclination to take in such children because of the fear of the disease. So, that is one question.

Dr. JOHNSON said that many of the children adopted into the United States so far check out as completely healthy—they do not have HIV. But is there a possibility that international adoption can solve the problem of children who do have HIV, or is it just something that nobody is prepared to address or to step up to the plate for?

Dr. JOHNSON. That is a hard question to answer. I would say that, first of all, the reason we do not have any children who have HIV coming to this country, is that they are screened out beforehand. So, they are sitting around in the orphanages.

Now, if you screen out a child during infancy who is HIV-positive, they only have about a 30 percent chance of actually having the disease. So, there are a number of children who are marked and will remain within institutional care because they tested positive at first.

I think that there is a chance for families, especially if good testing is available over there that documents that they are free of the virus, that those children can be adopted within the special needs programs. Whether or not they are going to be adopted because of fears domestically, I do not know.

Now, people are committed to adopt orphans, irrespective of how many children you have. So that, at least, is favorable to the individuals who are orphaned. But whether or not they will actually accept them is another question.

Ms. WELD. There is some question about the test they use for HIV in China. Apparently they use a test that has a high number of false positives.

Dr. JOHNSON. Yes.

Ms. WELD. But they go with that answer instead of repeating the testing to refine the answer to only get the true positives, so I suppose there might be a lot of children who are screened out of the international adoption process wrongly, from the point of view of a family that only wants a very healthy child. Do you know what I mean?

Dr. JOHNSON. Yes. There certainly will be children who will screen positive who do not have the disease.

Ms. WELD. My last question is on a different topic. I noticed in your statement that you talk about the Amity Foundation's work dealing with orphans. I would like to know more about the Amity Foundation. I know it does work in HIV also.

Are they going to start doing the care, do you happen to know, of these HIV-positive orphans? Also, what is their participation in the orphanage system? They are not an NGO, really. They are a government-sponsored NGO. What is the Amity Foundation?

Ms. COX. I think they are an NGO.

Mr. YOUTZ. I could speak to that.

Ms. COX. This is our FCC representative.

Mr. YOUTZ. Thank you. My name is David Youtz. I am the president of the New York chapter of Families of Children from China, which is the nationwide network of families.

You asked about Amity. Amity is an organization that we in the New York chapter have worked with very closely. It is an NGO. I think, to a pretty remarkable extent, in China it operates as a fairly independent nonprofit organization.

It has a religious link in its founding. I believe it is sort of a nonprofit joint venture—it is rather unique—between the International Council of Churches and some entity within the social services network in China.

I am not exactly sure of their governmental background. They are based in Nanjing. They are quite a large organization. They have a fairly national reach, although it is centered around the Yangtze River greater basin. We have now been working with them in FCC's various different charitable activities for about 6 years.

We found them absolutely scrupulous in their use of funds and their remarkable activism in going out, repeatedly visiting orphanages each year, checking very carefully to make sure that all funds provided by American contributions are used in exactly the way they are supposed to be.

We tend to be overwhelmed with the tiny receipts that come back that account for each and every expenditure of 10 yuan. So, we have been remarkably impressed with them.

During this last year when a lot of the headlines have been coming out about the AIDS crisis in parts of Henan Province, we have actually spoken with the Amity Foundation and asked them if they could check into these exact same questions.

We, of course, have been concerned about the children who are being orphaned, and the sort of family level of the crisis. Amity does a range of things in addition to the orphanage work that we work with. They do have a separate section that works with AIDS and other similar health issues.

So, I think at this moment we are waiting for our contacts in the families and orphanage care area of Amity to come back and report to us and see if there are things that we could do to aid children.

Ms. WELD. Thank you very much.

Mr. WOLF. Do you have any estimates for the total number of children in orphanages in China?

Ms. ROBERTSON. There are many estimates, but they are only estimates.

Mr. WOLF. But nothing that is particularly—

Ms. ROBERTSON. They range from 50,000 official to 4.5 million. I believe there are 1,000 state-run orphanages, are there not? Does anyone know that for sure? I believe that is an official statistic, and there are many privately run orphanages.

Mr. WOLF. What happens to a child in an orphanage when a child turns 18? Are there any generalizations that can be made?

Ms. COX. The first issue is the child surviving childhood. When that does happen, typical of orphanages and institutions around the world they age out at 18, and really are on their own. For the most part, they have not been educated. They do not have any support, they do not have any resources.

They are going to be the same people who become victims of abuse, who are likely to commit crimes. We certainly can consider children of any country to be their greatest natural resource, but without investment they also can become their greatest liability.

Mr. WOLF. Any other comments?

Mr. YOUTZ. I would just add one point there. Our organization has increasingly been working to try to provide money for the education of kids in orphanages. We have just had a big push in the last half a year to provide school fees.

As you may know, nominally, education is free for kids through high school. But the actual fact is, fees prevent a large number of kids from actually attending schools. The fees tend to be paid by a family.

That burden, for children who do not have a family, falls on the institution. Our understanding is that many institutions in China run out of enough funds to provide kids school fees by the time they are about equivalent of fourth or fifth grade.

The reality is that many of the kids growing up are only going to the local public schools up until that age, maybe the age of 12 or 13, which means effectively they will then just spend the rest of their time within the institution until they are 18, at which point they will go out as relatively uneducated members of the workforce and will be very hindered in their opportunities.

We have been trying to find as many ways as we can to get funding to come into the institutions earmarked for the continuing school fees of kids through high school, and I believe we are even funding a small number of kids now entering into college.

It is a start. I mean, I think what our organization can do is really a drop in the bucket. There are a very large number of kids here. But we have been working so far with specific institutions and trying to widen the number of institutions and the amount of funding we can get there.

Ms. COX. If I could add, another problem for children who grow up in institutions is that they have no legal identity, and so they do not have the resources to go out into the world like everyone else that is required to get a job, and so on.

And when you are frantically trying to just take care of children every day, child welfare workers certainly do not have time to be going through the legal process to get them an official identity. So, that, again, is a problem that will go with them throughout their life, or not go with them.

Mr. WOLF. John.

Mr. FOARDE. This question is for Dana Johnson. I am interested in what sort of training that caregivers get in the orphanages that you are familiar with, and how that training may have changed in the last decade or decade and a half.

Dr. JOHNSON. Well, I do not think, in general, caregivers are given very much training other than what they come with in terms of child care. Expecting them to be early childhood educators, which would be lovely, just exceeds their level of knowledge tremendously.

I think what many organizations have done, Nancy's and Half the Sky, both of them, is to train the caregivers and put people in there that were focused on the developmental issues of these children instead of medical, or just kind of housekeeping issues for these kids.

The grandma programs, which have been used in orphanages around the world, really make a huge difference in terms of the early infant development, and then the preschool makes a huge difference for that age group, too. But trying to get caregivers who are really overwhelmed with the basic issues of life, trying to get them focused on development is very difficult.

You really do have to bring additional people in to do that kind of thing. But that is something that is true worldwide. We face that in all of the programs in Romania that we are involved in, too.

Mr. FOARDE. Nancy, you started your organization from scratch and you are running it out of your front room. What sort of strategies have you used to build the relationships with the Chinese Government, particularly at the national level, and at the provincial and local level where you do those sorts of things? What has been successful and what has not worked?

Ms. ROBERTSON. I am so blessed. We are so blessed in this organization. Every door we have knocked on has opened. I think it is simply, as my colleagues have mentioned earlier and David just concurred, it is so personal, it is so one-on-one.

In a country with over a billion people, we keep running into these relationships that are significant. Over and over again, by simply being ourselves and respecting the culture and traditions where we all operate, we get an extraordinary exchange of respect and gratitude from the Chinese people and the government.

Specifically with the Ministry of Civil Affairs has been our strongest foray into these kinds of relationships. One other gentleman in the room has recently hosted a government minister at his home here in McLean, VA, this summer. It is very personal. They are so open to friendship.

I personally have never been disappointed. We also have a relationship with the China Charity Federation, which oversees the well-being of the children. When we send these clothes or humanitarian aid on United Airlines, they are responsible for getting these things to the orphanages and the children. Even a new pair of shoes makes a difference in the life of a child.

So, we just keep going forward day after day. This Olympic torch. I am thrilled to be able to bring this. The children will present the torch and I am hoping that Jenny Bowen is going to be where we are at the same time, because there will be children over there, actually adopted children, working in the orphanages to build and

help to create these systems of caregiving for the nannies, at the same time we hope to, plan to, pass this.

We are going to include children in the orphanages, and we are going to let the children do this and try to begin a tradition in China by passing this Olympic torch.

So, again, I do not mean to be evasive in my answer to you. My answer is, we have been extraordinarily fortunate. Every place that we have gone, we have been well received. I believe that it is so important right now for us to pay attention to this opportunity that we have through adoption and through working in China. It works. This is one place between our two great nations that works.

We have gone through our bumps, just as we have mentioned about the “dying rooms” and last year when we had the airplanes collide off Hainan Island, and in 1999 when the Chinese Embassy was bombed, and so on, and so forth. But we always seem to come out with our heads held high. There is no street fighting here. We go back to the children. We go to the children. They seem to be the ones that bolster all of our efforts.

Mr. FOARDE. That is very useful. Thanks.

Mr. WOLF. Susan.

Ms. WELD. Well, I am not sure I have any more questions. One very quick one. There was some mention of a minority child not being permitted—I am sorry.

Ms. ROBERTSON. I mentioned a minority child, yes.

Ms. WELD. What does that mean? Does that mean, if there were a child in an orphanage in a minority part of China, they are not eligible for—

Ms. ROBERTSON. Well, the case is usually that there is a whole orphanage of minority children. It may not be just one child, it may be a whole section of children that are being taken care of privately by private donations, tourists, etc. These children are not considered Han Chinese.

Ms. WELD. Did you mean to say that those are not available for adoption?

Ms. ROBERTSON. That is what I understand, yes. They are not.

Ms. COX. Are you asking if, as a matter of policy, are minority children available for adoption?

Ms. WELD. Yes. I am just wondering why there would be such a rule.

Mr. YOUTZ. I am not aware of there being such a rule. To my knowledge, kids would be available as a matter of national policy. But what Nancy might be referring to is that there are some orphanages or institutions that do not seem to have become a part of this national pool of kids that are being considered by the China Center for International Adoption.

Mr. WOLF. I am sorry. Why do you not introduce yourself?

Mr. GELNIK. My name is Yaniv Gelnik. I am a student at Brown University. I spent some time in a few of these orphanages over the summer. One of them was a minority orphanage. The way they explained it to me, is the ethnic children, the minority children are not allowed to be adopted.

In many cases, the reason was because they were orphans, not abandoned children, so they had family, just not parents. Those families would get first rights when the child turns 15, so they do

not want to let any children out for adoption for that reason. But in many cases it is simply because they are not Han, and so they are outside the system.

I visited an orphanage only for ethnic children, because the government would not set up an orphanage for them.

I think an organization called The Mothers International Foundation here in Washington, DC, has worked with local, private citizens in Hunan to set up this amazing place for the ethnic children. So, they are really outside the system because they are not Han.

I can also speak to some of the other questions you asked earlier, specifically, the one about the religious institutions. I did spend some time in a religious orphanage and learned how that works.

The one that I was in, I think, was evangelical. They raise all of their funding here in the United States. They send out newsletters and they try to get a lot of different members of different churches around the United States to support them.

They have an all right relationship with the local officials. The officials sort of know what they are doing.

It is really not a very stable sort of orphanage, but it is the best funded of those that I visited.

Ms. WELD. Thank you.

Mr. WOLF. Thank you very much for participating today. This has been very useful. I just want to comment that one of the responsibilities for the Commission is to make recommendations to the Congress and to the executive branch on human rights and rule of law developments.

As you leave here, if you think of some ways and some specifics, such as the INS issue, the citizenship issue, if you think there are ways that the Commission may be able to help, please send us a letter and we will try to factor that in.

Thank you all very much, including the audience, for your participation. We appreciate it.

[Whereupon, at 4:02 p.m. the roundtable was concluded.]

APPENDIX

PREPARED STATEMENTS

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NANCY ROBERTSON

OCTOBER 21, 2002

Thank you, Ira Wolf and John Foarde, Senator Baucus and Congressman Bereuter and thanks to the Congressional-Executive Commission on China for including me in this timely roundtable discussion on China's children: adoption, orphanages and children with disabilities.

I am honored to speak on behalf of The Grace Children's Foundation, an organization that has as its priority the educational, medical and humanitarian needs of the children in Chinese orphanages.

Although some of the focus of today's events revolves around the issues of human rights and legal reforms within the People's Republic of China, my input will not serve to advocate for or pontificate on those topics. My presence and peripheral involvement in the political and social changes taking place in China revolve around one specific clientele, one specific special interest group: abandoned children in Chinese orphanages and foster homes.

The story of The Grace Children's Foundation really began on Christmas Eve, 1994. My husband Brooks and I arrived in Hong Kong earlier that day just as the sun was rising and flew on to Shanghai. We had begun the incredible journey to adoption and to our daughter, Grace.

Christmas carols were blasting in the background when we arrived at the hotel and I was so excited I could barely contain myself. Brooks was steeling himself until the right moment, guarding me from any possible disappointment. We went to China without an agency, pretty much by the seat of our pants. We arrived at the hotel and were informed that we should unpack and freshen up and that our daughter would be there in 2 hours. I smiled to myself as we rode up to our room in the elevator, all the while thinking, "This is it, we are finally here!"

Then I panicked like I never have before. I told Brooks that I had changed my mind. He looked at me and said "What do you mean?" I had been the driving force. Although he was very eager, it was I who pushed everything along. I became terrified at the last minute, I imagine much like a woman about to give birth saying, "O.K. that was great but I want to go home now."

I shut myself in the bath and contemplated what I had done. What if I had ruined my marriage? This all sounded good but what would be the reality? What if I didn't like her as much as I thought? What if she didn't like me? I dressed and the phone rang and the messenger said "Hello, Mrs. Robertson, your baby is in the lobby." I said "Send her up."

Send her up? What was this, room service? I panicked further and propelled Brooks to the front door, pushing him through the crack saying "I cannot do this. You go and explain that I cannot do this." And I shut the door. Then, I got hold of myself. I squared my shoulders and opened the door and walked out in the corridor. There I saw Brooks holding the most beautiful person I had ever seen. He walked toward me and handed her to me. I said, "I love you Grace." From that moment until this I cannot imagine my life without her. On that Christmas Eve I saw in her eyes, all of the children.

WHY WE EXIST

Inside the People's Republic of China there are thousands of children living in orphanages and foster homes. The overwhelming majority of these children are girls. Few possess more than the most basic clothing and many of them struggle with treatable medical problems.

Without formal schooling or the crucial anchor of family these orphan children face a lifetime of struggle for even the most basic employment. These are the children who wait. The Grace Children's Foundation, through its programs and relationships has been allowed passage through what had been traditionally a wall of privacy in the orphanages.

ORGANIZATION HISTORY

In 1994 Nancy and Brooks Robertson adopted their daughter Grace in Shanghai. Like other adoptive parents, they were moved by the plight of the orphans who remain behind, most of whom have little chance of ever being adopted. The Robertsons and like-minded parents held discussions through 1996 about the creation of an

organization with the mission to improve the conditions under which these children live. The parents' group formed an organization that was incorporated in January 1997 as The Grace Children's Foundation (TGCF).

Since its founding, The Grace Children's Foundation has been singularly dedicated to bettering the lives of the "children who wait." The Foundation acknowledges that the Chinese government and its people have a plan to alleviate the dire circumstances of the children. It is China's plan and they are the architects. The Grace Children's Foundation and others are some of the builders on the team.

The Grace Children's Foundation works in co-operation with representatives of Chinese orphanages and other governmental and semi-governmental organizations who welcomed the concepts and provided access into the orphanages. This professional credibility has allowed TGCF to work with the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the China Charity Federation (CCF) which since April 2000 has joined with TGCF to assist in all three areas of the Foundation's work. In 2002, TGCF received permanent status as a publicly supported charity.

This type of cooperation fostered by a focus on children leads to better relations between the United States and China. If our two nations can cooperate on meeting pressing human needs, we can build on that and cooperate in other areas.

PAST PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Over the past 5 years, The Grace Children's Foundation, with the support of individuals, foundations corporate sponsors, medical facilities, educational institutions and merchant donors, has created pilot programs to support the orphans of China.

The Grace Children's Foundation Health Initiative has brought 10 orphans to the U.S. for life altering surgeries. The children and their caregivers were provided transportation through an ongoing partnership with Northwest Airlines and its Friend of China program. The first five children from Louyang and Beijing Children's Welfare Institutes were brought to the United States in April 2000 to the University of Virginia Medical Center where they received craniofacial surgery. In January 2001, TGCF and Medical City Dallas Hospital and the North Texas Hospital for Children made possible the treatment of five more children from Shanghai Children's Welfare Institute by surgeon Jeffrey Fearon, M.D. (who has since become the Chair of the Medical Advisory Board for the Foundation). All 10 of these surgeries resulted in permanent and dramatic improvement.

In August 2001, TGCF began work with Orbis International to link the orphan children to adequate ophthalmic care in China. The Foundation is preparing for four more children from Tianjin, Chengdu and Louyang Children's Welfare Institutes to receive highly specialized treatment in orthopedics, ophthalmic and craniofacial care at Children's Hospital of New York Presbyterian, St. Luke's Roosevelt Hospital and NYU Hospital for Joint Disease in November 2002. All of the above medical staffing (the children who have come to the United States have benefited from the services of 15 physicians and dozens of adjunct medical personnel) surgery, facilities, housing, food and transportation were donated to TGCF.

One of the children coming to New York this year is a little 5 year old girl from Tianjin. She has been waiting a lifetime to have an operation for severe scoliosis. TGCF is preparing for her medical care and foster care. We await her arrival with much enthusiasm!

Of the 10 children who were taken care of in U.S. hospitals 7 have been adopted and the other 3 are now in foster or specialized care in China.

One of the children who came to the United States for surgery now lives in Richmond with her adopted family, recently visited New York. She is now 5 years old and lives with her mother, father and sisters and brother. She helped to unveil the aircraft at the launch of Northwest's Friend of China program when we left from Shanghai on our first medical mission to UVA in Charlottesville. When I carried her up the stairs to the aircraft, I whispered in her ear that she would never be lonely again. I know that her life is good and she has brought so much joy and happiness to everyone who knows her.

TGCF is currently collaborating with American based Chindex International, Inc. and its newly formed foundation American Education and Health Foundation (AEHF) in Beijing. The combined efforts has yielded a rotating medical service to serve the orphan children directly in China at United Beijing Family Hospital which is owned by Chindex. American medical personnel from across the United States who have been touched by the plight of the orphan children, have pledged their support to travel to China on a rotating basis with services in orthopedics, internal medicine, craniofacial, cardiac care etc. With core medical staff residing in China, the children's care is ongoing rather than episodic.

AEHF believes, as we do, that “. . . improving the health of people in other countries makes humanitarian, strategic and moral sense.”

We are also grateful to Jennifer Weippert who has joined TGCF with her The Red Thread Project. The proceeds from Red Thread's beautiful gift baskets directly benefit the children coming to the United States for surgery.

The Grace Children's Foundation's Education Initiative is supported by the Department of Education at Brown University. Dr. Cynthia Garcia Coll, Chair, Department of Education and Jin Li, Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Brown University are acting as advisors on the design and implementation of a curriculum K-8 with an emphasis on special needs education. Sally Deitz, Ph.D., (in special education) co-author of Learning Activities for Infants and Toddlers: An Easy Guide for Everyday Use and Chair of the Education Advisory Board for TGCF, is heading the Education Initiative. Dr. Deitz is an experienced trainer for Children's Resources International (CRI) whose curriculum 0-8 has been widely used for the newly and independent states of the former Soviet Union. This curriculum includes a component on inclusion of children with disabilities and is being considered for adaptation by TGCF. Dr. Elizabeth Irwin, Ed.D. of Queens College will assist Dr. Deitz in planning, adapting and training.

During the summer of 2002, Brown University student Yaniv Gelnik obtained the Andrea Rosenthal and Mimi Sherman Grants. Mr. Gelnik traveled to China for a month's educational assessment of orphanages in Langfeng, Tianjin, Chengdu and Lijiang, where he studied the approach to teaching and learning in the orphanages.

Education is the key to liberating the children to a place where they can flourish. We are working to help provide this essential tool that will give the children a chance to elevate themselves beyond survival. We believe it's their chance for a life with dignity.

In an ongoing effort through its Humanitarian Aid Initiative, The Grace Children's Foundation with its sponsorship from United Cargo has sent hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of donated clothing, shoes, bedding, wool and fleece accessories and other necessities to the orphan children in China. In October of 2002 TGCF began shipping \$400,000 worth of in kind donations. Kathy Korge Albergate, Senior Vice President, Interstar Marketing and Public Relations, heads the Humanitarian Advisory Board.

The Grace Children's Foundation has won a Telly Award for an 8-minute film "Children Who Wait."

I was honored to carry the Olympic Torch sponsored by Chevrolet and Coca-Cola on December 23, 2001 representing the Foundation's work.

Coca-Cola has generously arranged for an Olympic Torch to be passed at the end of this year from The Grace Children's Foundation to the Minister of Civil Affairs, Douji Cairang, in Beijing in a ceremony to thank the Ministry for the outstanding work they have done on behalf of the adopted children from the United States and the children who wait.

THE FUTURE

The Grace Children's Foundation is well situated to help China's orphans immediately and into the future in a way that bridges the complex divide that often separates China and the West. Through its constructive work with the orphan children and the concerned Chinese agencies, the Foundation can add substantially to the well-being of the orphan population while serving to forge new understandings and cooperation in a shared humanitarian endeavor. Individuals and corporations who support the efforts of the Foundation stand to gain unique rewards in China—the satisfaction of helping children in need, and the appreciation of a grateful nation.

The positive though unintended diplomacy these children have generated is remarkable. In what other venue between our two countries do we continuously work with a feeling of hope and accomplishment? No one who has had the privilege of meeting or working on behalf of these orphan children has remained untouched by their spirit and poise.

The children have unwittingly become Ambassadors, bridges actually, between our two great nations. The hope they represent, the cooperation between representatives of our two countries that they have engendered, the mutually acknowledged respect for life they embody . . . they continue to serve as catalysts for understanding, compassion and respect between our countries. I have been truly honored to stand with these children, see their love, beauty and inextinguishable courage . . . to work hand in hand with those responsible for their care and well being . . . to realize that true diplomacy and hope can be born out of such meager beginnings. When I am overworked, perplexed, frustrated at the pace of our undertakings, I recall the words of a friend who said to me when you are feeling overwhelmed, "Go

to the children.” I do and in their eyes I see the hope for our two countries, indeed for humanity itself. These children, the 35 million orphans worldwide, all of our children . . . they are the future.

Again, thanks to the Commission for inviting me here to share some thoughts on China’s children and the wonderful spirit of cooperation between our countries that they represent.

Please visit our website at www.gracechildren.org where you will see photos and information associated with TGCF.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my husband, Brooks Robertson, my mother, Joanne Lepp, my sisters, Kathleen J. Lee and Robin Small and my brother, Bradford Chapman Lepp and thank them for their loving support. My father, Joseph R. Lepp, ret. U.S.M.C., who passed away the year before we traveled to China whose message to me was “Do the best you can, Nan, for the true test of a man or woman’s character is not in their final achievement in life, not whether they succeed or fail, but rather the means they employ to achieve their goals . . . honesty, kindness, love and consideration for those who have less than you and understanding of those who have more, so do the best you can, we will always be near to help.” I would also like to acknowledge my beloved grandmother, Adelaide Dioguardi and my uncle and aunt, Jack and Mary Regan.

Thank you to all of the individuals and friends including Brian and Renee Luwis, Jay and Julie Lindsey, Ed and Barbara Salvesen, Chi Ming Kan, John and Claudia Sherwood Servidio, Christine Fahey, Eric Mortensen, Msgr. Thomas P. Leonard, Yo-Yo Ma, Vance and Pamela Aloupis, Victor and Kathryn Creech, Joanne Roberts, Alan and Sherry Renne, Robert and Gail Kantor, Joan Frost, Scott and Margaret Roche Ballin, Claire Gruppo, Ben and Pat Reid, Michael and Rebecca Young Lesh, John Foarde, Don and Marieve Young, Nicholas J. Howson, Keith Hand, Julie Shuchman and Mitchell Levenberg, Xia Yi, Kathy Korge Albergate, Jennifer Crawley, Jennifer Fearon, and Suzi Hilles who have contributed their time, expertise and financial support to this endeavor. Without these people, none of what we have accomplished at The Grace Children’s Foundation would have been possible. And most important of all . . . I am grateful to the children.

I would like to commend the medical institutions and Jeffrey Fearon, M.D., for opening the doors wide to let the children come in. I would like to acknowledge Northwest Airlines and the NWA family, and John Watkins, our champion there. United Airlines and Connie Bello, Rich Pannulo and Anthony Serraro are also true friends of the Foundation. Even in this time of economic struggle, both airlines have found room in their aircrafts for the children and supplies for the benefit of the orphans.

I would like to acknowledge organizations, such as the Philip Hayden Foundation, Families With Children from China, Amity International, Half the Sky Foundation and many more which have as their mission, to serve the children. In addition I commend the adoption agencies and social workers whose work is detailed and must be filled with stories of joy and compassion.

I would like to commend the agencies responsible for the adoption procedures in China, the China Center for Adoption Affairs and the Ministry of Civil Affairs responsible for the well being of the children. I commend the caregivers in the orphanages and foster homes in China. I would like to thank Yan Ming Fu for his personal message of friendship and support in a dark hour in September 2001. Thank you Wu Yijing for always helping me to convey my thoughts when I am in China.

And Grace Kathleen Ayres Robertson who has given me the greatest honor I will ever know, to be her mother.

“The Grace Children’s Foundation is a New York based 501(c)(3) organization which seeks to improve the lives of China’s orphans through directed health, education and humanitarian aid programs in cooperation with Chinese officials responsible for their care.”

** The Foundation solicits funding and goods and services, both domestically and internationally, from corporations, foundations and individuals. The Grace Children’s Foundation is not an adoption agency and does not make cash donations to China’s orphanages or the Chinese government.*

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DANA JOHNSON, M.D.

OCTOBER 21, 2002

ABANDONED CHINESE CHILDREN: INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC ADOPTION,
INSTITUTIONAL CARE AND REHABILITATION OF DISABLED CHILDREN

INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION

For thousands of Americans, the distant and sometimes abstruse debate on human rights in China has taken literal human form in an abandoned Chinese infant placed for adoption in their family. Since the promulgation of the 1991 adoption law, which first permitted international adoption, over 28,000 Chinese children, overwhelmingly girls, have been placed in American families. Only Russia has placed more children in the United States during the same time period. The desire to adopt Chinese children, 80 percent of who are placed within U.S. families, continues to grow and waiting periods of one to 2 years for a referral are not uncommon.

This surge in Chinese adoptions can be accounted for, in part, by the increasing availability of Chinese children during an era when principal referring countries such as Korea have limited the number of children available for placement. However, a variety of factors has fueled this growth including the historic preference of Americans for adopting girls, availability of children at an earlier age than many other countries and acceptability of single parents. For most of this time period, China had the requirement that adoptive parents be above 35 years of age, a limit that included most potential adoptive parents in the U.S. Many families also have an intense interest in Chinese culture and a desire not only to adopt a child from China but also to make Chinese traditions an integral part of their family's life.

Over the past decade, adoption paperwork, fees and in-country processing have been standardized, with few surprises awaiting families when they arrive in China. Another fact that stands in stark contrast to adoptions in other countries is that there is little evidence of corruption in the adoption process. While many families have viewed the actual adoption trip to other nations as an ordeal to be survived, virtually every family adopting from China with whom I have spoken treasured their trip and found the populace welcoming and officials courteous and efficient.

Officials at the China Center for Adoption Affairs take their work very seriously and diligently attempt to match the characteristics of the adoptive family with those of a potential child. They have been anxious to improve the process of child placement, welcomed input from adoption professionals and have taken suggestions to heart. Medical information has improved as the program has matured. For example, regarding hepatitis B, a serious infection often acquired at birth, children once were tested at two months of age, a point in time where false-negative tests are probable due to the biology of that disease. Consequently, some children who tested negative at this early age were found to be positive when they reached their adoptive homes. Eager to improve the process, most testing has been moved to 6 months of age, a time when the results are quite valid.

Since 1998 my staff and I have spent significant time in eight Social Welfare Institutions in China and have spoken to adoptive parents who have visited dozens more. Most were large facilities in major cities, so I cannot comment on the conditions in smaller, rural orphanages. There was no difficulty gaining access to these orphanages and the staffs were open and friendly. My overall impression is that directors and caregivers are extremely committed to the children in their care, facilities are continuing to improve and there is a clear desire to do as much as possible to provide an optimal outcome. While some institutions still had few caregivers per child, many were staffed at a ratio of three to five children per caregiver. One Social Welfare Institute, which was also a rehabilitation facility for severely disabled children, had a one-to-one caregiver ratio during daytime hours. Turnover of healthy children into adoptive families appears to be rapid. One of the problems we have faced trying to evaluate our early intervention projects is that most of the children we tested were placed for adoption so rapidly that we could not reevaluate them following program initiation.

Most children are in good health when placed with their adoptive parents. Illnesses are primarily limited to respiratory infections and gastrointestinal problems, the most common illnesses in this infant-toddler age group. In rare circumstances where children are very ill, parents accessed the better quality pediatric programs and received good care. In the handful of cases I am aware of where the child died while the family was in China, officials were very willing to place another child with the family.

In one study of adopted Chinese children, unsuspected diagnoses were present in 18 percent of children and included hearing loss, disturbances in vision, orthopedic problems and congenital anomalies. (1) This percentage is similar to that seen in international adoptees from other parts of the world. I am not aware of attempts to knowingly portray a child who had a serious illness as being healthy and suspect that most of these situations arise because of limited diagnostic capabilities. For children in the special needs program, most conditions are accurately diagnosed and generally correctable once the child arrives in the United States.

The medical conditions afflicting Chinese adoptees are those seen in international adoptees worldwide. (2–5) Latent or active tuberculosis infection (3.5–10 percent), hepatitis B (3.5–6 percent) and intestinal (7.1–9 percent) and cutaneous parasites are the most common infectious diseases. Hepatitis C and syphilis are quite uncommon (< 1 percent) and HIV infection has yet to be reported in an American Chinese adoptee. As in most countries, the most common medical problems are deficiencies in micronutrients (3) such as iron (14–35 percent), iodine (10 percent), and calcium/phosphorous/vitamin D (14 percent). Chinese adoptees also share with many international adoptees a significant risk of being under-immunized against common childhood infectious diseases, (6–8) as well as a propensity for chronic cough and respiratory infections due to exposure to significant air pollution. The one problem that does occur more commonly in Chinese adoptees is a higher risk (up to 14 percent) of having elevated blood lead levels (=10 micrograms/deciliter). (9)

Preadoption risk factors that influence long-term prognosis such as prenatal malnutrition, prematurity and fetal alcohol exposure probably play a smaller role in overall outcome in Chinese adoptees than in children from other countries. Prenatal care and nutrition are generally as good and the use of alcohol by pregnant women in China is felt to be very uncommon.

The overall well being of Chinese adoptees appears to be strongly influenced by the length of institutionalization. Orphanages are well known to be the worst possible environment for normal child development. Linear growth failure is common, with children losing 1 month of growth for every 3 month in institutional care—a phenomenon termed psychosocial growth failure. Delays in one or more domains (e.g. gross and fine motor, social-emotional, language and activities of daily living) were present in 75 percent of children at the time of arrival.

Each year I review 2,000 adoption referrals and see 300 children for post-arrival examinations from around the world. From this perspective, I strongly feel that officials in China attempt to place children who are as healthy as possible. The adoption process is well organized, and long-term issues related to early childhood institutionalization are less common than other countries due to a younger average age at placement (12 months). Fees derived from international adoption have clearly helped improve conditions for children who remain within Social Welfare Institutions, and there is increasing use of foster care. Finally, parents are overwhelmingly satisfied with their experience. This impression is strong enough for me to have recommended adoption from China to family members and close friends.

DOMESTIC ADOPTION

The glowing reports on international adoption must be muted in the case of domestic adoption in China. In researching this area, I have relied heavily on the work of Kay Johnson, Ph.D., Professor of Asian Studies and Politics at Hampshire College in Amherst Massachusetts and adoptive parent of a Chinese child. (10–14) Abandoned disabled children of both sexes have been the traditional inhabitants of orphanages in China, as they have been in every country in the world where sophisticated medical care is unavailable. The situation was similar in the United States 40–50 years ago. However, in times of adversity, the Chinese preference for male children shifts the gender balance of abandonment clearly toward infant girls. Most contemporary Chinese view the ideal family as a boy and a girl. However, traditions of property transfer and the continuation of the filial line necessitate a male heir. In rural China where the majority of abandoned Chinese girls originate, old age pensions are unavailable. The practice of a daughter leaving her birth family to tend to her husband's parents therefore makes a male child the only means of "social security" for elderly parents. These traditions essentially ensure that the rate of abandonment for healthy girls will dramatically increase during times of misfortune, as was observed during the famine years following the Great Leap Forward or during rigorous enforcement of population control measures. The number of children abandoned each year in China is unknown, but estimates range between 100,000 and 160,000.

Until the early 1990s when international adoption began directly infusing financial support, Social Welfare Institutions in China were chronically underfunded.

Worldwide, there is no more politically voiceless or more vulnerable group than parentless children. The influx of abandoned girls forced orphanage directors to balance the marginal existence of the majority of children in their care with the costly medical needs of a small number of critically ill infants. Under these circumstances, they were forced to practice triage, as do orphanages around the world. Mortality at some facilities reached 50 percent, a figure similar to that reported in the early decades of this century in orphanages in the United States and Western Europe. That said, there is almost certainly a gender bias in how children are selected for treatment. In one particular orphanage in Wuhan, Dr. Johnson relates three instances where the desire for a boy was so strong that potential adoptive families assumed the financial burden of caring for a seriously ill, abandoned male infant despite the fact that the children were close to death.

Unfortunately, the placement of abandoned girls in adoptive families in China remains subservient to the goals of population control. In fact, the 1991 law which gave permission to adopt to childless couples above 35 years of age was designed to limit hiding an over-quota girl within a friend's or relative's family. Despite the limitations imposed by the law, Dr. Johnson's work has identified a very strong desire of Chinese couples and singles to adopt healthy girls to complete their ideal family. Such adoptions are generally not through official channels and may total from 300,00–500,000 per year. These adoptions are more common in rural areas and involve girls more than boys. Transfer of children into the adoptive family is complete and the arrangements usually do not involve relatives or close friends. Her work dispels common misconceptions that Chinese families do not adopt children from outside of family lines and do not adopt girls. More importantly, her research identifies a group of domestic adoptive parents willing to assume the care of normal, abandoned children, permitting Social Welfare Institutions to concentrate their efforts on those who are disabled. However, domestic adoption has not been promoted or supported to the same extent as international adoption, presumably because those abandoned have been viewed as being over-quota births first and children second.

The major problem encountered by Chinese families adopting outside the framework is official recognition of their child, which ensures access to such entitlements as education and healthcare. Within the group of Chinese adoptive families described by Dr. Johnson, two-thirds were able to legally register their adopted child by appealing to the good will of officials or paying a modest fine. However, a number were burdened with huge fines or suffered forced sterilization. Under some circumstances, even after enduring these sanctions, children were not officially registered. As noted by Dr. Johnson, the plight of these unregistered "black children" is ironic since China has insisted on guaranteeing that Chinese children adopted abroad have full citizenship and fully equal treatment in their adoptive families.

PRIMARY DISABILITIES

A disproportionate percentage of children who reside within Social Welfare Institutions are those abandoned because of primary medical disabilities. While many of these children have conditions that are easily treated within a sophisticated medical system, they pose enormous problems for families who have neither access nor financial resources to pay for this care. Therefore, even though the one-child policy exempts children with disabilities, Chinese families with handicapped children face powerful forces that encourage abandonment.

I have participated in a number of training courses in China and observed significant progress in pediatric rehabilitation over the past 6 years. Until recently, the disabled in China suffered the same segregation from the able population as individuals with disabilities in Western society. With the exception of the blind, for which the profession of masseuse was traditionally reserved, the focus was on the family attending to the needs of the disabled rather than promoting self-sufficiency. However, the past two decades have witnessed the establishment of centers of excellence in rehabilitation medicine as well as architectural adaptations that permit disabled individuals to participate more fully in society.

A driving force behind this change is Deng Pufang the eldest son of the former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping. During the Cultural Revolution, he was persecuted so vigorously that he sustained a severe cervical spine injury and since then has been wheelchair bound. Due in large part to the prominence of his family and his position as the President of the Chinese Federation for the Disabled, it is common to see ramps, handicapped restroom facilities, and redesigned streets and sidewalks that have eliminated curbing at crosswalks.

Coded tiles incorporated into sidewalks and audible signals at intersections help the blind navigate more independently and safely. These accommodations are not

limited to the major cities. In 1999, I participated in a rehabilitation course in a remote location in Inner Mongolia where new street and sidewalk construction incorporated these changes.

Access to and expertise in Western rehabilitation medicine is generally localized to large cities with sophisticated medical infrastructures. However, some treatments for chronic disabilities, including acupuncture, massage and natural compounds from the pharmacopoeia of traditional Chinese medicine, are generally available throughout China. Training programs are needed to develop the required expertise that will permit application of both new and traditional treatments to the benefit of disabled children.

Many communities have developed rehabilitation programs associated with Social Welfare Institutions. One facility that I visited, the Nanjing Social Welfare Institute, was specifically designed for the rehabilitation of severely handicapped orphans. However, many children from the community participate in the excellent therapy and vocational training programs available through the center. Another impressive program, the Children's Rehabilitation Center in Qingdao, was designed primarily for children with hearing, vision and cognitive impairment living in the community. Universal access of families to such services is a critical step in reducing the number of abandoned disabled children.

SECONDARY DISABILITIES

Secondary disabilities may prove even more daunting for institutionalized children. Less obvious than a cleft lip or clubfoot, these problems are brought about by lack of a nurturing environment during the early formative years of life. Secondary disabilities affect both normal and disabled children within orphanages, and may include irreversible deterioration in growth, cognitive, language and social skills, and emotion regulation. (15) In the case of children who remain within Social Welfare Institutions, particularly those with disabilities, the key needs involve a comprehensive package of medical, cognitive and social rehabilitation designed to teach skills that will permit their integration into Chinese society as independent adults.

I am pleased to serve on the board of an organization that is attempting to directly prevent the development of secondary disabilities within Social Welfare Institutions. Half the Sky Foundation (named for the Chinese adage "Women hold up half the sky") was created in 1998 by adoptive families who desired to maintain a tie to China, the country that was their daughters' first home. (16) The organization is committed to helping the children who remain in China's orphanages do more than merely survive. The mission is to enrich the lives and enhance the prospects for these forgotten children by providing infant nurture and early childhood education centers inside orphanage walls.

To fulfill this mission, Half the Sky, in cooperation with the China Population Welfare Foundation and the China Social Work Association, both Beijing NGOs, creates and operates two programs: Baby Sisters Infant Nurture Centers and Little Sisters Preschools. The Baby Sisters Infant Nurture Centers employ HTS-trained "Nannies" from the local community to cuddle, love and provide orphaned babies the physical and emotional stimulation essential to the normal development of the brain and psychological well-being.

In the Little Sisters Preschools, HTS-trained teachers use a unique and progressive curriculum that blends principles of the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education with contemporary Chinese teaching methods. The program is designed not only to prepare the children to succeed in Chinese schools, but also to help develop the "whole child"—to help her attain the positive sense of self so often missing in institutionalized children.

By the end of 2002, HTS will be offering services to over 1200 children in eight institutions: Hefei and Chuzhou in Anhui Province; Changzhou in Jiangsu Province; Chengdu in Sichuan Province; Chongqing Municipality, Shanghai Municipality; and two institutions in Guangdong Province. On Children's Day, June 1, 2002, HTS, CPWF, and CSWA in cooperation with the Ministry of Civil Affairs opened a national model center and training facility at the Shanghai Children's Home, facilitating outreach to institutions across China.

Half the Sky's long-term plan calls for establishing and maintaining programs in at least two children's welfare institutions in each Chinese province where there are substantial numbers of children living in institutions. Each center will serve as a provincial model and will offer regional training workshops and a base for the network of caregivers to exchange ideas and experience. The rapid expansion of HTS programs would not have happened without exceptional support and cooperation from the directors of each facility and local and provincial officials. I view this team-

work as further proof of a sincere desire to improve conditions for abandoned children as rapidly as possible.

CONCLUSION

On March 7, 1996, I participated in a congressional briefing sponsored by Senator Paul Simon that was organized in response to the Human Rights Watch report on alleged abuse and neglect in the Shanghai Children's Welfare Institution. The meeting began with a statement by Dr. Ewing Carroll, Executive Secretary of the Asia/Pacific Region of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church. Acknowledging the size and complexity of Chinese society, he stated that everything we would hear during the briefing would be true "somewhere" in China. In this spirit, I acknowledge that the situation may well be different "somewhere" in China, but my personal experience has been thoroughly positive. From my perspective, few countries have made as much headway over such a short period of time in improving conditions for institutionalized children and providing an ever-increasing array of interventions for those who are disabled. International adoption benefits not only those who are placed but also those who remain by improving conditions within orphanages. The adoption process itself goes as smoothly as it does anywhere in the world and outcomes, from the perspective of adoptive parents and adoption professionals, are overwhelmingly positive.

Despite great progress on many fronts, problems within this realm of children's issues do exist. Population control policy has been undeniably linked with increased abandonment of healthy infant girls since the late 1980s and a marked expansion of the population within Social Welfare Institutions. While some of these abandoned children succumb, probably many more are adopted by Chinese families in violation of adoption laws designed principally to prevent over-quota births rather than to ensure the well being of children. Consequently, hundreds of thousands of children, principally girls, exist in situations where they are deprived of entitlements such as education and health care due to their parent's inability to gain official governmental recognition of their adoption. As noted by Dr. Johnson, adoption laws should be further modified so that they serve first the needs of children, and domestic adoption should be promoted and supported as vigorously as international placement.

In 1999, the adoption law in China was changed, lowering the legal age of adoption to 30 and permitting adoption of orphans from within state welfare institutions by families who already had children as long they could obtain certification of compliance with birth planning regulations from local authorities. During the year following liberalization of the law, the number of officially registered adoptions in China increased from approximately 6,000-8,000/year to 52,000. While the number of children adopted from orphanages increased, a larger portion of this number probably represented registration of foundlings adopted outside of orphanages as well as official recognition of "black children" adopted outside of legal channels. In these events I see progress and gain hope that domestic adoption will be supported, and that those homeless children welcomed into Chinese families outside the letter of the law will enjoy the full rights and privileges guaranteed in China's own constitution.

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF SUSAN SOON-KEUM COX

MONDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2002

My name is Susan Soon-keum Cox. I am Vice President of Public Policy and External Affairs for Holt International Children's Services in Eugene, OR. Holt is an international adoption and child welfare agency that pioneered adoption from Korea in 1956. Holt has placed children for adoption from more than 20 countries and has had adoption and child welfare programs in China since 1993.

I have worked in adoption since 1976 and visited child welfare programs in several countries in Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. Since 1983 I have worked with hundreds of international adoptees as director of Heritage Camps and Motherland and Family Tours to Korea and, in 1993 and 1999, I participated at the Hague Convention on Private International Law in Respect to Intercountry Adoption. My involvement at The Hague was primarily as an adoption advocate and professional, however I also bring the perspective of my life experience as a Korean adoptee.

In the last 25 years I have witnessed enormous changes and transitions to the institution of intercountry adoption. I am pleased for the opportunity to be here today and express my observations of the impact of child welfare and international adoption on China.

Approximately 20,000 children are adopted from abroad each year by U.S. families. Since the early 1990s adoptions from China represent an increasing percentage of the children adopted internationally. In 2002, more than 4,000 children were adopted from China. These children also demonstrate a changing demographic profile of adoptive families, of attitudes about intercountry adoption, and adoption practice and culture. Most significantly, these adoptions represent a unique profile of international adoptees and the impact they will have upon the institution of intercountry adoption, and the broader cultural context of their birth and adopted countries.

As China emerges into the global consciousness, there are lessons to be learned from the Korean experience. Both countries share an impressive record of achievement in positioning themselves in the world market place, and a shadowy history and reputation regarding to a variety of human rights issues. China and Korea also share a common history of international adoption as a governmentally sanctioned practice that is viable, effective and humane as a means for a child to have a family. It is a social practice that is also highly visible and sometimes controversial on both sides of the ocean.

Nearly 30,000 Chinese children (primarily girls) have been adopted abroad. Compared to the overall population of China, that might seem an inconsequential demographic. However, it would be misguided and the loss of an important opportunity to minimize the impact of that population on the social and cultural future of China, as well as the social and cultural context of the families in the United States who adopt them.

Adoptions from China began at the same time that the virtual community was becoming a part of the daily life of many Americans. This directly and dramatically impact the adoption process. It influenced the connection of adoptive families to the agency facilitating the adoption, the children they were adopting, and most of all, the connection of adoptive parents to each other. While families adopting from China certainly did not invent international adoption, they did to a large degree pio-

neer virtual communities for themselves. They replaced the earlier practice of parent support groups in one another's living rooms with more accessible opportunities for support and education not limited by boundaries of geography or time zones.

China contributed to the 'new profile' of adoptive families by establishing policies that permitted older and single parent adoptions. While most countries limited the age of parents adopting infants to 40 or 45, the early adoptions from China required a minimum age of 40 with no upper age limit. Single parents were not restricted and were able to adopt young infants. Immediately adoptions from China became the most appealing opportunity for hopeful adoptive parents, particularly those over age forty and single women. China also established a firm requirement that families travel to China to bring home their adopted children. From the beginning this was considered by adoptive parents to be a positive and treasured opportunity rather than a barrier or challenge to be overcome.

Predictably, going to China to bring their children home has had a compelling and lasting impact upon adoptive families. Touched not only by the children they adopt, but also for the thousands of children left behind, adopted families stay connected to one another, not only for themselves, but also for the children they are parenting and the children they remember in China.

Adoption from Korea began in 1956 and more than 100,000 children from Korea have been adopted by families in the United States. However, it was not until the late 1970s that the issues of race, culture and identity of these adoptees were considered a priority by the adoption community. This was the beginning of heritage and culture camps and motherland trips back to Korea. It took longer for the Korean American community to become involved. Mostly uncomfortable with both the public and private implication of intercountry adoption, Korean Americans avoided participating. In the 1980s that began to change as Korean adoptees grew up and immersed themselves in their birth culture including becoming part of Asian groups in schools across the country. Korean American students began to reach out to and include Korean adoptees in their activities and it paved the way for the more established adult Korean American community to come forward as well.

In contrast, from the beginning, adoptions from China included outreach to local Chinese American communities throughout the country. Adoptive parents sought out cultural resources, established relationships and formalized programs and opportunities for their children. Many of these programs included the children of the Chinese American families and together with Chinese adoptees they learned to embrace the culture and heritage of their birth countries.

In the 1980s there was a GAO report on international adoption. In addition to highlighting varying aspects of the adoption process, the report illuminated the passionate response of adoptive families regarding their adoption experience and their deep commitment to ensuring that international adoption continued as a viable option. When the Hague Convention was first introduced at the end of the 1980s, those outside of the adoption community were startled at the degree of interest and emotional response of adoptive families. Throughout the next decade adoptive families have not faltered in their monitoring and questioning of the Hague process.

From the beginning, China instituted an international adoption process that is similar to the successful process that has endured in Korea for more than 40 years. By establishing a centralized procedure for adoption with oversight by the China Center for Adoption Affairs (CCAA), there is a system of checks and balances that ensures a consistent measure of accountability and equity. This has not been the foundation of international adoption in many other countries with newly developed adoption programs, and is largely responsible for the success of adoptions from China. This careful, thoughtful system has allowed impressive numbers of children to be adopted with few disruptions.

On numerous occasions, government officials and staff from the CCAA have come to the United States to visit adoption agencies, medical programs, state adoption and foster care programs, and local child welfare officials. They have also visited adoptive families around the country and observed the parent group supported programs, celebrations and projects for Chinese adoptees. It is clear that CCAA officials and others in China have been reassured by how well the adopted children are thriving in there adopted families and communities.

When adoptions first began from China, there were firm, rigid restrictions on access by outsiders to orphanages and institutions. There is still reluctance to allow outsiders unlimited access to many institutions, but increasingly China has welcomed child welfare and medical experts, as well as humanitarian and development specialists to assist in improving social welfare conditions in China.

China has understandably been cautious and at times reticent regarding their international adoption program. Like other sending countries, including the United States, China is sensitive to how this social practice on behalf of their homeless children is seen by the rest of the world. Media interest in Chinese adoptions has been consistent and varied. While many of the stories are positive commentaries about a particular adoptive family, other stories have critically exposed the complexities of the one child policy, child abandonment, and inadequate care in orphanages.

No country willingly accepts criticism of how they care for their children, nor do they easily allow children to leave the country of their birth to be adopted by families of another. Intercountry adoption should never be considered the first line of defense, or the answer to the social safety net provided by solid child welfare programs. However, it is an immediate and often the single solution to abandoned children in orphanages with no other option in their future. China has shown an understanding and acceptance of this reality.

When China established and allowed intercountry adoption for thousands of children in the past decade, it has also used the resources created by adoption to elevate the lives of children remaining in China. This is uneasy and uncomfortable for China, or any sending country to acknowledge. However, the evidence of the quality of care in institutions in China clearly demonstrates that resources have been re-invested to improve care for children in China. Foster care, early childhood development and education, programs for children with disabilities, child care training, medical services and numerous other programs to benefit children are increasing in China's child welfare system.

Worldwide, children in orphanages are not given high priority and considered of little value to their society. Resources for their care are inadequate and advocacy on their behalf rare. Often they simply do not survive desperate childhoods. The children who do survive are seldom educated or prepared to care for themselves or a family.

As China continues to seek prominence in a global context, they cannot avoid increasing scrutiny. Circumstances that seem far removed from adoption or child welfare will still have implications on adoption. As China positions itself in the world market place and prepares to host the Olympics, it is predictable that the media and others will continue to focus on social issues, including adoption and the role it has in China. This will likely make China uneasy. But China should remember that they are not alone in explaining or defending the practice of international adoption. The thousands of families who have adopted children from China are outspoken and passionate advocates. It does not mean that they look aside at all that still remains to be done to improve social welfare programs in China, but they see it through the lens of compassion and determination to help them succeed.

Like Korea, the cultural and social context of China will be affected by the impact of international adoption. Because white families adopting Asian children are clearly obvious and visible, they cannot be hidden. Policy makers in China or the United States also cannot ignore them. An example of the ability and determination of adoptive families to mobilize was evidenced when the United States increased vaccination and immunization requirements for individuals immigrating to the United States. While it was sound public policy for adults, the requirements for infants and children was disaster. The unintended consequences of this legislation was immediately clear to the adoption community and agencies came together to urge needed changes. However, it was the organized and strategic call to action of adoptive families who had adopted, or hoped to adopt, from China that was pivotal in securing the required alteration in policy for children.

In addition to the adoptive families, the collective influence of other individuals and organizations deeply invested in what happens in China is impressive. Organizations that are not considered part of the traditional adoption community have become involved, such as university researchers, the medical and education community, and the news media. An industry dedicated to the Chinese adoption experience has developed and flourishes. Resources on Chinese culture, history, language and contemporary China are considerable. Books for children at all ages of development and for adoptive parents are published constantly, many by adoptive families themselves. Culture camps, holiday festivals and local events are bountiful and updated directories of local and regional organizations and available in communities around the country.

Chinese adoptions have become a part of the normal cultural mainstream in the United States. International adoptive families have had minor exposure in public service announcements and some commercial advertising in the past (Eastman Kodak produced a commercial about a Korean adoptee in the 1970s). However, increasingly international adoption, and primarily Chinese adoption, is featured in commercial advertising, not about adoption or Asia, but ads for J.C. Penney, Nordstrom, Morgan Stanley, and others. These marketing promotions demonstrate the clout and viability of international adoption as mainstream culture.

At the heart of all this activity and attention are the adoptees themselves. Their life experience as Chinese adoptees will be greatly influenced by the collective energy and attention that has been a part of how adoption from China developed and emerged. By the time China hosts the Olympic Games, many adoptees will be old enough to have, and voice, their own opinions about their birth country and their adoption. It is not possible to predict precisely what those thoughts will be, but if the Korean experience is any indication, they will be a voice the world should be prepared to hear.

SUBMISSION FOR THE RECORD

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DAVID YOUTZ, PRESIDENT, FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN
FROM CHINA OF GREATER NEW YORK

OCTOBER 21, 2002

Families with Children from China (FCC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting families who are planning to adopt, are in the process of adopting, or have adopted children from China. There are 90 chapters across the United States representing thousands of adoptive families. The Greater New York Chapter alone includes nearly 2000 families. Since we were founded in the early 1990s, we have continuously had the opportunity to work with and observe Chinese orphanages. We believe it is important to include in today's discussion the voices of the adoptive community.

China emerged in the mid-1990s as one of the largest sources of international adoptions for Americans. The number of Chinese children adopted into American families is now about 5,000 per year. Across the United States close to 30,000 children have been adopted from China by American families since 1990. China has been a frequent choice because its adoption process has been stable and predictable, infants and children coming from Chinese orphanages have been healthy, and Chinese officials have been open to adoptions by single parents and older parents.

Beginning in 1993, China conducted a major overhaul and consolidation of its adoption policies and processes and set a new, national system in place. Our community has been impressed with the work of the national coordinating agency, the Chinese Center for Adoption Affairs. Graft and irregularities in dealings with foreign adoptions have been extremely rare. The relevant Chinese authorities have been conscientious about consistently and fairly applying the rules. The adoption paperwork requirements and costs have been on a par with, if not better than international practices. China has exhibited none of the problems seen recently with adoptions in Vietnam and Cambodia. FCC families' experiences with China adoption have been overwhelmingly positive.

The circumstances of adoption in China are in some ways unique. The large majority of children in Chinese orphanages are girls. This situation has been caused, by a number of social, demographic, and economic factors. These include a combination of widespread poverty in certain rural provinces, (particularly those inland regions remote from the booming economies of the coastal areas), and the traditional Chinese value of the primacy of bearing sons. The lack of social security assistance in China further fuels the tradition that male heirs, and not daughters, are obliged to provide financial and other care for their elderly parents. Finally, China stepped up its population control efforts at the beginning of the 1980s and established the "one-child policy." This policy, from its inception, has been irregularly enforced (strongly enforced in urban areas, and more loosely in rural areas), and is now being revised to reflect the reality that many families have skirted the one-child rule in attempts to bear a son.

FCC families are well aware, having visited orphanage sites in China during the last decade, that there were numerous problems in Chinese orphanages in the early 1990s. These ranged from poor conditions, overcrowding, and lack of resources, to poor management of the institutions. We believe China has made great strides in addressing these problems. They have been very successful at bringing new resources to orphanages. At many of the institutions we have visited, the quality of care, physical infrastructure, toys and equipment, and other conditions have dramatically improved. We have also been impressed that orphanages, working together with foreign and domestic groups, are now embracing foster care as an alternative to long-term institutional care for infants and children. We have been pleased to see significant growth in the number of local Chinese families participating in foster care programs, and the beginning of growth in domestic adoption by Chinese families. This latter development is new for mainland China, which does not have a tradition of adoption outside the extended family; this is, we believe, the direct result of a fruitful, collaborative relationship between the foreign adoptive communities and China.

While FCC is primarily an organization that serves American adoptive families, we care deeply about the children who remain in Chinese orphanages. Many of us parents felt compelled to find an effective way to do something to elevate conditions for these unadopted children. Increasingly today the children who are not being adopted are those with significant special needs or those who have passed beyond

the prime ages for adoption—the same category of children who have been difficult to place in American domestic adoptions.

Since 1996, FCC has been providing support to China's orphanages and helping to improve conditions for children growing up in institutional care. Over the past 6 years, for example, FCC of Greater New York has raised more than \$850,000 to fund orphanage assistance projects in China. Over \$800,000 has already been distributed to China to fund projects providing direct services to children in more than 40 orphanages in nine provinces. Most of the funds FCC distributes support continuing programs to increase the level of care the children receive.

Working primarily in partnership with a China-based non-governmental organization, the Amity Foundation, FCC sponsors orphanage children for medical treatment and corrective surgery and pays tuition fees for hundreds of children to attend community schools. Two important programs provide professional care within the orphanages, supplementing the work of the regular orphanage staff. The "Grandmas Project" recruits retired teachers and medical personnel to provide nurturing care to babies and special needs children. In a program developed by FCC, intensive-care nursing teams care for babies and infants at risk and provide therapeutic intervention to special needs children. FCC currently sponsors Grandmas projects in 17 orphanages, and teams of 4 to 6 Chinese nurses in 5 orphanages.

The development of long-term foster care has been perhaps the most significant advancement in the care of the neediest children, older and special needs children who are not likely to be adopted. Through seminars by organizations such as the Amity Foundation, orphanage directors are recognizing the benefits of loving foster homes over long-term institutional care for these children. FCC has worked with the Amity Foundation to develop quality foster care programs, providing a model of family care within the community with resources to address medical and educational needs, and to promote the advantages of child-centered family care to orphanage directors and provincial officials. The benefits to the children in foster care placements are apparent in the gains in their health and in their physical and emotional development. FCC has also partnered with the Holt Foundation, another organization promoting the advantages of foster care, in providing funds to begin two foster care projects developed by Holt.

In site visits to the orphanages with projects we sponsor, we have seen significant advancements in the conditions and in the level of care. To those who visited orphanages in the first years of significant numbers of adoptions from China, the observed improvements have been most dramatic. Government and business-community resources have been devoted to erecting new orphanage buildings and renovating others, replacing the dismal facilities many of us saw when we adopted our children. Government officials and orphanage directors have been receptive to efforts by a broad range of charitable organizations to improve services to the children, allowing access to the orphanages and training of orphanage staff.

Clearly the needs remain great and much more needs to be done. The trends of greater government attention to the population of orphanage children and to facility improvements, and receptivity to the assistance provided by international organizations as well as emerging charitable groups within China are hopeful signs of continuing positive developments in the care for China's orphaned and abandoned children.

CONCLUSION

Adoption of children from China into American families is one of the most successful examples of cooperation between our two countries. Despite frequent ups and downs in the relationship between Washington and Beijing, the adoption process has moved ahead with quiet and life-changing effectiveness. The adoption process and conditions in orphanages are one area where China has made impressive and enduring progress, which should be recognized and applauded. China's openness to assistance and its commitment to improvement in these areas demonstrates that China can change in directions that Americans are pleased to see. This suggests to our community that open lines of communication and constructive engagement with China works—to the mutual good of people in both countries. Families with Children from China urges that both governments do all that they can to allow this overwhelmingly positive story to continue to flourish.

