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Changing Family Landscape in the US: Adoption, Parenting, and New Family Making

Kaori Mori Want

Konan Women's University

ABSTRACT

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the transnational adoption of Asian children by Americans has continued. The US adopted 1622 children transnationally in the fiscal year 2020. 659 children out of 1622, roughly 40% of children are from Asian countries. Adoption from Asian countries to the US started during the 1950s. As a result of American military intervention in Asia, mixed race children were born between Asian women and American servicemen with some becoming orphans. These mixed-race orphans often became the targets of racism in Asian countries. Knowing their plight, the US government started accepting four thousand mixed race orphans. Since then, the US continued to adopt many Asian children up till now.

Most Asian adoptees are raised by white Americans. When they grow up, they find that they are racially different from their adoptive parents, and many look for their birth parents. The racial difference and the loss of birth parents have led some Asian adoptees to suffer. For those Asian adoptees in need of support, how could their adoptive parents help them?

This presentation will look at picture books that deal with Asian adoptees and are written by adoptive parents for the answers of the question above. Through reading these picture books as well as referring to theoretical discussions, I will argue how white adoptive parents try to negotiate multiple problems being generated between themselves and their Asian adoptees, and discuss how adoption of Asian children has contributed to the changes of family landscape in the US.

Keywords: transnational/transracial/Adoption; Asian children; racial difference; parenting, family making