WISING UP ANTHOLOGIES

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2007

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2008

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2009

VIEW FROM THE BED
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2010

SHIFTING BALANCE SHEETS

Women's Stories of Naturalized Citizenship
&
Cultural Attachment

Heather Tosteson, Kerry Langan, Charles D. Brockett & Debra Gingerich
Editors

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HEATHER TOSTESON

INVITATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS
Shifting Balance Sheets for All of Us

We assume many of the readers of this anthology will be, like the editors, birthright citizens who have found their own circuitous ways into an understanding of the importance of an open, thoughtful discussion of what citizenship and cultural attachment have come to mean to them—and what rights and responsibilities they see as flowing from this understanding. These experiences of birthright citizens are as crucial to the healthy, full integration of naturalized citizens into neighborhoods, communities and the nation as the experiences of the new citizens themselves, whose stories are at the heart of this book—for they are the holding environment in which these stories of migration and changing allegiances take on new meaning.

I share some of my own journey at the beginning of this collection because it is part of that holding environment and because the issue is personal for everyone involved, the citizen who is naturalized and the often unreflective birthright citizen who is brought into equal relation to her by that oath. What is the nature of that relationship? Who is responsible for it? Who benefits? Where does welcome fit in? Where does respect? Affection? Permanence? I believe we often do our best thinking if it arises from the density, complexity and immediacy of our own experience, that these abstractions—nationality, community, patriotism, democracy—which can arouse such ire and adamancy, mean more and differently when clearly reconnected with their vital and very messy sources in our daily lives.

Often the answers come through most clearly and mysteriously through stories because stories, as Jerome Bruner observes, invite interpretation, expose our normative assumptions and the emotional impact of their breeching, and, through the wholeness of action, transform a multiplicity of perspectives and motivations into one mysteriously meaningful experiential

whole. Stories also take two, the teller and the listener—and a bit of enchantment. Whenever we share, however briefly, that near primal quiet that overtakes us when we open to a story (wherever it is found), we may be bringing something new and valuable into being: the feeling of community.

HOW I CAME TO THE QUESTIONS IN CITIZENSHIP

My interest in the related topics of creative acculturation, migration, immigration, and citizenship has as some of its vital and messy sources my profound love and delight in my immigrant Welsh grandmother, my own migratory upbringing (which included many moves inside and outside the U.S. at formative stages in my childhood), my experiences living more voluntarily in other countries as an adult, my friendships with people in these countries and with immigrants and refugees in the United States, my disappointing experiences of good deeds of welcome gone awry, and the social complexity of the unintentionally—and often rawly—pluralistic local community I intentionally live in today.

Immigration

In 1915, my paternal grandmother, Dilys Bodycombe, born and raised in Pontardawe, Wales, sailed from Liverpool on the ship St. Paul and arrived at Ellis Island on November 22nd. She was eleven and accompanied by her mother and father and older sister, Gladys. They were, along with ten more of her siblings, part of the second large wave of European immigrants to come to the States. She was, in a quirky twist, mistakenly listed on the ship's manifest as Lilian, which later would be the name of one of her older son's favorite mistresses. (He would show an over-riding preference for alliances, legitimate and otherwise, with women who were foreign-born.) Dilys was part and parcel of a large, melodiously histrionic family of Welsh coal-miners—who squabbled over cards, serenaded each other with arias, and quoted copiously from their favorite socialist, George Bernard Shaw. They were, like many recent immigrants, very ambitious for their children and saw education as the clearest path to social mobility. On Dilys's part, whose own formal education ended with high school, perhaps this ambition came

from the freedom she experienced re-inventing herself in this new world as a woman of the middle class by marrying a graduate of Carnegie Mellon. This re-invention led her to insist after her marriage that she was not the kind of woman who could be expected to do her own laundry, an assumption my college-educated, native-born, and mildly forlorn grandfather seemed to have acceded to without demur even during the Depression, when he lowered his own job expectations considerably. In the same vein, my grandmother imperiously insisted that as a high school student in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, my father take the College Boards—over the protestations of the principal who said it was a cruelty to my father to suggest he aspire to the Ivy Leagues. They weren't, he insisted, open to residents of Wauwatosa. I assume my grandmother, as was her wont, collapsed in a rage-induced faint and won the argument, for my father took the exams and went to Harvard. Throughout his long life, my father negotiated a complex blend of ambition and feelings of inadequacy and pretense. His mother, however, delighted in his successes as his due—and in her own life happily cultivated a warm and totally artificial British accent for her daily life and an American one for playing Auntie Mame in local theatricals.

On my cherished solo visits to Wauwatosa to visit with her and my grandfather, I found her glamorous and luringly American—something, in those years when my own family shuttled between Denmark, England and the U.S., I was trying to puzzle my way through. American was, I concluded, *joie de vivre*, dramatic accents, silver ballgowns, the red book of famous opera plots, soft Persian rugs, folding TV tables, and television itself—none of which we had in our own houses, whether in Copenhagen, Cambridge, Bethesda, or St. Louis. Snuggling in with my Campbell's soup, watching Porky Pig, America I decided was homecoming, respite from different languages, the precariousness of my parents' marriage, the incessant moves.

Emigration

Perhaps as a response to the baffling time in Europe as a child, the exposure to different cultures, languages, and accents at a stage when I was learning to read, I showed little desire to travel as a young adult. But when my son was thirteen I fell impetuously in love with a Mexican artist and brutally uprooted my son to follow him to Mexico. In part, this act was an expression of my alienation from my own culture at that time. Now, it both horrifies

CHARLES D. BROCKETT

SOME FACTS TO STAND ON, SOME AVENUES TO EXPLORE

The purpose of this essay is to provide the reader with context for this volume's personal accounts of immigration, acculturation, and naturalization. It will cover, admittedly in brief fashion, the following: historical overview, U.S. distinctiveness, current immigration demographics, the naturalization process, acculturation and identity, and the situation of immigrant women.

Overview

We often say in the United States that we are a nation of immigrants, taking pride in the Statue of Liberty's welcome to the "tired . . . poor . . . [the] huddled masses yearning to breathe free." Yet at other times it sounds instead like many of us wish to replace Emma Lazarus's poem with a 'no vacancy' sign. Immigration controversy is not new—it has ignited intermittently for more than a century and a half.

The Know Nothing movement opposed the growing Catholic population prior to the Civil War, Exclusion Acts later in the nineteenth century targeted first the Chinese and later all Asians, and historic laws in 1921 and 1924 greatly curbed all immigration, especially from outside of Europe. Conversely, an equally significant immigration reform in 1965 removed legal discrimination against non-Europeans and opened the door for greatly expanded immigration from all over the world, thereby setting the scene for the immigration debate of recent years.

Consensus and controversy: Although it is widely acknowledged across the political spectrum that the U.S. is greatly in need of another fundamental reform in immigration policy, we are so divided over the issue the Congress has been unable to legislate successfully. A major study was commissioned by

Congress in 1990 to examine the issue and suggest appropriate reforms. The Jordan Commission did just so in its outstanding report in 1997 (and prior preliminary reports) but Congress did not act.(1) A broad bipartisan coalition for reform did emerge in the second term of President George W. Bush and for a while it looked like it might succeed; however, the effort collapsed in 2007 under withering attack from the right.

Throughout these controversies, most U.S. citizens have been clear that as a country we have benefitted from the continuing flow of immigrants joining our society. We certainly agree, and the contributions to this anthology demonstrate why. However, contemporary survey data also show majority dissatisfaction not just with current policy but also with current levels of immigration. Although some scholars and activists argue for the free movement of labor across open borders paralleling that of capital, this is an infrequently held position.(2) Most U.S. citizens are unwilling to allow all hardworking people of good moral character who would like to immigrate to the United States to do so. Because there are so many who would like to come, we agree. There are limits to how many newcomers can be incorporated successfully into a community as part of a continuing flow. The harder questions are what is the desired level for the U.S. population of foreign compared to native born and what criteria should be given priority in determining who is permitted to immigrate.

Historically the United States has been among the most permissive countries in its immigration policy (except for 1924-1965) as well as in allowing for naturalization. An important way of understanding U.S. history is the expansion of who we allow to join us by becoming U.S. citizens, from only whites in the beginning to no restrictions for the last half century on who you are in terms of race, religion, gender, or nation of origin. Alongside all of the country's defects, this must be recognized for the extraordinary achievement that it is, creating a diverse population of citizens unmatched except perhaps by Canada.

Citizenship and Community: But what do we mean in the U.S. by the 'citizenship' that we offer to those who wish to join us? Some might be comfortable with a minimal expectation, perhaps not much more than an instrumental relationship in the marketplace. Others might have broader expectations of agreement on core values and the full acceptance of the responsibilities of membership in a *community*. When the immigration level reached its peak in the early twentieth century, a strong Americanization

movement emerged that at its best aimed at facilitating the assimilation of immigrants into the existing community. At the time immigrants were seen as often coming from backgrounds radically different from those of the native born. Yet at that time they were almost all Europeans.

Today where I live on the outskirts of Atlanta our immediate area features not only sizeable numbers of native-born blacks and whites but also significant groupings of Afro-Caribbeans, Bhutanese, Bosnians, Burmese, Eritreans, Ethiopians, Indians, Liberians, Mexicans, Nigerians, Pakistanis, Somalis, and Vietnamese. Given the great increase in the level of immigration in recent decades and its broad expansion of U.S. diversity, the Jordan Commission called for renewed attention to Americanization, which it identified as: "a set of expectations that the United States, which chooses to invite legal immigrants, legitimately has of newcomers. It applies equally to the expectations immigrants legitimately have of their new home."(3) We agree—with both parts of the statement.

Immigration Policy: Cycle of Permissiveness and Constraint

In the early days: At the point of its independence the United States was overwhelmingly populated by Protestants from the British Isles along with a smaller number of Protestants from continental Northern Europe. Forcefully marginalized from this society, of course, were the Native Americans and African Americans. Citizenship itself was offered only to free white persons by law in 1790. Through the first three decades of the republic, immigration flows were minor with immigrants constituting less than one percent of the population. Unrestricted immigration, a non-controversial policy under such conditions, grew more controversial with the rapid expansion of both the number of immigrants in the decades up to the civil war and with its diversification as large numbers of Catholics entered the country, beginning first from Germany in the 1830s and then from Ireland in the 1840s. This intensifying conflict, however, was overwhelmed by the even more divisive set of issues that culminated in the Civil War. Immigration itself diminished as well with both the war and the years of economic difficulty that followed.(4)

Immigration expands: As U.S industrialization accelerated later in the century, though, so too did immigration once again. Not only did the U.S. become more of a magnet but multiple socio-political changes in Europe led many from Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe to seek a better fate

across the Atlantic. Many were single males, many eventually returned home. Nonetheless, for the five decades beginning in 1880, the U.S. welcomed some 30 million immigrants; during the first decade of the new century this represented about 40% of the country's total population growth. The immigration level peaked in both the decades of the 1890s and 1910s at 15% of the population.(5) In the industrial cities of the North the rate was probably closer to 20%.

And contracts: Many of the immigration controversies of today would be familiar to the protagonists of this earlier period. Movements to restrict immigration levels appeared alongside its expansion, culminating in the Quota Acts of 1921 and 1924. The resulting sharp fall of immigration to the U.S., especially from outside Western and Northern Europe, had been preceded some decades earlier in the western states where the major immigrant flow had been from Asia. Economic and cultural concerns, as well as racism, led to a series of exclusion acts. First targeted were Chinese laborers in laws passed by Congress in 1882, 1884, 1886, 1888, and 1902. Diplomacy culminating with the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1908 greatly curtailed immigration from Japan. South Asians were excluded in 1917 and most remaining Asians by the 1924 law.(6) Removal of these restrictions in the 1940s and 1950s then led the way (although the relevant country quotas were miniscule) to opening immigration altogether in 1965.

Current situation: The foundational law governing policy now is the Immigration and Naturalization Act passed in 1952 and amended repeatedly since. The landmark legislation of 1965 removed the country quota system established in the early 1920s, instead establishing separate ceilings for the two hemispheres; this division itself was removed in 1978. Priority under the law is given to family reunification, critical employee skills, and artistic excellence. Refugees were originally included as a priority category but were removed in 1980 and since then have been treated separately.

Although the precise number has varied, until 1990 the overall annual ceiling was less than 300,000 legal immigrants. In 1990 it was more than doubled. For the decade through 2009 it climbed again, hitting just over one million immigrants in most years.(7) These changes are reflected in the percentage of foreign-born residents in the overall population. From the high of 15% early in the twentieth century the rate dropped steadily down to its lowest point since data was collected of only 5% in 1970. Under the impact of the 1965 law, immigration (legal and otherwise) then began growing faster

KERRY LANGAN

INTRODUCTION

China has long fascinated me. With four thousand years of history, the Chinese have given the world one of its major civilizations. Five years ago, I stood on the Great Wall and marveled at this triumphant feat of engineering, a precise assemblage of earth and stones that rises from the hills in a massive show of strength and beauty for 5,500 miles. Each small section of the wall is impressive, but my eye couldn't help but travel its visible distance, tracing the endless castle wall, with its fortress watchtowers placed at exact intervals, as it winds on and on through the countryside, as seemingly long as Chinese civilization itself.

The wall was built to keep invaders out of a country that preferred to be left alone. For the vast majority of its history, China was her own world, a self-sufficient land that sent no envoys abroad. To learn China's secrets, traders had to make the arduous journey to Asia, but they were well rewarded for their efforts. The Land of the Dragon is credited with an impressive list of the world's inventions including paper, gunpowder, the compass, print and moveable type, India ink, porcelain, silk, steel, kites, and on and on.

In the past two decades, China has given the world her most unique gift, her daughters. From behind the Great Wall, China has sent forth thousands of tiny female ambassadors. In 1991, the U.S. State Department reported that American families and single parents adopted 61 Chinese infants and toddlers. Word quickly spread that healthy infant girls (and a few boys) were available for adoption, and the United States soon led the world in Chinese adoptions. At its height, in 2005, 7,906 American adoptions of Chinese females took place. Overall, approximately 150,000 babies and toddlers were adopted from China in the last twenty years, with roughly half now living in the United States.

Most are familiar with China's one-child policy, implemented in 1979, to arrest overpopulation. During the twentieth century, China endured

disastrous famine and poverty. During the Great Leap Forward, *thirty million* people starved to death. It's a statistic I can't completely comprehend: it's simply too large. This era of starvation devastated China. To feed all of her people, China had to drastically reduce her population.

Boys carry the bloodline and family name in China. Sons take in their aged parents while daughters care for their in-laws. Without a son, aged Chinese parents risk becoming destitute and homeless. If only allowed to have one child, survival and cultural preference dictate that it must be a son. Those couples that dare defy the policy by having more than one child suffer reprisals such as loss of jobs and homes. Hence, 150,000 Chinese girls growing up around the globe, in the United States, Ireland, England, France, Australia, Spain, the Netherlands and elsewhere. China's daughters are living in twenty-six countries worldwide, a global expatriate community comprised of members who did not choose to leave their homeland.

Of course, now China is realizing how valuable girls are. Who will the sons marry? There must be grandchildren to carry on the family name and honor the ancestors. The one-child policy is loosening; couples in some areas are allowed to pay a variable fee to have a second child. Most significant, China's tenacious attitude regarding gender inequality is at long last losing its grip. Many urban couples desire, even prefer, girls, citing the loyalty of daughters. Modern China is experiencing phenomenal development and has a great need for employees, men and women, to replace her aging workforce. In the current economy, daughters can provide for a family just as well as sons. There has also been an increase in domestic adoptions since the growing middle class is able to afford adoption fees and the costs of pediatric care. Some have speculated that the one-child policy may be completely dissolved sometime in the next decade.

Not surprisingly, the number of Chinese babies eligible for international adoption is diminishing. In 2009, Americans adopted 3,001 babies from China, a decrease of 66% since 2005. The wait for a baby, at one time less than a year, is now several years, causing couples to have to update expensive adoption dossiers. As a result, couples and single parents are looking to other countries for more rapid adoptions.

Still, approximately 75,000 adopted Chinese children, more than 95% of them girls, are now naturalized American citizens. Roughly 15,000, a full 20% of the adoptees, are growing up in a two-mile radius on the upper west side of Manhattan. The rest are coming of age in other cities, college

KERRY LANGAN

DOUBLE HAPPINESS

When we first returned home from China with our daughter, Madeline, in 1995, we faced so many questions: How would we reverse our days and nights to get back on Eastern Standard Time? How quickly could we have our eight month old examined by a doctor? Would we have her re-immunized? Should we switch to a soy formula? How long should we wait before taking her to visit relatives in other parts of the country? I was certain of only one thing: I would never write about any of this.

Why? Madeline, and everything about her, was too precious to discuss with mere words. The joyful experience of coming together as a family was beyond sacred to her father and me. I'd never be able to adequately write about the bittersweet moment she was first placed in my arms, my heart expanding with the universe, Madeline breaking into wails and reaching for her caretaker. Nor could I explain the deep attachment we felt to the other eleven families in our adoption group who were mirroring our experience, immediately head over heels in love with their new daughters. Some miraculous great fortune had matched us with the child who was *meant* to be ours. Holding Madeline in those first moments, taking in her little turquoise outfit and the scratch on her nose, I wanted to convey love and safety to her. At that moment, I was a stranger to her, but I was also her mother. I was trembling, thinking, "Please, let me be worthy of this baby."

We toured the cities of Hefei and Guangzhou in a blissful, sleep-deprived state, marveling that our most cherished dream had actually come true. In the market, Chinese merchants and shoppers rubbed the babies' heads in hopes that the good luck of infants going to wealthy America would rub off on them. In my right mind, I would have felt disconcerted about the implications of the gesture, of their mistaking me as wealthy because of my race and because I was holding a Chinese baby whose future had been determined by her gender. In my newly maternal state, however, I could

only focus on the discomfort Madeline felt when strangers approached her. Her life had been turned upside down in a moment, and she was right on developmental schedule for stranger anxiety. In our first days of family life, Madeline had become trusting of Bob and me, her reliable source of food, but we sensed her fear that we might place her in the arms of a stranger. When going out in public, Bob carried Madeline and I walked alongside. We had noticed that the Chinese were less inclined to approach a tall man with facial hair than a diminutive, dark-haired woman dressed in Chinese clothes (to appear more familiar to Madeline, I had ransacked local shops to find the same dress worn by her orphanage caretaker). From a distance, I might've passed as a Chinese woman. I knew, Bob knew, all of the parents knew that we were the lucky ones. With everything that was wrong in the world, it was still possible for something beyond wonderful to happen; we had been given a child! And not just any child, but Madeline, our precious, precious girl.

How had we ever existed without her? I just wanted to look at her forever, to absorb her every expression and emotion, to assure her that I would always be there for her. When you fall in love that fast, your body undergoes an ecstatic shock. I wondered if I could possibly be experiencing the same hormonal surge of mothers who have just given birth. Bob was reduced to an amusing puddle of paternal love. Madeline threw anything she could get her hands on down on the floor and laughed when her father stooped his large frame to pick up toys, spoons, cups, napkins. If his baby wanted to play "Daddy fetch," Bob was not going to disappoint her. He had very little previous experience with babies, but Madeline was *his* baby. She entered our lives on the ten-year anniversary of Bob's and my first date. As I watched my husband dote on our daughter those first days, I laughed and said, "Well, I was the woman of your life for ten years, but there's a new girl in town."

We were in our daughter's native country, the country we would come to think of as our second home. We promised ourselves that we would learn Mandarin (we now know the few phrases we learned from *Big Bird in China*) and that we would return to China when Madeline was old enough to store memories. We filmed the journey on our camcorder and shot a ridiculous number of rolls of film. Still, during those first days as we explored China and exulted at the sights and landscape, we couldn't wait to get Madeline 'home,' to Oberlin, Ohio, where we could really settle into family life. Madeline was our life; she was all we would ever need. I knew that within moments of holding her that first time. Write about any of that? Impossible.

MADELINE GEITZ
ANNA MAE ANHALT
ALICIA KARLS

CHINESE DAUGHTERS & AMERICAN CITIZENS Q & A, A & Q

Madeline:

Anna, Alicia, and I live in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Ohio, respectively, but in some ways we feel closer than any other group of three could. We were adopted from the same orphanage in central China in July of 1995. Our birthdays are a few weeks apart—it's even possible we could have shared a crib at our orphanage. We, along with several other girls in our adoption group, have gathered at annual reunions in Chicago, a central meeting point. We also took a return trip to China together in the summer of 2005. All of us have asked, and been asked, similar questions regarding our adoption experiences. This collaborative self-interview provides answers to those often asked questions. Our editor, Heather Tosteson, asked us to consider additional questions regarding naturalization and citizenship. You'll see that the three of us are in agreement on many points but also have a variety of opinions on others. It is evident, however, that we share deep pride in being the unique Chinese daughters that we are.

How has being adopted affected your life?

Anna:

Oh goodness, where to start. Quite honestly being adopted has affected my life of course, but from the every day-to-day life of mine I rarely am reminded of it or think about it.

I mean when I do think about it, yes of course—if I wasn't adopted the language I would speak would be different, my culture would be different,

who I hang out with, my life experiences, my opportunities—all different.

I am a person who does believe that everything happens for a reason. I don't think my adoption was an accident, I don't think where I am today was an accident and I KNOW that wherever life happens to take me in the future won't be by accident either. Being adopted doesn't define me, it's just a part of my life that has helped bring me to where I am today.

Alicia:

Being adopted is one of the biggest things that define who I am. I'm here because of adoption; I have a mom because of adoption; I have an amazing life because of adoption. I *definitely* wouldn't be the same person without being adopted. I don't mean to say that everything I do is based on adoption; it's just a really big part of who I am. I don't go around saying I'm adopted, but I sure am proud if I get asked. I don't think of my mom as my adoptive mom (yes I've been asked), I think of her as my mom, as anyone else would think of their parent. I also hate answering the question "if your real parents ever wanted you back would you leave your fake mom?" First of all, she's not my "fake" mom. Second of all, no, because I love my life right now; my birth parents had to make a choice and it must have been for a reason. I'm never going to be ashamed that I got adopted, that would be like being ashamed of being myself.

Madeline:

It's rare that I think of myself as adopted, or factor in my adoption to who I am as a person. 'Adopted' isn't some sort of state that I think of myself to be in—I was adopted at eight months old and, in my lifetime, I'd rank it as about as notable an event as losing my fifth tooth, or getting my seventeenth haircut. Now, this is not to say I'm ungrateful in the slightest about being adopted by such a loving family—my luck in receiving such a perfect life was one in a million—but my adoption is not what makes me Madeline, or the only thing that makes me who I am. I am the combined result of everything in my life—every birthday, every crush, every pair of jeans, every song I sang in the shower, every font I used in a school report, every CD I put on my Christmas wishlist, every math equation I ever solved, and every color I ever painted my toenails—not just the event of my adoption.

Madeline:

I volunteered some time for data entry and phone calls during the 2008 Obama presidential campaign. This was an experience that opened me up to learn about the American political system and how I could be a part of it, even though I can't vote.

To be honest, I don't feel 'American' like one feels 'blonde' or 'tall' or 'overweight.' The times I consider myself American are when I'm registering an account for a website and select 'USA' as my country, traveling with a U.S. passport, or taking ' U.S. History and Government.'

I hope to travel more outside of the United States, or to participate in a study abroad or foreign exchange program. I imagine going to other countries would make me 'feel' American. As of now, I was born in China, but have been living in the United States almost my entire life, so I don't have a point of comparison.

You are part of an interesting cultural phenomenon of the last twenty years, the foreign adoption of Chinese babies, almost all of them female. These babies are now girls coming to adulthood and developing ideas of their own about the reasons for and the personal impact of this phenomenon.

How do you understand the causes of this phenomenon? Do you think this preference for male children and disproportionate abandonment or relinquishing of females was determined primarily by the Chinese government's top-down one-child-per-family policy, by the larger historical depreciation of women in China, or by an intersection of the two?

Anna:

Well I think in the 90s when I was adopted, it was a mixture of the two: the Chinese government ordering only one child per family and the fact that Chinese culture says that the son is in charge of taking care of his parents as they age. But now, as time goes on, I think that the world is constantly changing and evolving. I believe that the idea that daughters/girls are less than or unequal to sons/boys is slowly disappearing.

Alicia:

I'd say it was a mix between the two. The government probably wouldn't have had the one-child rule (choosing the female over male) if not

for the point of view about women.

Madeline:

I think that the family name and the greater earning potential of males are the chief factors. China is changing, though, and people are realizing the value of girls.

Do you feel that your own birth mother had a choice when she left you? Do you think she should or could have stood up against her culture's clear preference for boys?

Anna:

Well seeing as how I don't know the reason for my mother having to give me up, I can't really say. Yes, maybe my mother gave me up because I was just one child too many, or I was one child too many and the only reason she would've kept me was if I was a boy. I will never know. I believe that whatever the reason, I'm sure it was very difficult for her, but she felt that it was the right thing to do at the time.

Alicia:

If it was the law, I don't think that she had a choice to leave me. I also don't think she would have stood up against society. I have a feeling that it would have been really hard to give up a child in the first place, and probably even harder to go against the form of government and society. I honestly haven't given much thought about it though because I believe everything happens for a reason; she left me there, and that led to my adoption. It doesn't matter why she left me there, I'm here now and I can't do anything about it.

Madeline:

I don't know if my mother had a choice, or if she would have been the type of woman to stand up to this idea. It's not my concern, though—I've been adopted and there's no use in looking back.

Has this phenomenon affected your own valuation of women? Has it made you a feminist? Will it affect what issues you choose to vote on when you are able to vote? How?

JENNIFER BAO YU JUE-STEUCK

GOODNIGHT MOON, GOODNIGHT MOM

We stand
all of us drawn here
by an invisible cord eons long
awaiting the start of a ritual
removed from its womb
by distance and by hope. . .
—Janet Jue

Writing is an act of hope.
—Isabel Allende

She is four years old. Mom reads her all-time favorite picture book, *Goodnight Moon*. Nestled under her Winnie-the-Pooh covers, her small head is sandwiched between Mom's outstretched arms, the book directly in front of her brown eyes. The green-and-red-colored pictures leap out, filling her with wonder and appreciation.

"Goodnight moon," coos Mom, softly petting her long brown hair. Goodnight Mom. Goodnight stars.

"Goodnight kittens," continues Mom, kissing the shiny wisps on her small head. She is nearly asleep. Her small fingers on her mother's firm arm detach, her eyes wilting shut like a flower folding from too much sun.

"Goodnight stars. Goodnight air." Mom's voice is softer now. Quiet.

"Goodnight, Mommy," says a half-asleep four year old as she yawns and Mom slips out of the covers, carefully and lovingly tucking them round her little frame, bending down to kiss her forehead. Strings of dark brown hair stick fuzzily above her head, defying gravity, on her faded Winnie-the-Pooh pillow.

Her miniature stomach rises and falls slowly with warm puffs of air. The light fades. The door creaks to its nearly closed position. A soft glow from

the hallway falls into her room, warning monsters to stay far, far away. The light leads to safety—like runway lights that guide airplanes back to earth in pitch-black, stormy nights. Straight to the 24/7 haven of Mom's protective embrace.

Goodnight, Jen. See you in the morning.

Goodnight, Mommy. Goodbye.

Mom tiptoes away, her figure a small blip in the dark.

Then one morning, a hospice care worker arrives at the house just before dawn, just before two strange, scary men in black suits roll Mom out our front door, down our driveway, down the majestic mountain where our home kisses the California sky, down the long stretch of Highway 1 that cradles the coast and nearly dips into the deep blue of the Pacific, down and away . . . until nothing is left but the smell of Mom's perfume, a fog of memories, and the whisper of her voice reverberating in my heart.

My name is Jennifer *Bao Yu* "Precious Jade" Jue-Steuck. I am thirty years old. My birthmother is from Jiangsu province, China. In 1979, when I was nearly two years old, I was adopted privately by an American couple from California, at a time when adoption of Chinese children was almost unheard of. It was a complex affair. Paperwork for my adoption was issued through Hong Kong and Taiwan, where my birthmother lived when I was born. My first tongue was Mandarin, followed by English (post-adoption), Cantonese (at Chinese school in California), French (from age seven at school), and a sprinkling of Californian Spanish.

During my childhood, I never gave much thought to being adopted—I was far too busy with homework, cross-country running, dance team, cello, and piano. But when my American mother died from the 'silent cancer' (ovarian) in 1999, I felt a *double loss* and experienced a *double mourning*: the loss of my mom, to whom I was very close and, to my astonishment, a second loss that sprang out of the blue, lurking in a place so deep and layered I didn't even know of its existence—the loss of my birthmother, the mother I never knew, yet whose breath, blood, and spirit make these words possible.

I think of both mothers now, listening to the roar of engines as our plane takes off from Hong Kong, China bound for London's Heathrow Airport. I am returning West from my first trip to China since my adoption twenty-eight years ago. . . .

The momentous occasion for my inaugural return to China is Hong Kong's First Adoption Festival. The three-week-long series of educational talks, interviews, workshops, film screenings, and press meetings—hosted by the nonprofit organization Mother's Choice (Hong Kong) in November 2008—includes fellow guest speakers Dr. Amanda Baden, Jessica Emmett, Adam Pertman, and Nancy Thomas.

During the festival, we meet hundreds of adoptive families in Hong Kong. It seems that at least half of them belong to expat communities. As a co-founder of Chinese Adoptee Links (CAL) International—an all-volunteer group with the mission of creating a multigenerational social network for the 150,000+ Chinese adoptees living in twenty-six countries—I've had the privilege of meeting adoption communities in eight countries. This is by far the most diverse group of parents I've met in a single locale. One night, after the festival screening of the newly released feature film, *The Ticket* (based on a true-life Chinese adoption tale), a parent raises her hand and asks, "Jennifer, why did you set up CAL International?"

"Well . . ." I pause, wondering how to explain the serendipitous series of events and 'chance encounters' spread over thirty years. "You see," I say, as my mind travels back, "it all started with a pen pal."

"A pen pal?"

"Yes, a pen pal. In Paris."

We were nine years old. Her name was Valérie, and we only exchanged three letters. But ten years later—at the age of nineteen—I was a sophomore university student studying abroad in Paris.

I didn't know a soul in France.

But I had something special in my pocket from America: Valérie's letters. The letters she had mailed ten years before (when I was the new kid in fourth grade) to my house in Laguna Beach (Orange County), California. Valérie loved to draw, and I remember a large envelope included one of her creations—a fantastic cartoon caricature on the back flap. How I loved looking

at the soft brown envelope with its peculiar French stamps. It was large and luminous, and unlike anything I had ever seen before. The cartoon etched into its silky soft skin looked so beautiful—indeed, to my eyes, *magical*—especially since I couldn't draw at all!

I remember receiving the letter one day after school. It was my first year as a new student at Laguna Beach's Top of the World Elementary School, and I was having a hard time adjusting to my very Euro-American school. For the first time in my life, America's deep-seated racial tensions were being thrust into my face right on the playground. I felt sad. Confused. And, at its worst, humiliated and ashamed. But of what? Of being Chinese? Of being adopted? Of being different? Probably all of these. I begged my mom to send me back to my old school. How comforting it was to know that I had a friend halfway across the world, a friend who seemed to appreciate, and actually delight in, my difference.

As I nervously clutched an enormous encyclopedia-sized telephone book in Paris (they still had telephone books in 1999), I sucked in a deep breath and watched its pages fly. *Don't worry,* I chatted to the butterflies in my stomach, s*he's probably moved.*

But as I flipped through, my eyes fell on her very name and number! My heart skipped a beat.

I dialed and said, "Bonjour."

It turned out we were neighbors! We met in person for the first time and Valérie showed me her apartment, and even treated me to a delicious meal at her parents' gorgeous restaurant in the *Sixième arrondissement.* She lent me some much-needed student supplies (like a Walkman, a radio, some fun books), and shared a bit of *her* City of Light, as only a lifetime resident of Paris could.

Nearly a decade later—at the age of twenty-eight—I found myself wandering the streets of Barcelona, Spain. I was there for dissertation research as a Ph.D. student at the University of California, Berkeley. To my surprise, I continually bumped into Chinese adoptees. In the grocery store. At the library. Strolling down streets arm-in-arm with their Spanish parents. My heart warmed at the sight of so many adopted girls, and fond thoughts of my own childhood surfaced from shadows of memories long forgotten.

But there was one little girl in particular I will never forget. It was a beautiful afternoon, and as I turned a corner onto a busy Barcelona side street, two little brown eyes bored a hole into mine.

HEATHER TOSTESON

LISTENING FOR COHESION

Out of the many, one; out of the din, a hymn;
out of the anonymous throng, a friend.

Assimilation and integration constitute a two-way street. Those who want to join America must be received and welcomed by those who already think they own America. . . . The burden to make this a united country lies more with the complacent majority than the beleaguered minorities.

Arthur Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America*

People are not likely to find in political principles the deep emotional content and meaning provided by kith and kin, blood and belonging, culture and nationality.

Samuel Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*

Remember, remember always, that all of us, and you and I especially, are descended from immigrants and revolutionists.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, to Daughters of the American Revolution, April 21, 1938

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame/ With conquering limbs astride from land to land;/ Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand/ A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame/ Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name/ Mother of Exiles.

Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus"

In our country, we don't have a good *language* for interdependency that balances our strong emphasis on intentionality and individuality with our equally strong commitment to creating care, a state of genuine social attachment that protects that far from invincible individuality—and calls it continually to align with something larger than itself. We can't bring that community into being by ourselves however much we may wish it, so our individual commitment, unmet, is powerless. But that community cannot

exist for us without our full participation, and we can't receive its gifts without accepting at the same time our profound interdependence. So, it would be helpful to have some language that lifts up those individual choices through which something more and qualitatively different from any of us—community, country—comes into being.

Martin Luther King's 'blessed community' comes far closer to evoking that community than 'Land of the Free, Home of the Brave.' For me, it is the corollary of that radical statement, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all humans are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights. . . ." What moves *me* each time I hear these words is the profound universality of the *We*—and the image of community that flows from it. What do relationships based on that assumption of essential equality look like, feel like, *lead* to? Where do the large variations in our abilities and our circumstances fit into this commitment? Where does *care* fit in this conversation about truths, unalienable rights, individual liberties?

These questions arise anew for me as I read the fascinating stories here, each one absolutely unique, each of them, when read in relation to the others, creating something more—and different—from what any one of them alone can do. But these questions also rise when reading women's stories in general because the assumption of equal intrinsic value for women has been one of the most difficult of truths for most cultures, religions, and nations to align themselves with—in deed as much or more than in words. This commitment to the intrinsic equality of women is often resisted because it is perceived as the most fundamental assault on community. If *everyone* is free to pursue their own happiness, who will hold the whole? Who will do the welcoming? Who will do the nurturing so essential for a species that has such a long developmental period outside the womb that our most basic survival requires family, community—and minds that can conceive of them?

I think we're all a little wary of attachments that are purely voluntary. We experience them as more fragile than blood bonds, or ones cultivated, contained by social force. But what happens to anyone when we take choice away from them? What relationships come into being then? I am going to suggest that one of the most important questions about immigration—what defines the concerns on both sides—is attachment and interdependence, that our challenge is how well we can hold the intrinsic equal worth of each other in consciousness—aware that doing so, on both sides, it is a choice, an *affective* choice.

LISA CHAN

CHEESECAKE

She drops the cubed chicken into the wok, and the kitchen is filled with its sizzling and crackling. Next, a splash of soy sauce sends a plume of fragrant steam into her face. The whir of the hood fan and the scrape of her metal spade temporarily drown out the sounds of her children playing in the backyard under the hot South Carolina sun. They will turn as brown as chocolate if they stay out there too long. She is reminded of her own youth and days of tropical Hong Kong heat. The sun was something that got into her eyes and burned her neck as she ran to work or rushed to school. It was never something she played in like her children did today.

Today is an irregular break from her daily routine of working at the Chinese restaurant she and her husband had started. They had arrived in the United States with only the idea that hard work in the U.S.A. could lead somewhere better. Hard work in Hong Kong wasn't leading anywhere, so she and her husband thought they may as well try working in a new country. Finally, twenty years later, today is the day she and her husband are to be naturalized citizens. The official ceremony that they are required to attend offers them the rare opportunity to stay home in the afternoon and eat lunch with the kids.

Even with the day off, she is still cooking in the kitchen, cleaning, and fixing up the yard. They are never aware of words like: *work-life balance*, or *rest and relaxation*. The word *weekend* means busier days and longer hours. *Monday* means food deliveries. *Tuesday* is the day they roll egg rolls. Every day is filled with organized tasks, and the years slip by, marked only by to-do lists and a few extra gray hairs. She had thought that as long as she followed the rules and laws of this country, she would be safe, but three years ago she had tried to go on a cruise as a first-time family vacation. It had been a circus getting the proper paperwork and visa prepared for herself. This scared her because her mother was aging and she knew she would have to go back to

Hong Kong soon. The idea of holding a U.S. passport was something that made sense. Slowly, throughout the years, she started to hear new words like: *Medicare, Social Security,* and *retirement.* These things were still foreign to her, even after all these years of paying taxes and running a business, but there was a fear that these things would remain out of her reach unless she did something about it. Becoming a naturalized citizen felt like the next step for a better future.

Her husband enters the kitchen and starts setting the table. The bowls and the chopsticks clatter on the table. These sounds of family life make her happy. She feels complete, even though the business worries her and she still wonders about how she will pay for the college education of her three children. Three children in college one day! The thought of it fills her with motivation.

The last two decades of hard work are paying off. Her children look happy and healthy. She has a business, a car, a home with air-conditioning, and a husband who truly is her partner. Back home, the men were always gambling and did not respect a hard-working woman. Here in the States, women and men are more like equals. She watches her husband go out into the backyard to call the kids in for lunch. *"Sihk faaan!"* he calls. They scramble out of the pool and he helps to towel them dry. She watches with affection and feels like she has everything she ever wanted, even a country that matches her own ideals.

"Mom, are you turning American today?" her son asks.

"No. I'm Chinese. And so are you. Don't hold your chopsticks like that."

They hold bowls of rice to their mouths. Usually they eat oranges after their meals, but today a cheesecake dessert is waiting for them in the refrigerator.

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NATALIA O. TREVIÑO

THE NATURALIZATION

It is November, and I have been Mexican all my life. My cousins say we are all *norte americanos* because we are all born on the same continent. I imagine saying this to Rosy and Greta down the street. They will roll their eyes.

It is cold in the house this morning. Dad likes to keep the temperature as close to nature as possible, so my skin is unable to imagine crawling out from the covers. I dress like it's winter, but by the afternoon bus ride, we are sweating. I never get the clothes right in this kind of weather.

Mom has a strange look on her face when I get home, her eyebrows raised and looking down at her skillet, like a glass elevator is taking her way up. The cooking smells pour out from her narrow kitchen. Salted meat sizzling with onions. Small cubes of fried potatoes set aside, their grease sinking into the white paper towel below them. I give my mom an absent kiss on the cheek, put my books on the table instead of going straight to my room. I want to know what scared her.

She adds the tomato sauce to her already sizzling skillet, and there is the sudden cymbal sound of frying liquid. The aroma of *picadillo* lifts from the pan.

"*Ay mi'jita*." Her cigarette is resting on her old brass ashtray, growing a long, gray speckled tube that is about to crumble. She is stirring the tomato sauce while it bubbles. She lets out a long breath that hisses in unison with the sauce. "I hefto take a test."

"What? Why?" My mom does not take tests. Except I remember her getting ready for her driving test when I was in third grade. My stomach curls a little.

"I have to become a seetizen."

"What? You've never wanted to become a citizen." We've asked her about this. Lots of times.

AZADEH SHAHSHAHANI

REFLECTIONS

If there is one thing that will always raise curiosity about my origins, it is my accent. It has indeed turned into such an inseparable part of my identity that I am reluctant to lose it. It often takes me back through time, to when I was sixteen and had just arrived from Iran. Having to master a new language was no more difficult than adjusting to a strange environment with people who looked different and dressed differently from me. Indeed, my black hair and light brown eyes seemed far out of place in the private high school in Memphis in which I was first enrolled. If it were only for such superficial differences as appearance, however, I would have undoubtedly had a much easier transition. It was, rather, the strikingly different culture. I remember that I was shocked seeing fifteen-year-old girls not only wear make-up, but also drink and smoke.

It was my parents' aspirations for their children to benefit from a better education and opportunities in life that brought me here. They had lived in the United States in the mid to late seventies, when my father, having obtained his medical degree from Iran, went through his residency training and my mother obtained her nutrition degree. After spending seven years in the U.S., they went back with my five-year-old sister, hoping to make a difference in their homeland with their newly acquired expertise. After two years, exactly four days after the revolution, I was born. My name, Azadeh, means "free-spirited," signifying the great hopes that my parents and the many other parents who named their daughters Azadeh that year bore for the revolution. Their hopes were soon dashed, however, as the oppressive regime of the shah was replaced by a theocracy in which there are rules governing every aspect of people's lives in public, and even private, spaces. In this system, one's advancement in professional and especially official ranks depends in part on the extent to which one chooses to profess one's religiosity, as defined in a regime-dictated manner.

Fifteen years later my parents decided to move back to the United States. They were disillusioned by the failure of the new regime to bring any meaningful liberty to its people, rather imposing its own system of oppression under a different guise; by the long war with Iraq, which had drained them emotionally; and frustrated by the lack of opportunities for themselves and their children. It was especially the latter that had infuriated my parents, as despite his high level of knowledge and years of experience, my father was replaced as the head of a medical institute by one of his trainees who enjoyed better connections with government officials.

There was also the lack of meaningful educational prospects for me and my sister, as the sole criterion for gaining acceptance to the university was the entrance exam which was only administered once a year and was accompanied with exceedingly high levels of competition. Had it been only the exam, however, my parents might have had a less difficult time imagining a bright future for their daughters. But the examination was also accompanied by a test of one's Islamic background, which was ultimately meant to ensure availability of spots for associates of the regime and weed out those seen as holding potentially 'dangerous' ideas, even if intellectually far surpassing the others. And as one advanced in the academic curriculum, the religious fitness criteria became more stringent. The ones placed at the top in any field were more often than not relatives of a government minister, or otherwise those making a point of displaying their adherence to Islamic norms as defined by the authorities.

This was the context that persuaded my parents to make the move and in my father's words, "rescue [their] children from this hopeless situation before it gets too late."

It was in summer of 1993 when my parents and sister ventured to the U.S. for a brief visit, leaving me behind. (My parents had indeed obtained permanent residency during their stay in the U.S. through my father's work. At one point, my father had apparently wanted to throw out the green cards, deeming them useless as my family did not contemplate any thoughts of ever coming back to the U.S. on a permanent basis).

This trip was only the first in a series of four or five visits over the next year, during which my mother took the naturalization exam and became a citizen, thus enabling her to apply for permanent residency for me as an immediate relative, and my father got a job in his old hospital. With each visit, the level of admiration for the U.S. in their tone increased

NIKOLINA KULIDŽAN

BECOMING AMERICAN

My wipers on medium speed, I drive north on Highway 1 through the gloom that is Monterey Bay in July. The fields of artichokes stretch both east and west of the highway and the farm workers in bright yellow raincoats and red baskets strapped to their backs provide the only color in the gray, foggy landscape.

I navigate towards Elkhorn Slough Visitor Center more by instinct than by memory, singing along to Bruce Springsteen's rendition of "Old Dan Tucker." Of all the American music on my iPod, Springsteen's remake of the old folk songs seemed the most American, which is why I chose it as the soundtrack for this drive.

I follow the curvy, tree-lined street, hopeful that the entrance to the park will be obvious. A handful of protestors holding handmade signs and waving American flags make the gate hard to miss. "Sam Farr is a socialist," "Proud to be an American," and "Protect our borders," are among their messages. I slow down to read more of their posters but the cars start piling up behind me and I follow the parking attendant's instructions through the gate.

A persistent drizzle welcomes me as I walk out and I can't help but question the wisdom of an outdoor ceremony. Far worse has been endured to become an American citizen, I remind myself as I walk across the parking lot.

"Hey," I hear a loud, familiar voice. "Is there a 'Speak now or forever hold your peace' part to this ceremony?"

I turn around to see Andrei, my now-retired boss and a dear friend.

"I don't think so," I say and smile.

"Well, that is unfortunate. These fools don't know what they are doing." When we hug I know home is here too.

My relationship with America has always been a tumultuous one. Even as a teenager for whom a McDonald's milkshake was the epitome of gastronomical joy, I had somehow gathered that I was supposed to despise such blatant foreign encroachment on our Serbian soil and soul. So I did. But when my mom asked me if I was interested in spending my senior year of high school in the U.S., I didn't hesitate.

Although in my teens my future wasn't the highest of my concerns, one had to be blind not to notice the miserable way most people lived in Serbia. Middle-aged professionals sold smuggled gas and cigarettes on the streets, the elderly dug through the dumpsters and slept on the streets, the city buses were too packed to close their doors, and the students and teachers were too busy protesting various social injustices to spend any time in the classrooms. For those who knew how to capitalize on the state of near-anarchy, the times were ripe. For the rest, they were hopeless. On some instinctual level, I must have known that if I stayed in Serbia, I would join the latter group.

On top of that, there was also the fact that I had already been uprooted once when my family fled the civil war in Bosnia and Herzegovina several years earlier. Since then, I had become more like a moss, anchored to the ground with tiny threads, than like an oak, with strong, deep roots that don't survive transplanting. In some ways, Serbia was as much a new ground as the U.S. would be and since I had taken there well enough, I figured I could take elsewhere too.

That is why, in the summer of 1998, I bid my family and friends a farewell and traveled half-way across the world to try my luck. While the professed reason for my year-long visit to the States was to perfect my English, both my family and I knew that I would do my best to find a way to stay there. I can only guess how my parents felt sending the younger of their two children into the big, wide world, uncertain what it was they were sending her into or if she would ever return.

When I first arrived in Utah, I was too busy adjusting to a new life to ponder the fairness of the fact that I had to travel so far in search of a prosperous and dignified existence, which seemed reserved for only a small fraction of the world's population. Instead, I busied myself getting straight A's and surfing the web for a college scholarship, in hopes of one day becoming a part of the fortunate minority. Only occasionally, a vague pang of guilt

your back and your eyes down. In the U.S., I can hear children calling their mother, "Aye!" What way that be to talk to your mother? "Aye!"

My mom passed away in 1999 and my dad passed away in 1993. I just lost my twin sister on May 20, 2010. I had two sisters and two brothers. I was the oldest. My brothers and sister are in Freetown now. I was separated from my twin sister in 1999 and only got together with her again in 2007, so her death is very hard for me. I am helping her three daughters. They are two, eleven and fifteen. I want them to come and stay with me here. After I am a citizen that will be possible. Then, I will try and get my GED and go to college. But I have these responsibilities.

I would teach my nieces differently from the way I was taught if they were living here in the United States. Here I am going to be really really open because teenagers get involved in so many things here. Girls are wild here. Boys are more mature there in Sierra Leone before they approach girls because they are scared. If they approached a girl, the girl could prosecute them to the parents. If a boy came and talked with you, you would go to your mom and dad and they would go to the parents of the boy and complain. That's why it's safer over there than here for girls. In Sierra Leone people know each other. Everything starts from talking, so in Sierra Leone we didn't talk to boys.

I went to a mixed school in primary. In secondary I went to a girls school. Some parents prefer their boys to go to a boy's school so they can do well in school. I would want my nieces to be in an all-girls school here.

Civil War and Displacement

I was displaced from all my family in 1999 and only found my twin sister in 2007. I have found a brother but I have not seen him yet.

We were attacked in the night. We were sleeping and someone screamed, "House on fire. House on fire." Everyone ran in a different direction. I was running with my mother. My mother was shot and I had to leave her, I couldn't take her with me.

For two or three days after that, I was hiding in buildings. Then I ran to the seaside and I found people who were going to Guinea-Conakry in a canoe and I went too, traveling with them. I was in a refugee camp in Guinea-Conakry, the Famoriah Camp. People kept coming from Sierra Leone. I left the camp to go to the Sierra Leone embassy in Conakry to see if I could find

my brothers and sisters. We were all displaced.

In 2000 there was a rebel war on the border of Guinea. People thought it was Sierra Leone and Libyan soldiers doing the fighting. The president of Guinea, President Lansana Conté, said all the refugees needed to leave the country. I was in Conakry near the embassy when he said this. The Guineans guards and Guineans, regular Guineans, they came and took us. This was not kidnap. This was all in the open in the daytime. They went to the houses of Sierra Leoneans and took all their things. These men took us women to a school and they locked us up and they beat us and kept us locked in there without food and water for four days. There were so many of them, so many women. It was dark. You couldn't see. I have a lot of bites on my back from fighting them. All this happened in a *schoolroom.*

A woman came to my rescue. She was a Sierra Leonean. A nurse. Her name was Maryam. All she heard was this screaming and crying in the school. She kept knocking on the door. She thought there were kids in there. She got the police to open the doors. It was just women. I was bleeding. She took me to the clinic and she took care of me. But I was sick. I didn't want to be in Guinea anymore. I could not be in that place. I was eighteen when all this happened.

The Guineans treated us as if we were rebels. I was not expecting them to turn against us. They were our neighbors. It was shameful and disgraceful. There were pictures of us. The president of Sierra Leone sent ferries for refugees to come back to Sierra Leone. Our brothers and sisters in Sierra Leone decided to take revenge on Guineans in Sierra Leone. But the president of Sierra Leone stopped that. The president of Guinea apologized. He said it wasn't Sierra Leonean and Liberians fighting, it was Guineans fighting themselves.

I could not stay in that place, so I went to the island of Guinea-Bissau. That was better. But the houses were all of bamboo and when the water rose it would come into the houses and all your things would wash away. So I got tired of it and I went to the city of Guinea Bissau. That was better. No water to wash into the houses. The city had no light, no electricity—you used candles or lamps. That was true of the city for a long period before. It had nothing to do with war.

In Guinea Bissau I met my late husband, Foday Kanu. He asked me to go to the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) for documents. He said he wanted to marry me. He was very kind to me. He was

JULIJA SUPUT

A BOUQUET OF ROSES

After our love-making, my hands lazily explored my lover's spine, and my finger tips caressed each vertebra with the dedication of a scientist who hopes to make some sensational discovery. Time seemed to stand still on those hot summer afternoons of 1999, when the whole town on my small island took a collective siesta. The thought of having a lover who lived in the States did not bother me a bit. The summer would last forever, and we would repeat our love ritual every afternoon in my lover's rented studio. Afterwards, I would run home, my flip flops hardly touching the irregular stone pavers on the narrow passage between houses, and take my boys to the beach.

But the summer ended. Fifty thousand tourists I didn't care for, and my lover, whose soft skin I still desperately longed to touch, left. Sometimes, while I sat on the terrace of a coffee shop chatting with my colleagues about our students, I would see the silhouette of a man that reminded me of my summer lover. And my heart would beat faster. But I was not sure anymore whether my love story really happened or whether it was just my imagination.

Until my lover's phone call in November. Until his return in the middle of the winter. This time, I offered him my hospitality in my little run-down house, and the summer love suddenly acquired a different dimension. It seemed to have a future. A future in the United States, in California.

My knowledge about and interest in America was a loose patchwork of the best American movies I had seen in our small town theater. I mostly forgot the American authors I had zealously read in the seventies and eighties. I knew that there had been and perhaps still was an American dream, but it had never attracted my curiosity. I was a French and Italian teacher after all.

Nevertheless, when my lover had proposed marriage and asked me to come with him, it did not take me long to decide. I started imagining infinite possibilities for my young boys. All of a sudden the narrow streets of my town became too narrow for my feverish imagination, the familiar faces

boring. I wanted a change. I wanted my boys to have a better life, although what exactly that would be, I was not sure.

My lover left for the second time. My boys and I would follow him as soon as my fiancée visa arrived. My friends and colleagues looked at me in disbelief while, with my hands dancing in the air, I talked about my plans. Their eyes told me what they didn't want to say. "You are too old for this big move. You are forty-six and you have kids. Where are you going? Are you crazy?" I was not scared. I was excited and curious.

With two of my boys I left on January 14, 2001. At the airport, I felt a lump in my throat while I hugged my oldest son who would not come with us. I was on the brink of tears when my mother hugged and held me tight, and wouldn't let me go. Then, the last call for all passengers flying to London.

"We will come back next summer," I told her and freed myself from her embrace.

I pushed my boys gently towards customs, holding three passports with visas stamped in them in my hand. I turned back one more time and tried to smile. I saw my mother crying, my oldest son hugging her; I breathed deeply.

It was midnight when we arrived at the San Jose Airport. My fiancé kissed me furtively on the cheek. He didn't embrace me.

My eyes were wide open in amazement as I carried my suitcase to our master bedroom. The house was huge with five bedrooms and three bathrooms, high ceilings, everything clean and new. Later, in bed, my hands wanted to reconnect with the lover I remembered from my island. But they could not. There was a barrier between my hands and my lover's skin, as though I were touching a knight in his armor. "Probably jetlag," I concluded as I sank into a dreamless sleep.

The next day, as we drove to Costco, my eyes searched for some sign of a real city, some tall buildings, some skyscrapers. In Costco, I felt dizzy from seeing so much food and so many people pushing their gigantic carts around. My fiancé hopped from one stand to another where ladies in red aprons and white hats offered samplings of different foods.

I soon learned that *free* was my fiancé's favorite word. When he saw it or heard it, his face lit up, acquiring an almost pious expression. *Expensive* and *destroy* were other buzz words for him. The expression I detected on his face when he uttered them was far from pious.

LOURDES ROSALES-GUEVARA

Interviewed by Heather Tosteson

MY LOVE FOR THE U.S. CAME LATER

I was born in Baire, Oriente, Cuba in 1951 and came to the United States on April 5, 1968. I turned seventeen three weeks later. My son was born in 1983 and I became a U.S. citizen in 1987. It was not a happy day. I remember not being happy. I was already divorced or separated and my son was about four.

Becoming a citizen was a process of convenience. My mother, father, sister, and brother had already been citizens for awhile. I went to medical school in Spain as a permanent resident with a re-entry permit. Everyone told me it would be easier to practice medicine if I was a citizen. I can't say that I was proud to become a citizen. My love for the United States came later.

I did feel I would be renouncing something. I would be renouncing being Cuban—even though when we left Cuba they stamped our passports *apatrida*, without a country. My favorite cousin went with me to Immigration for the citizenship papers and I told him, "I am having a hard time with changing citizenship even though Cuba says it doesn't want me to be Cuban."

Developing Identity as a Woman

Even when we came to the States, I was treated as a child. I think of myself in Cuba as a child, and also in high school. I was so nostalgic for Cuba, darling. The feeling of womanhood didn't come until I went to Spain at twenty-one. It was the first time I was separated from my family. In Spain, college and medical school are together. These responsibilities were so great, that is when I began to understand myself as a woman, not as a child.

I received a call from the United States about my younger brother having an accident. My feelings were different from everything I'd ever felt

before. I left Cuba as a girl, but now, in 1972, I was hurting as a woman. This grief I was feeling about my brother was different from crying for a boyfriend in Cuba or for my grandfather. When I heard about my brother, I left the party I was at and went to the Catholic church across the street to pray for him. I had a boyfriend in Spain. (There was only hand-holding in my culture even abroad alone—being boyfriend and girlfriend was only this.) My boyfriend told me, "That made a big impression on me—your going to the church to pray." I didn't know how to answer. I think it is my destiny to be apart from people I love when important things happen in their life or mine.

My relationship with my mother and my sister was not close. My mother was close to my brother. I was closer to my father then. I love them unconditionally but not as if I *belonged* in that family. I belonged with my grandfather and my aunt. I was always referred to as different.

My mother, who was born in 1924 like my father, led a very private life. She was a teacher in Cuba. She had her three kids. I never saw her really involved with us, the girls.

My aunt was single, a *solterona*, most of her life. She married in her fifties—when we were in the U.S. She was *the* special person in my life. I follow more her pattern. She had gone to university and gotten a PhD in pharmacy. Everything I learned about justice, honesty, and everything good was from her and my grandfather. My father was like a prince, a little spoiled, and my mother was passive.

My aunt was very intelligent, petite, a nice lady. Competent. My aunt married an old friend of the family who had become a widower. They told us he was looking for someone to care for him. They never left Cuba. I hear from other members of the family.

My grandfather was spectacular. Everything that has to do with goodness I learned from him. He was very successful in business, but when there was a hurricane, he'd go to the poorest in the town to help. My whole idea of how I could practice medicine came from my grandfather and how he behaved. He and my aunt were *good* people, he had a great sense of humor.

Our houses, my parents and that of my grandfather, communicated through their backyards and patios, so I spent many nights in my grandparent's house. After Castro, we all would eat together so the food would look like more, so we were at least eating breakfast, lunch and dinner there every day. They would let me sleep with my aunt in her bedroom many times. Even for