



OUR CHINA STORIES

我们的中国故事

Lena

Adoptee

Adoption place: An SWI in Southern China

Adoption date: 2007

Age at adoption: 12 months

Lena is pictured here (middle), with her birth brother and sister, in China. I am 10 years old and I am in 3rd grade. I am happy to be adopted.

I have two moms, two dads, two sisters and one brother! Four of them live in China and the rest live in America. The ones that live in China are my birth family. In America, my dad is Chinese and I am Chinese and my sister is half Chinese. My mom is the only one who is not even a little Chinese.

I have a dog named Pickles. His Chinese name is Xiao Huanggua. He is very fluffy. He is very small and he is Havanese. He is the cutest little guy I have ever seen in the world.

I like to talk about China. I like to visit China. When it is night in China, it is day in America. We go there to spend time with my birth family. I like to go to the store in China with my brother. I like to visit my sister's room. My sister and I have funny jokes. It is fun in China and we get sugar cane from the field. We went to a wedding in China. It was crowded. In our house in China, it is outside inside! (Note from mom: there is a courtyard in the family home which is similar to an American living room and dining room. It does not have a roof.) Mama cooks on a wok. My village is very small. There are pigs there. The dogs in the village are less cute than my dog.

I would tell other kids who are adopted to go see your birth parents. They have really good food. In China, you can't have more than one or two kids because it is very crowded and it costs a lot of money for more kids. They miss you.

Amy and Robert

Adoptive parents

We are Amy and Robert. We have two daughters, a teenage biological daughter and our daughter Lena, age 10, who was adopted from China.

When Lena was little, we searched for and found her Chinese birth family. Since then, we have been learning how to be a family in an open international adoption. An open adoption is an amazing privilege, especially considering the rarity of reunion for Chinese adoptees, but it is not for the faint of heart.

In our interview, we tried to do our best to share our personal experiences and not speak for Lena or her parents. That being said, we know that the story of Lena's history, birth family and adoption may help shed light on the questions of other Chinese adoptees who do not have the opportunity to ask their own birth parents for answers. We have seen and felt just how loved and missed Lena is by her birth family. In another time or under different circumstances, she would have been the much-loved second daughter of their home. The fact that they bravely choose to navigate the challenges and unknowns of openness with an American family is a testament to how very much they love her and want to have her in her lives.

We chose to use pseudonyms in our interviews because Lena is still very young. While she was happy to share her story now (and quite excited about the prospect of seeing herself on the internet!), we can't predict how she will feel about making her unique circumstances public as she gets older. We also hope to protect the privacy of Lena's birth family. We asked their permission to share our side of our families' story and they agreed, but chose not to participate themselves at this time. Stories of search and reunion are very popular in the Chinese press and we believe they do not wish to put a spotlight on themselves or the very difficult choices they made.

Amy has searched for and located several other Chinese birth families and we have met several others when we were in China. Amy is a volunteer Search Angel doing DNA birthparent searching in the U.S., in hopes that genetic genealogy strategies may be useful for international adoptees in the future. It is our sincere hope that reunion becomes more common as more Chinese adoptees begin to search. We also hope that our story will help adoptive parents considering a birth parent search recognize the struggles and responsibilities that successful searches will require of them.

Myra **Adoptive sister**

Hi. I'm Myra and I am 13 years old. I am in the 7th grade. My little sister, Lena, is adopted from China. I am on the swim team and I like to read. I am half Taiwanese and half white.

I have been to China three times. The first time is when my family adopted Lena. The second time was when I was in 2nd grade and we met Lena's birth family for the first time. The third time was recently when we went to visit her family again.

When we go to China, I like to see the cultural differences and I like eating the food. When we visited Lena's birth family in China, their village was a lot different from a town

in America. It was less modern and in the countryside. I have taken Chinese lessons, but I am embarrassed to speak Chinese in China because I am not very fluent and I don't speak the right dialect for the village.

I don't think it is weird for Lena to have two families. It has always been a part of my life. It is kind of like having a step-family, but instead of being on the mom's side or the dad's side, it is just on Lena's side. Lena's little brother is really cute. I can interact with him more than with her sister, because we can just play. Her sister and I are about the same age, so that makes it a little more awkward because we can't communicate very well. Lena and her Chinese sister understand each other better.



Lena, middle, with her birth brother and sister, in China.



Lena with her Family