

## International Adoption

When choosing to adopt a child, some prospective parents make the decision to partake in an international adoption. That is, they choose to adopt a child from a country other than their own. This process can be long and full of bureaucratic red tape, especially since it is a matter conducted entirely between the potential adoptive parents and a foreign court, which acts on behalf of the foreign government. The United States government cannot intervene on the parents' behalf. There are a few reasons and some benefits to this option, however.

Aside from the usual reasons for which one would choose to adopt, there are a couple of reasons why international adoption specifically may be a preference. One reason can be benevolence. The major countries from which children are adopted into the United States all have glaring social problems which drive the international adoption process. China, for example, has strict population control laws which often force Chinese parents to give their children (especially girls) up for adoption. Russia suffers from poverty to such an extent that raising a child is often not feasible. Americans who adopt children from these environments and others like them may decide that they wish to rescue a child from such circumstances and bring him or her into the home.

A second-- and perhaps more substantial-- reason for international adoption is the decline in availability of children for adoption in the United States. The number of adoptions which were conducted transnationally has more than tripled in the last 15 years, due largely to a decrease in potential adoptees available domestically.

The potential benefits to the adopted child are fairly obvious. She is raised in a nurturing home by people who wanted the child so badly that they went to great lengths and expense to adopt her. In nearly all cases, the child moves up in socioeconomic class after being adopted. The child may also experience educational opportunities which may not have otherwise been available. While these benefits may be obvious, there are more complex and perhaps more obscure impacts on the societies and cultures involved at both ends of the adoption process.

For those interested in international adoption, there are a number of resources available. First of all, it is advisable to first learn about domestic open adoption and explore domestic options before looking abroad. There can be certain risks associated with international adoption. That said, there are many children available in more than fifty countries, all of whom who are legally free for adoption and are in need of caring homes.

One good place to start on the journey toward adopting a child from abroad is

the website Adoption.com. The site has a great number of resources to answer all questions adoption. They have a section of the site devoted solely to international adoption (<http://international.adoption.com>). The United States State Department also has some information about intercountry adoption available online ([http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/adoption\\_485.html](http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/adoption_485.html)). This page clarifies the role that the U.S. government may be able to play in the adoption process, as well as providing phone numbers to call for more information on international adoption.

A final word: international adoption is a long process full of bureaucratic hurdles. It can be costly and may require prospective parents to reside in the country of the child's origin for a period of time before the process is complete. Like all things that require effort, however, people who endure the process ultimately find it to be worthwhile.