

10 Facts About Adoptees

For Community Members & Allies

By Cam Lee Small | Therapy Redeemed

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This list was produced in association with an interview hosted by [WCCO CBS News Minnesota](#). I was honored and privileged to participate in dialogue with news anchor Susan Littlefield and offer this fact sheet to the Twin Cities community as a followup to our conversation about the intersection of adoption, mental health and social justice. Please know this is not a comprehensive guide, only select recommendations related to topics that came up during our conversation. *This is also for educational purposes only and does not serve as formal/clinical counseling or consultation.*

- 1) I was a son before I was adopted (acknowledge loss and relationships that existed prior to adoption)
- 2) Birth family is forever family (for those adoptees who do want their birth families to be acknowledged as significant and active)
- 3) Race, ethnicity, and culture do not disappear through adoption. Too often it does. Please be mindful that “blindness” to those dynamics is not as helpful as it was once thought to be. [this also relates to white saviorism and manufactured-orphan movements]
- 4) Be careful not to conflate *adoption* with *gift* and/or *gain*. It leaves us and members of the public vulnerable to minimizing the losses a child suffers through separation and relinquishment from birth family, regardless of their age when separated and relinquished.
- 5) Be mindful not to position adoptees and their stories against one another, as if there are good adoptees and bad adoptees, to justify one’s beliefs about adoption, or to evoke feelings of guilt or shame for feeling any certain way about adoption. Adoptees have experienced enough division in their lives. Too much. Additional threats to our sense of cohesion and value are generally unhelpful. The spectrum of [adoptee consciousness](#) should lead to empathy and activism.
- 6) Adoptive siblings and extended family members can be adoption informed, too.

7) Mental health support should be seen as a normative component to our overall health and well-being. Especially for children/youth/adults who navigate relinquishment and adoption/permanency. And especially for the ones caring for them.

8) Adoption is not only a micro-scale issue, but intersects with macro-level, systemic realities. Therefore, it needs to be addressed and approached from a multi-disciplinary and multidimensional perspective. The adoptee community is not a monolith and exists within complex systems of time, power, consciousness, resources, relationships, needs, and strengths.

9) Only listening to “grateful” adoptees and heartwarming adoption stories is a disservice to all of us who are seeking to make the world a better place, and specifically to current and future generations of adoptees who may be experiencing needs that are not represented in dominantly created and cultivated narratives of adoption.

10) There is hope. Please do not be discouraged by new information but be encouraged it’s there and equipped by it that you would carry a higher capacity to effect change and demonstrate compassion in those places where you feel called to love and serve. Please take heart. As if you were being trained to more effectively stand in solidarity with your neighbors; and in doing so, display more brilliantly the kinds of relational peace and harmony for which we were all designed.

Additional Resources

[A Letter to Future Adoptive Parents](#)

Social media posts

[#notathing campaign](#) in response to the adoptee who was murdered in Korea

[Adoption shouldn't lead to death](#)

[Adoption agencies market children as commodities](#)

[8 Microaggressions Against Adoptees](#)

1-minute videos about adoption

[Fundraising, Adoption and the Local Church](#)

[Praying for Adoptees: a message for prospective adoptive parents](#)

[Adoptive siblings can be adoption informed, too](#)

BIO

Cam graduated from University of Madison-Wisconsin with a BS in Psychology. He then served as the adoptee summer camp director for Holt International, before earning his Master's in Counseling Psychology. After earning his clinical licensure, he self published his memoir [This is Why I Was Adopted](#) as an interactive workbook for adoptees and families to explore grief, loss, restoration and hope. He earned his [Permanency & Adoption Competency Certificate](#) through the [Center for Adoption Support and Education](#), and is partnered as a vetted clinician both with [MNAdopt](#) and the post-masters directory curated by [Training for Adoption Competency](#). Cam is trained in [biblical counseling](#), certified in [non-violent crisis intervention](#) and is a member of the [American Psychological Association's Minority Fellowship Program](#).

Cam has written adoption-informed essays for [Christianity Today](#), [National Council for Adoption](#), [University Minnesota School of Social Work](#) (p. 19), and [Center for Adoption Support and Education](#). He has also been interviewed on [podcasts/radio/video shows](#) such as Empowered to Connect, The Cha Show, Let's Grab Coffee with University of Memphis professor SunAh Marie (WYXR 91.7), The Archibald Project, The Forgotten Initiative, and Asians for Mental Health with Dr. Jenny Wang ([access all interviews here](#)).

In addition to appearing on panels for [Angela Tucker \(This Adopted Life\)](#), Holt International, Catholic Charities, [Be The Bridge](#), [I Am Adoptee](#), [Expert Voices in Adoption Conference](#), and [Camp Choson](#), he has also taught and facilitated workshops and video trainings for churches, universities, and child-welfare organizations around the nation, including Children's Bureau, Replanted Ministries, Southeast Christian Church, Foster Love Project, Catalyst Foundation, United for Adoption, Korean American Adoptive Family Network, The Minnesota Society for Clinical Social Work, and Wisconsin Child Welfare Professional Development System ([view full list and access presentations here](#)).

WHERE YOU'VE SEEN CAM



