

Jena Heath: Tell me a little bit about yourself. How old are you? Where are you from? What are you doing? Then, I need to know how old you were when you came home from China, what province.

Zoe Watts: I am eighteen. I go to Southwestern University. I'm a visual arts major there. In my free time, I rock climb. I do Krav Maga, which is a type of Israeli martial art. I draw and do stuff like that. I was eighteen months when I was adopted, or when I came to America. I'm from Yulin, which is in central, I believe it's Shaanxi, but I'm not sure.

Jena: Were you in an SWI? Were you in foster care? Do you much about China?

Zoe: I talked about this on the FCC thing, actually. I didn't learn this until I went back to my orphanage. We had thought I was in the orphanage the entire time. It turns out I wasn't. I was in foster care from the start. My foster mother, she was a grandmother. She took care of the five girls that were adopted with me. I was in foster care the entire time. That's why they hypothesized why we were all so fat, because we were getting food, lots of food. [laughs] We grew up in this family setting with this woman's family. When we went back to China and the orphanage, it was funny because we were getting driven to the orphanage and our car driver recognized me from my eyebrows, out of all things. It was the funniest thing ever. He was like, "I recognize you. My grandmother used to foster these kids." We went over to her house. She had all these pictures of me that my mom had never seen and all this stuff. We learned about how I acted as a kid and things like that. It was fascinating.

Jena: How old were you when you went back to China?

Zoe: It was in 2012, I think. I would've been -- I'm so bad at math.

Jena: Fifteen?

Zoe: Yeah. Good Asian stereotype. [laughs]

Jena: That's okay. We need fewer Asian stereotypes around here. We need Asian jewelry maker, visual artist people. You were probably about fifteen, if you're eighteen now. You were telling me before that you did the sister city exchange, the [indiscernible] exchange.

Zoe: I did the [indiscernible] cultural exchange with the Families with Children from China, Austin branch. I was one of five. We were all from different age groups. We all went over there and talked with the schools. I think we met with five schools -- it was one school every day -- and talked with them about the differences of the education and what we've learned and things like that. It was really cool, for lack of a better word.

Jena: Then, you and your mom went on a heritage tour after that exchange trip while you were still in China. You tacked on a heritage tour. Tell me a little bit about that and then a little bit more about meeting your foster mom.

Zoe: As far as the heritage tour goes, it was really interesting to see -- because you're there to observe the Chinese culture, but you're with people who are in the same situation as you. You're seeing it not only through your eyes, but through the people that you're with. From the cultural exchange especially, and also because I was so involved with FCC from the start, I had more of a deeper understanding of the culture at that point in time since I had more experience with it. It was really cool to talk to the fellow adoptees and learn about how they were viewing that and how their stories and their personal history changed the way that they saw what we were all seeing. It's that different outlook. It was wonderful. I made some really good friends there.

Jena: How was meeting your foster mother?

Zoe: It was really hard, mostly because I didn't speak Mandarin at the time. I still don't. I'm learning currently. I wasn't really able to ask her all of the things that I wanted to ask her because there was that language barrier. We had to go through a translator, which is hard to get the full message. There were a lot of things I wish I could've said in that context in the moment, even some things I wish I could've said alone without my mom there. There's some things I feel like it would be hard to say.

Jena: Like what?

Zoe: I think I've always, in the back of mind, wanted to know more about my history. I'm sure I wouldn't, but I feel like I would offend my adopted mom if she thought that I wasn't getting everything out of my childhood that I possibly could. It's not something I'm probably ever going to know. It's something that would be nice to have.

Jena: Do you ever think about a birth parent search?

Zoe: No. First of all, it's just really hard in general, in the first place. I also think that out of a courtesy to my birth parents, I don't think it would be fair to track them down and then demand all of these answers. I personally have this view in my mind, that I think is the case with a lot of adoptees, that your birth parents are doing this in your best interest because they want you to have a good life. I don't think it would be fair to just ignore that and keep wanting more answers and more answers. That differs for everyone. Personally, I wouldn't ever go looking for them. If somehow they reached out me, I would be cool with that and talking with them because it's their choice. The other way around I don't think is something I would want to do.

Jena: It sounds like you've thought a lot about everybody's feelings in this, your mom's feelings in terms of pressing the foster mom or talking with the foster mom for more information, and your birth parents' feelings and the notion that you don't know what they would think or feel if you came knocking on their door. Do you feel pretty resolved in your own mind about not knowing? What I'm wondering is, you're very considerate of everyone else, and where does that leave you with this information you would like to have?

Zoe: There's always going to be those questions that I would like to know the answer to that I'm not going to get. I'm pretty comfortable with that. Just having that idea of them is enough at this point. Other people's feelings are very important to me. If I can be safe in the knowledge that the people around me are okay, that's okay for now.

Jena: How do you think your mom would react if you asked about a birth parent search?

Zoe: I've mentioned it to her. We haven't really talked in-depth about it. I think she would be okay with that because she tries her very hardest to make sure that I'm okay and that I'm happy. The times that we have brought it up, she sounded really supportive. If I was going to go do that, she would want to make sure that I was in a good place to do that. Other than that, I think she would be fine.

Jena: Do you have any siblings?

Zoe: I don't. It's interesting because the girls that I were adopted with, we were really good friends for a long time. We considered each other sisters. After we got older, we drifted apart. You don't really see those people anymore, which is upsetting. I like to think there's this connection, still, with us. Whenever we see each other it's really easy to pick back up where we left off. That's really nice. In a way, in a sense... But yeah, I'm an only child.

Jena: Did you have reunions when you were younger with the girls you were adopted with?

Zoe: I did. I was also part of an FCC playgroup. I was able to talk with other adoptees. I was at least around other people that had similar stories. We had the opportunities to talk and things like that.

Jena: Tell me about growing up. I'm interested in friends and questions and how you dealt with all of that, and then also in FCC. You've been very active, it sounds like, from the time you were little all the way through being a counselor. Tell me about the role that FCC has played. Now that you're all coming of age and don't need parents to plan everything, if adoptees could run FCC, what would be the same and what would be different?

Zoe: First off, all of the FCC meetups and the groups and whenever we had the Chinese cultural events, I always looked forward to those. Those were always where I felt the most comfortable, probably because I was around a lot of people that were like me. At least the people that I've talked to, most of the people felt the same because you're in a situation where you're now the majority in the community. It feels a lot more comfortable.

As far as running it, I don't think I could handle that much paperwork. If you had adoptees running it, and in general whenever you have adoptees heading organizations and projects about adoption, you get this more in-depth and more personal experience from it. I think that would help a lot with the adoptees that are coming in. There's not as many of them now. It

would be very interesting and very helpful as far as educating the community if you have the personal stories and things like that that are the voice of these organizations.

As far as growing up, it was interesting because until third grade when I started going to a new school -- I was in a Montessori school for the first few years -- I never really experienced discrimination from the kids around me. I don't want to say you're colorblind because you're not, but you don't really think about those things until you get to a certain age when society basically demands that you start paying attention to those things. I don't want to blame -- it's just a thing that happens. Up until third grade when I started going to a "real school," it was not really a big deal. I had friends of all ethnicities and backgrounds. When I got to third grade, when I started going to this new school, there were a couple of African American kids, no Hispanic kids. Then there was me. Everyone else was Caucasian. I was really good friends with one of the only African American kids in the class for just that first year before the person left. We were the only minorities, so we stuck together. Later on when there weren't ever any African American kids in my class, almost none, it was just me and all of the Caucasian kids. Oh, I'm sorry. I just remembered there was one Hispanic kid, but he left really quickly. Growing up, most of my friends were Caucasian or white. I have some really, really close family friends that I've known literally since I came from China. We consider ourselves sisters because we grew up together. I hung out with them a lot when I was a kid. The neighborhood they grew up in was predominantly white.

I didn't really have anyone to relate to in my daily life, which is why those FCC events were such a big deal. All of my FCC friends, we all lived in different places so we didn't ever have the chance to come together and hang out and stuff. It wasn't until about fifth-ish grade that there was another Chinese adoptee at the school. They were in a different grade than me, so we didn't ever interact. I remember always getting confused with being that person's sister. Whenever there was a group of Chinese adoptees or just any Asian kids in a group, everyone assumed we were related.

I went to a lot of summer camps as well when I was a kid because my mom worked through the summer. I was at camps that were mostly white kids. This sticks out in my mind because it was the first time I ever got upset for being stereotyped and categorized. All of the other times I'd experienced a lot of stuff, but I just rolled with it. It was easier for me to just go with it rather than speak up about it. At the time, I didn't know how to argue back with them. I was growing up with the same media and stuff that they were.

Jena: What did they say?

Zoe: I had a lot of Chinese jokes told to me. I had a lot of people speaking fake Chinese to me. Everyone thought I did karate, which I did, but you know, still racist. Just the things that you think about, a lot of stereotypes. It was weird. I don't remember what grade it was. I think it was fourth. There were a bunch of guys that wanted to call me Mulan. They called me Mulan for two months or so until I told my mom. She was the one who went and told the school that they needed to stop and tell those kids that it wasn't okay. I just rolled with it until that one

time in summer camp. There was girl from South Korea. There was a girl from Japan. The three of us hung out a lot. Someone was saying something or other about us being related or something. It was the first time I'd ever gotten angry about that. I was like, "We're not related. We don't look anything alike. Leave us alone." Of course they didn't. I remember it because it was the first time I'd ever stood up for that and felt like I wasn't trying to fit in. It was the first time that I had ever not wanted to be like everyone else. That was really important, obviously.

Jena: That was the first moment that you really declared yourself?

Zoe: Right.

Jena: Do you remember roughly how old you were?

Zoe: Nine or ten. There was always a part of me that wanted to be like everyone else. At that point in time I was like, "There's nothing wrong with not being like these people, but I'm not." This is going to sound cheesy and cliché, but it's true. I shouldn't have to change and adapt to a certain standard because I'm not that same standard. I should embrace that I'm different and go with that and build on that. After that, I had a really long conversation with my mom about it. She talked to me. It was really nice. Also, in this conversation I got this assurance that my mom was going to, obviously, care about me no matter what. When you're little, you want to make your parents happy and that kind of thing. There was a lot of bullying and racism and stuff that I had tolerated just because I didn't want to be a burden on anyone. At that time, I got this reassurance that I could talk about stuff and I wouldn't get in trouble for it.

Jena: You kind of sucked it up until then. Do you think that's common among adoptees, from talking to friends? Do have a sense of whether that's a common experience or not?

Zoe: It's interesting because I don't have a lot of conversations with my adopted friends about being adopted, at least the ones that are my same age. When I'm a counselor at FCC, we have these conversations with the campers about being adopted. I've had more in-depth conversations with the kids that I'm a counselor for than I have with the people my own age. There's this weird stigma against talking about it once you're older because you're expected to like, "Oh, you've gotten over it already." I don't think it's discussed nearly enough with people your own age. I forgot the question. I'm sorry.

Jena: I was just wondering do you think it's common for young adoptees to suck it up? Maybe they're experiencing much more in the way of these unwelcome remarks than their parents are aware of.

Zoe: I definitely do. I think that's the case with any adoptee whatsoever, but especially foreign adoptees that are a different race than their parents. First of all, when you're really young, you don't really know why you're being discriminated against. It never occurs to you. It occurs to kids in general that there's a difference between racism -- it's not until you get to the point where you start noticing the culture around races and the stereotypes and stuff. That's the

point when stuff really gets bad. I think a lot of kids try to push that away and put that off, having that conversation off, because it's hard. You don't know how your parents are going to react. You don't know how you're going to react. You don't know how your community's going to react, especially if you're a Chinese adoptee. If you live in a community where the majority of people are not like you, you don't know how well they're going to understand you or if they're going to understand you at all.

You have this fear that you won't be understood, so you just bottle it up and spend a long time trying to find the right words for it, but you just don't have that yet. Obviously, I don't want to make generalizations about everyone. That's a shared experience that my friends that I've talked to, that I have talked to about this, especially with the campers who have this -- they've told me all these things that have happened to them and that they haven't told their parents. They tell me not to tell their parents, which I think is really interesting. It requires what I got, that assurance that it's okay to talk about things and to be open about things. Also, what comes with that is the understanding that you're different from these people, but that doesn't mean that you're any less than them or that your feelings don't matter in the grand scheme of things.

Jena: After you talked to your mom and she told you, "Look, I'm with you. Don't shoulder this alone," she went in and intervened when those kids kept calling you Mulan?

Zoe: Yeah.

Jena: That's really annoying.

Zoe: It's a classic, like I've never heard that before.

Jena: Right. You wish they would at least be original.

Zoe: Yeah. Tell me something I haven't heard before.

Jena: Once that happened and you kind of declared yourself at nine and basically said, "Cut it out. I'm not Japanese. I'm not Korean. We're not the same person," did that help you advocate for yourself as you went on, or would you say it was a back and forth all the way through?

Zoe: It helped me talk to my mom about it more. I didn't really start standing up for myself until I got a lot older, which is really upsetting to think about. When you're in middle school, you read all those books and you watch all those movies about bullying. Middle school, in general, is horrible for everyone. It sucks. It's very superficial. Oh, god. I hate middle school so much. In middle school, you're taught to be yourself. What the heck does that mean? If you act like yourself, you're not going to have any friends. I hate to say that. From looking at middle schoolers that I know now, the siblings of my friends or the campers that I work with or just looking back at my own experiences, there's this expectation that you need to conform to this certain idea. On top of that, you're going through puberty and all this stuff. Not only did I have to do that, I also had to learn how to stand up for myself because of my race. It wasn't just

appearance and grades and what kind of shirt you were wearing that day. There was a girl in my grade that wouldn't talk to you if you didn't wear an Aéropostale shirt or something like that. I had to get an Aéropostale shirt, and then I had to stand up for myself.

It took me until probably freshman year of high school before I really started thinking about calling people out on racism towards me, and then calling them out on racism towards other people, and really starting to become educated about the social issues and about adoption. Part of it was the FCC Culture Camp. I'm supposed to be teaching all these kids to stand up for themselves and to be in touch with their culture and stuff like that. I'm not even there myself. It was an eye-opener for me when I was a counselor. All these kids are coming to me with their problems and I can't fix it. I recognize these problems. What did I do to fix those for myself? I didn't really do much. I wanted them to not be in that same position.

Jena: It's a pretty big responsibility to be a teenager figuring things out for yourself among your peers and then being a counselor at a camp where you're a role model. You're working with younger kids who are confiding in you. You're trying to sort out the very same problems they're confiding in you about. What would you tell them?

Zoe: My first thing -- this is so broad -- is to educate yourself. Know about where you're from. Know how to say your Chinese name. I didn't know how to do that until fifth grade, I think. Also, know how to write it. That would be great. Be as in touch with yourself as possible, education on a personal level. Learn about where you're from. Be educated about the society that you're living in. It sounds really pessimistic, but know that there are people that are not going to like you because of your race. Think about that in the grand scheme of things. Knowing that will cause a lot less strife. Don't try to conform to other people's views of what you should be as an Asian, as your age, your gender, things like that. Know that there are going to be people who don't like you. They don't matter in your life.

I hate the advice, "Be yourself." It is impossible to be someone that you are not. I've tried it. It doesn't work. All that ends up doing is making your life miserable because you're so worried about what other people think of you and you're not really thinking about what you want to be. The key there, as with a lot of things, is education, but being in touch with who you are and yourself, knowing about your background, knowing about what you want, and then knowing that there are just going to be people out there that are not nice people and that you shouldn't worry about them. They're not important in your life. You don't have to interact with those people. You don't have to listen to those people. Surround yourself with people that are cool, that like you for who you are and aren't trying to change you and that are supportive of who you are.

Jena: If you essentially say to yourself some version of, "Hey. You know what? Not everyone on this planet is going to get me. Not everyone on this planet is going to like me. There are people in the world who make judgements based on what ethnicity people are, what race, what country they come from. I'm not even going to get myself involved in thinking about how to tailor myself to those people."

Zoe: I forgot to ask, am I allowed to curse on this thing?

Jena: Are you kidding? Go for it, girl. I'm a major curser. Curse your head off. Don't worry about it. This is your story.

Zoe: It's so bad. I curse like a sailor. It's terrible. Actually, this brings up a point that I was thinking of. There's a lot of racism within the Asian community. The right word, it's not racism, but there's a lot of discrimination within in the Asian community towards adoptees that I have felt particularly. I have a lot of friends who are Chinese, especially from Chinese dance, that have Chinese parents. They were all nice people. There's this idea that you're not actually Chinese. That's especially hard for adoptees because you're like, "I'm not this culture. I'm not this culture. Where am I supposed to be?" It takes double the work to get to that point within the Chinese community. I don't know about any of the other races because I'm not part of that, but the Chinese especially because there are traditions. If you don't fit into those, if you don't understand those, you're not actually Chinese.

Jena: It's not just feeling this from white people or from people who are not Asian, but from Chinese people who may not see you as authentically Chinese. Can you remember an example of how you became aware of that, when you felt that?

Zoe: The biggest thing was when I was in Chinatown for the first time -- no, I was at a Chinese market. I was there with a group of girls that I went to dance with. They were all Chinese as well, but they weren't adopted. They said something and asked me what I thought of it. I didn't know what it was. They just stopped talking to me. They cut me out of the conversation. I just kind of sat there for the rest of the hour and a half listening to these kids talk. I had no idea what they were talking about. They didn't make any effort to tell me about it so that I could educate myself. It was like if I didn't know about this automatically, I wasn't worth including in the conversation. That was the first thing that happened.

Jena: Was that here in Austin?

Zoe: Yeah. I was younger though. I danced at two places. I danced at Love of China. Then I danced at April Rain. This was when I was still with Love of China. I was really little. It was a while ago.

Jena: Did you like Chinese dance? Did you like doing it?

Zoe: I liked doing it with April Rain. Love of China, it was a great program. Their director's really nice. It just wasn't the right community and the right structure for me. I really liked it. It got better once I got older. It was hard because I wasn't the best dancer, but I had fun with it. It was a hobby for me. I knew I wasn't going to go be a dancer. It was just fun. It got a lot better as I got older because the people around you mature more in that sense. I got picked on when I was a kid because I wasn't the best person. When everyone got older, they realized that it's not

about whether or not you're good or not. It's about having fun. That's when I really started liking it. We had this community. There was five of us in the top group. We became really good friends. It was something that was fun. It was also nice to finally be in the top class. You got to work with the "little kids." You got to be the leaders. It was fun.

That was also when I realized that I had other talents that I could contribute to it. I didn't have to be the best dancer, but I could help out with the choreography. I sang in one of the performances. You got the things that you were really good at and were able to integrate them. It became more of community that had this basis of Chinese dance and Chinese culture. One of the girls was an adoptee. The rest of them had Chinese parents. They didn't care. We were part of this nice, little community. It was really nice. It helped me stay in touch with the culture because it was every week. It was something I could do every week rather than wait several months and then go to an FCC thing. It helped me keep in touch with the culture throughout my entire life. It strengthened that sense of nationality.

Jena: On the point about Chinese people not seeing you as legitimately Chinese, did you feel any of that when you were in China? Was it fairly insulated because you were on a heritage tour?

Zoe: What was actually funny was when I was in [indiscernible] I actually felt less of that. The schools were very welcoming. We were guests of the government as well. We went to a lot of talks and interviews with them. I never felt like I was being stigmatized. I felt more of it when I was on the heritage tour from some of the people on there. Part of it was maybe my fault. Because I knew a lot about the culture from having been there for a week before and in that immersive culture experience, I wouldn't correct people but if they asked questions or something and if the tour guide didn't know the answer or the tour guide didn't answer them, I would answer them. There was this, "You're a kid. You shouldn't be speaking up about this," even though it was something I knew a lot about. That's been a problem my whole life. I'm weirdly knowledgeable about weird things. I just know these random facts. I research things I find interesting just for fun. I want to tell people about them. I want people to learn about those things. Especially when I was little, I didn't always realize that people didn't always want my help.

Jena: The tour guides were like, "Kid, we don't need you to answer the questions," or it was the other people on the tour?

Zoe: It wasn't the tour guide. It was the parents of the people. This wasn't necessarily in a tour setting. We were sitting at dinner. Now, I can't think of an example. They'd ask a question, thinking out loud to the entire group. I would actually have an answer for it. They'd be like, "That was rhetorical. Don't answer me." I got more alienated in that setting than I did when I was talking to the other Chinese students, but when I was in a setting with parents of adoptees. None of the adoptees had a problem with it. They were all really happy to learn stuff. It was the parents. I was talking about this with you earlier. When you're a parent of an adoptee, you start believing that you have an understanding of the culture and of what your child has been

through. I don't think that's the case. You're never going to understand what your kid is going through. It's not fair to them to limit them in what they do just because you think that you understand it and that you think that you know enough about this to make the decision for them.

Jena: You're eighteen years old. You've been here since you were eighteen months. Your generation is coming of age. Lay it on me. Be honest. What about the adoptive parents? You were telling me earlier that you don't think adoptive parents should tell their child's story. Tell me about that.

Zoe: In general in our society, there's this idea that teenagers don't have an opinion. I'm not going to lie, there are some teenagers that I think should not be saying things. There are things that I have said that I look back and I'm like, "That was stupid. I shouldn't have said that. That was judgmental. I wasn't thinking logically about it." I get that. I don't think we give teens and young adults enough credit. They're saying, "They're just being loud. They have an agenda. They have all these new ideas, these liberal, those young people." I don't think that's fair, especially with adoptees and Chinese adoptees because you get this idea that you're not old enough to understand what's going on. Obviously that's a blanket, but that's the base of it. I've been talking to an adoptee that's been telling me about something, some kind of discrimination or bullying that's happened to them. Their parent has interrupted them and been like that, "That wasn't what happened."

I don't think that parents should silence their kids and try to tell their stories for them. You're not in the position to do that. Like I said, parents of adoptees have this false sense of understanding of what it's like to be adopted. You definitely understand more than someone who's just talking about it without any experience, but you don't have that understanding of what it's like to be adopted and the position that you're put in and the position that you're put in being Chinese in a society that's Anglo and white-centric. I don't think it's fair to say that you have an understanding of what it's like to be adopted when you're not actually adopted. It's worse in some ways because the people listening to you think, "Because that person has an adopted child, they definitely know what they're talking about. They must know. What they're saying must be right." That's not always true.

Jena: What is the role for parents? Tell me what the role for parents should be as their kids get older. Obviously, it changes over time.

Zoe: First and foremost, it's to be supportive and to be a support for them. Let your kid vent to you. Let them talk about their problems. Don't interrupt them and try to reason it or justify it or apologize to them. You're not asking for your parent's apology. You're just wanting them to listen to you and maybe, a little bit, understand what you're going through so that you can help them. I've had conversations with my mom, I know she means the best. I would never think that she doesn't have my best interests at heart. I've told her about things that have happened to me. She's goes, "Don't worry about. They're just little. Don't worry about. They just don't know. They just don't do this." That's not what you're necessarily looking for. You're not looking

for justification from an entire society. You just want to know that your parents will have your back and that they're going to support you no matter what happens.

That's the most important thing is to listen. Listen to your kid. Put aside all of the things that you have, the beliefs that you have. Just let them talk to you. Like I said, don't try to make excuses. Don't try to reason things out. Just allow them. You're not going to know what they're going through ever, but you can at least try. You can make people feel better for the time being by just saying, "They didn't know what they were talking about," but that doesn't change the fact that that still happens. Those comments still come. The racism is still there. What's much more important than saying, "That individual doesn't know what they're talking about. That person isn't educated as much," is to come to terms with the fact that your child is not going to be treated the same as other kids. From that standpoint, just listen to them.

Jena: Rather than trying to make it go away by making it seem like an exception, "This person is ignorant. Don't pay any attention to what they have to say," maybe what the parent should say is, "I hear you. That must have felt terrible." From the adoptive parent standpoint, speaking for myself, it's very hard to say to your kid, "We live in a racist society. You are going to be at the brunt of it sometimes. I will help you, if you want me to, figure out some strategies when it happens." When I hear you say this, I know that is exactly the right thing to say. I also know it's very hard to come to terms, even though you know it intellectually, with saying to your child, "You're right. This sucks."

Zoe: Especially for the girls. I don't know if this is getting too off topic. There's this huge stereotype against Asian women in general and this objectification. When I was in high school, senior year there were these guys, these two seventeen-year-old kids, in the hallway talking about how they love Asian women. I was passing. One of them noticed me. He looked at me and was like, "Don't worry, not your kind of Asian." This is messed up on so many levels. First of all, you're seventeen. Go to class. Second of all, it blew my mind that that was something being talked about in a high school. Realistically, that stuff is everywhere from the second you turn on the TV. It sucks.

It's harder for the girls adopted from China that are part of that generation. We have to grow up in that sexism and racism there. We don't even identify as this -- none of the Asian women do. There's this idealized, objectified view in our society of Asian women and that stereotype. No one really conforms to that if you think about, this idea that doesn't have a personality, that's just there. That stereotype really affects young, Asian women and girls. I don't want to say in general, but I know I have felt sometimes that if I could be that stereotype, that people would like me or pay attention to me more, not in the objectified way. If you look at the Asian women in media, you have these two tropes. There's the love interest that doesn't have a personality or the side kick who's goofy and dumb. If I'm going to be noticed in a society that has these two ideas of Asians in general and especially when you're a female, what am I going to have to do to make people notice me as a person rather than this idea? I don't really know how to talk about that as much in a family-friendly way.

Jena: You're talking about the sexualized, subservient, Asian woman stereotype?

Zoe: Yeah. First of all, it's disgusting. Second of all, I've had people, guys especially, that I thought were friends and then turns out that they're only interested because they think I can be this stereotype, this weird, twisted idea of what they think Asian women should be. This is actually something I have talked to fellow adoptees that are my age about. When you get these guys that have this yellow fever and this idea of Chinese women, it's really hard to find your place in society as a strong, Asian woman when you've got all of these stereotypes and judgments weighing down on you from everywhere. What it all boils down to is that I think it's harder, especially for the girls that are adopted. You've got to fight the stereotype, first of all, that you're adopted, and then you've got to get past this cultural stereotype of what you're supposed to