

Jena Heath: How old are you?

Nora Brock: Thirteen years old.

Jena: What grade?

Nora: Seventh grade.

Jena: Do you like it?

Nora: Yeah. It's okay.

Jena: What is your favorite thing that you're taking in school?

Nora: I really like dance team.

Jena: What kind of dance is it?

Nora: It's jazz dance and a little bit of contemporary dance.

Jena: Have you been dancing for a while?

Nora: I've been dancing since I was four.

Jena: Have you done ballet and the whole works?

Nora: I do Chinese dance. I've done that for all my life. A couple years ago I started jazz dance.

Jena: What else do you take at school? Tell me about school.

Nora: We have to take the four core classes, math, science, ELA, and Texas history. For my electives, I'm taking Chinese and orchestra and dance team.

Jena: What instrument do you play?

Nora: I play the violin.

Jena: Tell me about Chinese. Have you taken Chinese before, or this is the first time?

Nora: I took it in sixth grade. I'm going to do it through high school.

Jena: How are you finding learning Chinese? This my daughter's thing, thumb up, easy; thumb to the side, medium; thumb down, hard?

Nora: It's thumb up, easy. Our teacher makes it really fun to learn and learn new words and play games.

Jena: Can you converse a little bit at this point?

Nora: We learned conversational things in Chinese like "Hello. How are you?" easy things like that.

Jena: Do you think you'd like to go to China?

Nora: I like visiting there. I went there when I was eight. I celebrated my birthday there. I like visiting it.

Jena: You celebrated your eighth birthday in China. What was that like?

Nora: It was really fun. We did a lot of sightseeing while we were there. I met my foster mom while I was there.

Jena: How was that? Tell me what that meeting was like. Were you at her house? Did you meet somewhere in the little town? Do you remember?

Nora: I went to the orphanage. I met her there.

Jena: Do you have much memory of that meeting?

Nora: I remember going to the orphanage and seeing where I was raised for a little bit of my life.

Jena: How did that feel?

Nora: I don't know.

Jena: Hard to remember, a little bit?

Nora: Yeah.

Jena: It was a long time ago. Eight is kind of young. Sometimes you don't remember everything. Do you want to go back to China? That was before you knew Chinese. Next time you go back you're going to be talkin' to everybody,

Nora: Yeah. It would be fun to go back. When I was there, my family, people wanted to take pictures with them because they hadn't seen blue eyes. It was funny because they were really interested.

Jena: They were interested in your western parents. When we were there, my thirteen-year-old stepson came with us to adopt my daughter. People kept stopping him. We were at the zoo in Guangzhou. A couple stopped, handed him their baby, and said, "Can we take your picture?" We were in a park. A bunch of teenage girls went crazy and surrounded him and said, "Can we take your picture?" The thought of going back, do you like the idea that might happen again if you go with your folks? Does it make you feel funny to be picked out in that way?

Nora: I would love to go back. It would be funny, also, to see how they react to American people when they really like taking pictures with them.

Jena: When you think about going back, do you give much thought to the idea that you would be in a country where everybody looks like you whereas when you're here, it's more the other way around.

Nora: That's what happened last time we went back. People would come up to me and start talking in Chinese. I don't know what they were saying. I blended in with all of them. My family were really different.

Jena: How did that feel to blend in?

Nora: Different, not normal.

Jena: Do you do the China camp here, the Culture Camp, any of the cultural activities like the Moon Festival and the New Year's Festival stuff?

Nora: Yes. We celebrate a lot of Chinese holidays like Chinese New Year. We do a moon walk around my neighborhood every year. I go to the FCC Culture Camps.

Jena: The moon walk around your neighborhood, is that something you guys started? Are there other folks up here who are Chinese or are familiar with Chinese culture?

Nora: My mom started it. We invite a bunch of people, our neighbors and our friends. We just walk around the neighborhood on the moon day.

Jena: That's a really cool thing to do. Tell me about other things. What are you reading?

Nora: I really like the *Harry Potter* series. I read a lot. I really like it.

Jena: Is *Harry Potter* your favorite?

Nora: Probably.

Jena: Have you seen all the movies?

Nora: Yes.

Jena: Tell me about your friends. Do you have a best friend?

Nora: I don't really have a best friend. I have a lot of really good friends. Also, I have a group of friends called the ladybugs. It's all kids adopted from China.

Jena: That's cool. I never heard of the ladybugs before. Is that your own name for your buddy group?

Nora: Yeah. It's the name we created.

Jena: How did you meet the ladybugs?

Nora: My mom found a bunch of them from where I dance.

Jena: How many ladybugs are there?

Nora: There's five. We meet once a month. Two of them moved away. There were seven, but now there's five.

Jena: Does that give you a sense of a community?

Nora: Yeah. We can all relate to the same things. It's really fun. We get to hang out.

Jena: What about other kids? Have you had, over the years, other kids ask questions? I know that my daughter last year had to do a presentation in her third-grade class about her family history, her family tree. This was her first real experience standing up in front of other kids and talking about the fact that she's adopted and her family tree in our family, but that there's a whole biological family that she has really no information about. It was a little bit tough for her because kids in her class had a lot of questions.

Have you had to deal with questions from other kids? If you have, how do you look upon that?

Nora: A lot of kids are just curious. They don't really understand it fully. I don't mind answering their questions. They don't really know anything about it. I don't mind.

Jena: It doesn't make you feel funny or anything?

Nora: No.

Jena: Do you think much about your biological family in China? Have you given that much thought over the years?

Nora: I don't think about them that much. I'm really busy. I like to do a lot of things. Sometimes I do, like at Cultural Camp when we talk about it in a circle.

Jena: In the adoption journey part of Culture Camp? When you talk about it there, what does that feel like?

Nora: You're surrounded by other people that know what it's like. Some people don't like talking about it that much. I don't really mind.

Jena: Do you think that's a good part of Culture Camp, or do you think that's a part of Culture Camp you could live without?

Nora: Whenever the lady comes in the room, we all just get silent. Then she asks us questions. There's only a couple kids that talk. I don't think it's maybe the funnest part of Culture Camp for me. It's pretty good, I guess.

Jena: If you were the Queen of Culture Camp, would it be in or out? Be honest.

Nora: In, but shorter. It's really long. It's kind of awkward because no one wants to share.

Jena: It feels personal?

Nora: Yeah. Usually the counselors the ones talking.

Jena: Is there anything about being Chinese, or being adopted from China, or being in a family where everybody wasn't born in the same country that you would like other people to know?

Nora: A lot of people assume that I know fluent Chinese and I can have a full-out conversation in Chinese. They're like, "Oh, you speak Chinese?" I'm like, "Nope. I don't know any of it. That's what I'm learning." They make assumptions that I have a really strict mom that makes me have all good grades, but I don't.

Jena: They make the assumption that you have a tiger mom. Have you heard that? Maybe you would like them to think twice before they tell you their assumptions?

Nora: Yeah.

Jena: I would like to say thank you very much. This has been a great conversation.

Nora: You're welcome.