

Jena Heath: Tell me a little bit about your stuff about China. Do you know much about what province you're from, how old you were when you came home?

Camille Davis: I was nine months old when I was adopted. I came from Fuling.

Jena: Nine months is pretty young. I'm assuming you're like, "I don't remember anything about that."

Camille: Yeah. I don't remember anything. All I know is from pictures or from what my parents told me.

Jena: We were talking earlier about some of the FCC stuff. How much activities, holidays, that sort of thing is part of your life?

Camille: We go to a giant gathering for Chinese New Year. It's this giant empty hall with a giant stage. We have really good Chinese food there. We have a dinner. We get to talk with everyone. Then they have a giant performance for us. It might be dancing. They always have lion dancing. I used to do that for a year. It was fun. I wanted to do horseback riding, so then I quit that to do horseback riding. We make wontons at -- where was it, Mom?

Kathryn Thompson: The Discovery Museum.

Camille: At the Discovery Museum.

Jena: Tell me about where you live. Tell me about your people in school. Are there other Chinese kids, other Asian kids in school?

Camille: There are two in one of my classes. There's one in my orchestra class. There's another one who's adopted. She actually lives right up the road. She is in my science class.

Jena: You have a fair amount of, it sounds like, a pretty lot of contact with other kids who are Chinese and other kids who are adopted from China.

Camille: Yes. I only know of two that are actually adopted. I'm not sure about the others.

Jena: As you were growing to hit the big age of thirteen, when you were younger did kids ask you questions at all? Any of the, "Is that your dad? Is that your mom?"

Camille: Yeah, they did. They didn't really understand the whole thing. They would assume that I was their daughter from birth. Then if they'd come in the class and help out, they'd be like, "Wait, you look nothing like them." I'd be like, "Yeah. I'm adopted from China."

Jena: How was that for you when they would ask? Did it bother you? Did it not bother you? How did you handle it?

Camille: I don't know. It kind of made me feel special.

Jena: It made you feel special in a good way?

Camille: Yeah. There's not many other people who were adopted, especially from such a different cultural place. It was kind of cool to be like, "I come from here and here."

Jena: Have you been back to China at all?

Camille: No, I haven't. I actually haven't left California.

Jena: If I lived here, you'd have to blast me out of here with dynamite. [laughs] Do you want to go to China?

Camille: I do want to go to China. That sounds really cool.

Jena: We were talking before about Mandarin. For a while you and your mom were learning some Mandarin. You shook your head like, "Those days are over." Tell me about learning Mandarin, why you decided "I don't want to do this anymore?"

Camille: I was probably the youngest one there or one of the youngest there. There weren't really other people that I could be like, "I can't wait to go see this person. We could talk and goof off together," or just have someone in the class. It was kind of just me alone. My sister did it as well, but she had more kids that were her age that she could hang out with. Then I was there alone like, "I don't have anyone."

Jena: Are you taking any other languages?

Camille: I'm taking Spanish right now. It's not my favorite class. I would probably like to change it. You have to take a language. I'm forced to. I don't have a choice in that.

Jena: It's a good one to know. We have a lot of fellow citizens and friends who are Spanish. In my neck of the woods in Texas, it's really good to know some Spanish. If you ever come visit Austin, you'll be glad you know some Spanish.

I'm going to ask you a little bit about whether you think much about where you come from in China and birth parents. Is that something that enters your mind very often, not at all? As my daughter would say, a lot, medium, or a little?

Camille: Probably when I was younger there were more kids asking about me. "You're adopted?" It entered in my mind more probably then, probably medium. Now, I rarely ever think of it. I don't even remember when I was there. I can't even remember things from when I was two. It's not like I felt like I had anything to lose when I came here. This was my family.

Jena: Right. You're not thinking about people who you could even picture or know.

Camille: Yeah. It would be cool to meet other people that were adopted from China.

Jena: Is there anything that you would like other kids to know about being adopted or being Chinese, anything that you think you want to put out into the world about maybe when they ask a little kid questions, is that a good thing or a bad thing?

Camille: I've had a lot of questions asked. I know how to answer to them when they ask. Probably one of the most common one is either, "Are they your real parents?" which are always like, "They are my parents, but they're not my biological parents." The other one would probably be, "Why did they give you up for adoption?" I just say, "I never knew. It's probably because they didn't have the money or the resources to take care of me." That's kind of it. You get so many questions like that when you're growing up, you know how to handle them and they just roll off.

Jena: Are there any responses that you recommend for a younger kid?

Camille: Probably just saying if they do ask, "Are they your real parents?" just say, "Yes, they are my real parents because they raised me and everything like a real parent. They're just not my biological parents." For "Why did they give you up for adoption?" you don't know that so you can just say, "I don't know. It was most likely because they couldn't take care of me. There's many reasons why they couldn't do that. Most of them were probably because they were being mature adults and saying, 'We don't have the money to take care of you. We don't have the time to give you what you need to grow up.'"

Jena: You sound like a happy kid, happy and contented. Would that be a fair assessment?

Camille: Yeah. It was also easy to come up with those kind of things because my sister is also adopted. She's five years older than me. She would also be like, "Oh, yeah. People asked me that all the time too, but all you have to say is 'this.'" It was really easy to have a role model who already went through all of that.

Jena: When kids would ask you stuff, you would talk about it with Grace?

Camille: Yeah. I'd be like, "When mom and dad came into school, everyone's like, 'Wow. I didn't know you were adopted.'" She taught me it doesn't really matter because they're just your parents.

Jena: What else is it like to have a big sister? What's the up? What's the down?

Camille: There are downs because she can be -- it's the job for siblings to be annoying to each other. If you're a sibling, you are always going to be annoying to each other in some ways. I say a lot of the ups are -- I did a lot of the sports. She exposed me to more things. She did Irish step dancing. Then I started doing that, so then we did that together. She did

track and cross country. I started doing that. I'm never really sure if she hates me for doing those things that she did. It was good for me.

Jena: When we were talking about this, recording your interview, and I asked you, "Do you want me to put you together on the site with your sister or do you want to be on your own?" you were very clear you wanted to be on your own. What's your thinking about that?

Camille: A lot of times it will be like if we're going up to see a family member, like if we're going up to see my grandma -- she lives up in Stockton -- we'll make a card for her or there'll be a reason why we're going up. It's Mother's Day or it's Christmas or something. I'll make a card for her. Then I'll write something in it. A lot of times she'll be like, "Oh, can I sign the card?" I'll be like, "Sure." Then she just puts her name on the end of my message. That can be annoying when she was like, "I helped write this," but she didn't do anything. She just wrote her name.

Jena: I see. You want full credit where credit is due. You don't want anyone ridin' on your coattails.

Camille: [laughs] Yes.