

Jena Heath: What do you think about the international adoption of Chinese children? Your own experience in your family, your experience with your daughters, your experience searching, do you feel like there should be an international program for adopting children? Do you feel that there shouldn't be? As you've learned more about it, have your views changed?

Lan Stuy: I don't know. My own experience with my life, I feel like I turned out fine even I grew up in a poor family. Somehow, I still like some of the Chinese culture. The kid adopt by the family outside China, it's a example like my three daughters. I feel like it's a little hard for me to raising them because in the deep of my heart, I'm the Chinese. I still kind of fall with the Chinese culture. I want my girls to able to continue some of the good Chinese cultures, grow up in the good Chinese cultures. I don't see that here. When they're raising a Chinese girl to teach them Chinese culture, but you are in a totally different country in a totally different culture. I do not like that. Sometime I do hope, "God. I wish my girls stayed in China." [laughs] In this way, I feel like maybe it's better to have the girl grow up in China.

Jena: Even if it's in a poor village?

Lan: Yeah, even the poor village because you learn the real life. You learn the different thing. You learn different experience. I feel sometime the kid do have a better life, have everything pretty much. They don't need anything. In my culture, you grew up in the poor village, but you learned dependence. You learned to work hard, to go for what you want. That's the part I want a girl to learn. That's the part I think maybe it's better for the girl to be in China. [laughs]

Jena: The biggest difference then between growing up here and growing up in China, you think, is that -- it sounds like, tell me if I'm wrong --

Lan: -- When I grow up, I don't have a single toy. Kids my age and grew up in the village, we always go out, explore, find things, do fun things, create fun things by yourself. Here, the kids -- my girls have a hundred stuffies. They still see stuffy and scream, "Can I have this?" They don't need it. To me, god, the girls here put too much so easy to get what they want, have what they want. They don't have the, "Maybe I need to study, work hard because there's something in my mind. I have my dream. I need to go for it. I need to own it."

Jena: What do you think should happen to China's adoption program? If you ruled the world, if you were the King, or the Queen, what would happen?

Lan: Since I know couple of my friends, one of my old friend, she's same age am I. She had been married almost ten years. She can have her own child. She only wanted to adopt. She can't because the orphanage in her area say, "No, no kids." I have to tell you that there's so many families, they wanted to adopt too. I think it's because the international program. I'm sure most orphanages prefer the international adoptions. Most of the kids, they already have the family to adopt from outside of China. That's why most orphanage say to no to the family

inside China. That make the family inside China miss the opportunity to become a parents to adopt a kids. Those kids need a home too.

I have to say the medical and this kind of stuff, it's better for the special need, to live in US, in some other country. It's better than in China. Maybe keep the special need program, but the healthy kids should consider about maybe have adoption for inside China is better. Also to me, I feel like China's changing a lot. As a country, if you can't even raise the kid from your country, that's no good. The kids are the future of the country. If the government is good enough, the government should keep the kids inside of China.

Jena: Especially in the new China, if there's all this wealth, there ought to be a way to keep the children inside.

Lan: That's what I think.

Jena: Tell me about times when you have found birth parents and what the reaction of the birth parents tends to be. Give me an example of a time when you found a birth parent. What happened? What do you do? Exactly what do you do?

Lan: I think there was back to only 2009. We were doing a birth family research project in the Jiangxi province.

Jena: Jiangxi is where?

Lan: Jiangxi, Jiangxi Province. It's little bit northwest of China. I definitely met with the first family that are located. I even remember the girl's finding documents. It says in her finding document says she was finded at the, kind of like Grand Station, by one guy. They had the name of the finder. Soon as I located the finder, then I find out actually he was the foster father of the foster kid program of the orphanage.

Jena: Had he been this child's foster father?

Lan: No. She wasn't being foster kid, this girl. She did foster care some other kids in the orphanage, also some of the kid in my project too. That's why how I know she was with the foster father. As soon as I show him the document of this girl's in my hand, he definitely remembered which girl was. He told me he doesn't know where the girl exactly come from but he know the other person, the person who had the give to her. He doesn't know this lady's name though. He just described which location of this old lady live and tell me the direction of wherever and tell me, "If you find her, then you will get the birth family information."

It's hard for me because I wasn't from the area. I had to get a local driver. I explained to the driver what location I looking for. Good thing he knows. He drove me to the area. It was a big village. I said, "What to do? I don't even know what the lady looks like, what she was doing." Then we walked around the whole village, asked people around, "I looking for this

lady. What she looks like, what she was doing.” Finally after talk ten people, finally people pointed to me, “That house.” Must be her. I knock on the door. I had explained to her why I was there and show her the picture of the girl. She didn't say anything. She just looked at me weird saying, “What do you want from me?” Kind of afraid [indiscernible] and didn't say anything, just tell me, “I can't help you. Go. Just go. Go.”

Jena: She was the birth mother?

Lan: No. To me, I'm so close. I'm not going to give up. I don't want push her so hard though. I said, “What should I do?” I turn around, try to figure out what to do. Ten minutes later I walked back, knock on the door again. I almost begging her. “Come on. I really need your help. You no help me, I'm not going to go away.” Then finally she was still didn't talk much, sitting there in the front of the little chair in her house. Then just get up. Finally ten minutes later she get up, then went in, get a piece of paper, have a name and phone number on it. “Call this person.” Then she didn't say anything. I say, “Okay.”

I pick up the phone and call. There's a man answer the phone. Because my dialect, they can hear I'm not from the area. Of course he was wondering why I'm calling him. I had to explain to him again. Then he started exciting after I explained to him why I'm calling him. He say, “Don't hang up. I call you right back.” Five minutes later I got a call back from this guy, ask me what's my location and tell me he's coming to pick me up and go to with the birth parents. After five minutes, he show up with the car. They took me in the car. We straight to the village.

Jena: How far was the village?

Lan: It's about half hour drive. Then when I get there, it's kind of like in a private house in a village. There's a young couple and the grandma and two kids there. I walk in. I interview the family. Then I find out the story. Actually, the mom told me first child is a daughter. Then she got pregnant again a couple years later. Family being in a village, they feel so much push for having a boy. Then she told me that when she was seven months pregnant or nine months pregnant, there's a orphan of her mother-in-law. She remembered. That's what she remembers. She said, “I saw her in her house, they making agreement,” something. Soon as her baby girl born, she know this lady -- that was the lady I tried to locate and had the phone number -- come to her house, pick up the baby, and make agreement with them, said she have a rich family friend of her want to adopt her daughter. That's what happen.

Jena: That was probably the middle person in their village who was taking them to the orphanage?

Lan: Yeah. She had no idea her daughter was adopt by the family outside of China when I telling her. I think the family was from Canada, the adoption family.

Jena: How did she react when you told her?

Lan: She was extremely surprised and had no idea, kind of frustrating and wondering what was going on. "Why my daughter was in Canada? How my daughter change the orphanage?" all kind of questions. The grandma didn't say anything. The birth mom tried to tell me what was happening in the old day, how a daughter give up to this old lady, the middle person. Then they start asking me questions about how the girl doing, what her adopted family looks like. At the beginning, I think in their mind, lots going on in their mind. Pretty much they were stand there, can't talk in couple minutes in the beginning.

Jena: Do you think she was angry?

Lan: No. She was really happy. You can see the sparkle in their eyes when they look at the picture of their daughter. They would say, "Oh, yeah. I can see that's my daughter. Can't believe it." It's happy and also maybe one part might be upset. They told me good thing they know where their daughter now. They told me soon that they have their daughter in this lady's hand, they make agreement. You give up your daughter for other family. That so you never come to ask any question. That's the deal. You can't come after the family asking any question about your daughters. That's why when I asked them, "Have you ever wondering where your daughter was? Have you ever looking for your daughter?" She say, "No. We can't because we make a deal with them when we hand our daughter in this lady's hand."

Jena: That the door will close?

Lan: Yeah. That's why when I told them, "Your daughter is in Canada now with her adoption family," they say, "I had no idea. How is that happen?" Amazing.