

Adult Adoptee Speakers

Susan B. Alvarado

Susan B. Alvarado, LPC, PLLC, is a Licensed Professional Counselor in the Commonwealth of Virginia. She is committed to serving the adoption community as a psychotherapist, educator, and advocate.

She has worked as a therapist in community mental health settings and in prenatal health care clinics. She holds a Masters Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling, a Post Master's Certificate in Community Counseling and is completing a Post Master's Certificate in Marriage and Family Therapy at Virginia Tech.

In the past five years, Ms. Alvarado has dedicated her postgraduate research and training to the field of adoption and attachment processes, incorporating both her knowledge of clinical mental health services and her experiences as an adopted person herself from Colombia. She worked as a therapist for a post-adoption counseling center and currently maintains her own practice serving individuals, children, adults and families created through adoption. She has co-led children and teen adopted persons groups and camps for the Barker Foundation, a local adoption agency that also provides post-adoption services. In 2005 and 2006, Ms. Alvarado participated in Barker's Homeland Colombia Tour, serving as the adopted teen's clinical counselor.

Ms. Alvarado presents on topics related to adoption and attachment to adoptive parents, adoption agencies and other mental health professionals. Her research with other Colombian adoptees was published in the Handbook of Adoption: Implication for Researchers, Practitioners and Families, St. John's University, 2007, and she has been featured in "Adoption Today" magazine.

Amanda Baden

Amanda Baden, Ph.D., received her doctorate in counseling psychology from Michigan State University and is currently an Associate Professor in the Counseling Program at Montclair State University in Montclair, New Jersey. Dr. Baden has both personal and professional experience with adoption. She was adopted from Hong Kong and raised in a transracially adoptive family. In 2008, she and her partner adopted a child from China. Her experiences have led her to focus her research and clinical practice on adoption triad members, transracial/international adoption issues, racial and cultural identity and multicultural counseling competence.

Dr. Baden has written extensively on adoption issues, including a model of identity for transracial and international adoptees called the Cultural-Racial Identity Model. She is one of the editors of the recently published book entitled, *The Handbook of Adoption: Implications for Researchers, Practitioners, and Families* (Sage Publications). She serves on several advisory boards for organizations, including Families with Children from China, Chinese Adoptee Links and the International Adoptee Congress. She is a regular columnist for Families with Children from China newsletters across the United States and Canada and for *Mei Magazine*, a publication for Chinese adopted children.

In 2005, Dr. Baden was chosen by her Congressman, Jerrold Nadler, and the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute as an Angel in Adoption. Dr. Baden was recently invited to speak at Hong Kong's First Adoption Festival, "What is adoption, how is it changing, and why is it still widely misunderstood?" hosted by Mother's Choice in Hong Kong and a variety of partner organizations. Dr. Baden's clinical specializations include counseling adoption triad members, transracial adoptees and individuals with multiracial backgrounds. She lives in New York City and is a licensed psychologist with a clinical practice in Manhattan.

Melanie Chung-Sherman

Melanie Chung-Sherman, LMSW-IPR, LCPAA, is an independent social worker with experience in foster care and adoption. She is a licensed Master's level social worker and a licensed child placing administrator with the State of Texas.

Ms. Chung-Sherman has helped lead birth land journeys for adoptees and their families for several years. She traveled with Adoptees for Children to speak before the Korean Parliament regarding international child welfare issues in 2008. She is a national and international speaker regarding child welfare issues and permanency rights. Ms. Chung-Sherman is the current Vice President of the Dallas Interagency Council, a non-profit organization of foster and child-placing agencies in the North Texas area. She is also the former co-chair for the Programs and Outreach Committee for the Texas Asian Adult Adoptee Group, a support and service group for international adoptees and the community. Previously, Ms. Chung-Sherman worked at Texas Christian University's Institute of Child Development with Dr. Karyn Purvis, Ph.D., and Dr. David Cross, Ph.D. Ms. Chung-Sherman resides with her husband and toddler son in the North Dallas metroplex.

Stephanie Kripa Cooper-Lewter

Child welfare professional and international Indian adoptee, Stephanie Kripa Cooper-Lewter, LMSW, is a Ph.D. Candidate and adjunct faculty at the University of South Carolina College of Social Work. In 1994, she began her personal and professional involvement in adoption-related issues, with a particular emphasis on post-adoption support for youth and families. She is particularly passionate about providing mentoring and other post-adoption support services to adopted adolescents and adults. Over the years, she has served as an adoptee volunteer for several adoptee heritage camps, online groups and as a guest presenter at national adoption conferences and adoptive parent groups. She is actively involved in a leadership role in several adult adoptee groups including Desi Adoptees United and Indian Adoptees International.

Ms. Cooper-Lewter is a Licensed Master Social Worker and mental health professional, bringing over 10 years work experience in nonprofit and community organizations working with at-risk and low-income families addressing poverty, child abuse and neglect, foster care, Indian Child Welfare, youth development, mentoring, immigration and acculturation issues, crisis intervention, as well as school and medical social work. Prior to returning to graduate school to pursue her Ph.D., she served as President/CEO of a Big Brothers Big Sisters local non-profit organization. She currently works as Director of Research and Evaluation for a non-profit organization, Healthy Learners. She lives with her husband, Nicholas Charles, and is a proud mother of her daughter Courtney and her son, Nicholas Chetan.

Susan Soonkeum Cox

Susan Soonkeum Cox has been an adoption and child welfare advocate for more than 20 years. A nationally recognized presenter on international adoption, Ms. Cox has been a guest on the "NBC Today Show", "Good Morning America", CNN, "NBC Nightly News", C-Span's "Washington Journal", "Australia Today", NPR, Voice of America, and appeared in numerous national and international publications including: *Newsweek*, *TIME*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *People*, *Oregonian*, *Baltimore Sun*, *L.A. Times*, *the Korea Times*, *CNN*, *National Public Radio*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Town & Country* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

Ms. Cox was appointed to the first White House Commission on Asian and Pacific Islanders; is a member of The Hague Special Commission on Intercountry Adoption; the State Dept. Advisory Committee on Voluntary Foreign Aid; The White House Council on Women in the Americas, and regularly testifies before Congress on issues related to child welfare and adoption. Ms. Cox was asked by Senator Clinton to serve as Co-Chair of Korean Americans for Hillary and was made an Honorary Citizen of Seoul by then Mayor, Lee Myung Bak.

Ms. Cox has written for numerous national and international publications including the Yale Journal of Law & Feminism; Edmund S. Munskie School of Public Service; The American Academy of Pediatrics Journal; Portland State University; the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute and the Casey Family Foundation. In 1999, Ms. Cox founded the International Gathering for Korean Adoptees in Washington D.C. and is the editor of "Voices from Another Place," an anthology of Korean adoptees.

Astrid Dabbeni

Astrid Dabbeni has over 15 years experience working in adoptions. In the Early 90's Ms. Dabbeni lived and worked in Italy supporting U.S. Military families living abroad who were in the process of adopting special needs children from the United States. She has worked, volunteered and interned for a variety of adoption organizations, such as the Department of Human Services, Open Adoption and Family Services, Holt International and Rocky Mountain Adoption Exchange. Ms. Dabbeni majored in Sociology, with an emphasis on adoption, at Willamette University .

More recently, after working as a Family Support Specialist at the Oregon Post Adoption Resource Center (ORPARC), Ms. Dabbeni realized there was a gap in pre- and post-adoption education services leading her to create and develop Adoption Mosaic, a non-profit organization providing education and support to all adoption constellation members. She currently serves as the organization's Executive Director. She currently serves on the Board of two Oregon adoption related organizations. Ms. Dabbeni travels the country to lead youth groups, present workshops on transracial parenting, talking with children about adoption and various other workshops. Ms. Dabbeni's life-long interest in adoption is rooted in her own adoption. At age four, Ms. Dabbeni and her sister were adopted from Colombia, South America . When she was 18 years old, Ms. Dabbeni and her sister returned to Colombia to "reconnect" with their birth country.

Judith Eckerle Kang

Judith Eckerle Kang, MD, was adopted from Korea at five months old and grew up in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She has since returned to Korea to participate in multiple adoptee groups, tours and language programs. She recently completed a post-doctoral research fellowship in International Adoption through the Center For Neurobehavioral Development, funded by a National Institutes of Health training grant. After completing her residency in Pediatrics at New York Presbyterian Hospital Cornell in New York City, NY, she joined the staff of the International Adoption Medicine Program at the University of Minnesota. Her research interest is in determining the early factors that can predict cognitive and psychological functioning in international adoptees. In addition to her research, Dr. Kang performs pre-adoption medical reviews, educates residents and assists in both patient education and patient care in the International Adoption Clinic. Dr. Kang is a member of Adoptees For Children and has traveled to Korea to advocate to Ministry officials on behalf of children in institutions.

Todd Kwapisz

Todd Kwapisz graduated from the University of Oregon in 1996 with a BS in Sociology. He currently works for the State of Oregon in Social Services. Mr. Kwapisz has directed Adoptee Heritage Camps, led Family Tours to Korea and worked on legislation for adoption and child welfare issues, particularly advocating for adoptees to have access to their birth records. Mr. Kwapisz was a key organizer of the First Gathering of Korean Adoptees in Washington D.C. in 2000, 2001 and 2004, and the Vietnamese Reunion in 2000. He currently serves on the Board of Directors for the North American Council for Adoptable Children and the Korean American Citizens League. His passion continues to be working with the adoptee community and educating the public on aspects of the adoptee community and the "adoptee experience". Mr. Kwapisz is Adult Adoptee Outreach Director for Holt International and member of Adoptees For Children.

Joy Lieberthal

Joy Lieberthal received her B.S. from Union College and her Masters in Social Work from Columbia University. She held the position of President of Also-Known-As, Inc. /NY for six years and was on the planning committee for the First Gathering of Korean Adoptees in Washington, DC in 1999 and the First Gathering in Korea in 2004. Professionally, she was a Policy Analyst for the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute, where she co-authored the *Report on the First Gathering of Adult Korean Adoptees in Washington, DC*. She has been published by Child Welfare League of America in their *Adoption and Ethics* series. She also worked for *Adoptive Families Magazine*.

Ms. Lieberthal was a social worker in international placement for Spence-Chapin Services and worked in their post-adoption department for the last five years as a therapist and child development expert. She remains a consultant for that agency as a private counselor and runs programs for adopted kids. She has created curricula for agencies and professionals on a wide variety of topics related to helping families and children around adoption issues. Ms. Lieberthal has spoken in local and national forums, in particular, at Joint Council on intercountry adoption and the North American Council on Adoptable Children, among others.

Sandra J. McLaughlin

Sandra McLaughlin was awarded the Angels in Adoption Award by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute for her extensive work around the globe and in the United States advocating for the needs of children. She has more than 25 years of professional expertise in international and domestic child welfare throughout Asia, Latin America, South America, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and the United States. As a social worker, Ms. McLaughlin has been involved in all facets of the adoption process from birth parent counseling to post-adoption services, and child welfare program development around the globe. She is an accomplished speaker and has keynoted numerous international conferences.

Ms. McLaughlin has been recognized for the innovative model programs she established for the U.S. Agency for International Development in Romania. Her work in post-adoption issues resulted in the development of the Heritage Camps for adopted children. Ms. McLaughlin is also involved in post-adoption counseling and has led Motherland Tours to Korea. She also has extensive experience training and educating social work professionals. As a founding member of Adoptees for Children, she currently serves as an adoptee delegate to Korea to promote adoption before the Korean government.

Stephen Morrison

Stephen Morrison received a B.S. in Aeronautical & Astronautical Engineering from Purdue University and an M.S. in Aerospace Engineering at USC. Mr. Morrison and his wife Jody have four children, one of whom was adopted from Korea. Mr. Morrison has been a long time advocate of homeless children and is the Founder of Mission to Promote Adoption in Korea (MPAK). Through MPAK, he has elevated the status of domestic adoption in Korea and has been honored for his work both in the U.S. and Korea. In 2005, he was honored by the Mayor of Seoul with the Honorary Citizen of Seoul Award. In May 2007, Mr. Morrison was also awarded the National Medal of Honor by the Korean government in recognition of his work through MPAK. Mr. Morrison is a member of Adoptees For Children and regularly goes to Korea to meet with Korean officials regarding adoption policy and practice.

Kathleen Carney Sacco

Kathleen Carney Sacco currently works as the Korea Program Coordinator for Family and Children's Agency, Inc. She has worked in the adoption field for over 11 years, including adoptions of children in state care and international adoptions. She has spoken at various conferences, schools and adoptive parent groups on topics such as adoptees' impact on the field of adoption, search and reunion, growing up adopted, medical issues in international adoption, post-adoption issues and returning to the birth country. She previously served on the Board of

Directors of the adoptive parent group, After You Adopt. Ms. Sacco currently serves on the Board of Directors and was past chair of the Korea Caucus at Joint Council. She is a member of Adoptees For Children. Ms. Sacco is a licensed social worker who obtained her Master of Social Work from Arizona State University. Her interests include post-placement services and clinical and ethical standards of adoption practice.

Amber Stime

Amber Stime, MSW, the Executive Director and Founder of African Cradle, is an Ethiopian adoptee who lost both of her hands in a land mine accident as a toddler and was placed in an orphanage to receive medical care. At the age of eight, she was adopted by an American couple and grew up in Minnesota. After receiving her Masters Degree in social work, Amber worked in the adoption field for six years before returning to Ethiopia to start a center for orphaned children.

Working tirelessly for the past 22 years, Ms. Stime is a recognized leader in multi-cultural adoption and has received numerous awards for her outstanding dedication to children and families. Ms. Stime has participated in and been the keynote speaker for many adoption conferences and workshops.