

**MADELINE GEITZ
ANNA MAE ANHALT
ALICIA KARLS**

CHINESE DAUGHTERS & AMERICAN CITIZENS
Q & A, A & Q

Madeline:

Anna, Alicia, and I live in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Ohio, respectively, but in some ways we feel closer than any other group of three could. We were adopted from the same orphanage in central China in July of 1995. Our birthdays are a few weeks apart—it's even possible we could have shared a crib at our orphanage. We, along with several other girls in our adoption group, have gathered at annual reunions in Chicago, a central meeting point. We also took a return trip to China together in the summer of 2005. All of us have asked, and been asked, similar questions regarding our adoption experiences. This collaborative self-interview provides answers to those often asked questions. Our editor, Heather Tosteson, asked us to consider additional questions regarding naturalization and citizenship. You'll see that the three of us are in agreement on many points but also have a variety of opinions on others. It is evident, however, that we share deep pride in being the unique Chinese daughters that we are.

How has being adopted affected your life?

Anna:

Oh goodness, where to start. Quite honestly being adopted has affected my life of course, but from the every day-to-day life of mine I rarely am reminded of it or think about it.

I mean when I do think about it, yes of course—if I wasn't adopted the language I would speak would be different, my culture would be different,

who I hang out with, my life experiences, my opportunities—all different.

I am a person who does believe that everything happens for a reason. I don't think my adoption was an accident, I don't think where I am today was an accident and I KNOW that wherever life happens to take me in the future won't be by accident either. Being adopted doesn't define me, it's just a part of my life that has helped bring me to where I am today.

Alicia:

Being adopted is one of the biggest things that define who I am. I'm here because of adoption; I have a mom because of adoption; I have an amazing life because of adoption. I *definitely* wouldn't be the same person without being adopted. I don't mean to say that everything I do is based on adoption; it's just a really big part of who I am. I don't go around saying I'm adopted, but I sure am proud if I get asked. I don't think of my mom as my adoptive mom (yes I've been asked), I think of her as my mom, as anyone else would think of their parent. I also hate answering the question "if your real parents ever wanted you back would you leave your fake mom?" First of all, she's not my "fake" mom. Second of all, no, because I love my life right now; my birth parents had to make a choice and it must have been for a reason. I'm never going to be ashamed that I got adopted, that would be like being ashamed of being myself.

Madeline:

It's rare that I think of myself as adopted, or factor in my adoption to who I am as a person. 'Adopted' isn't some sort of state that I think of myself to be in—I was adopted at eight months old and, in my lifetime, I'd rank it as about as notable an event as losing my fifth tooth, or getting my seventeenth haircut. Now, this is not to say I'm ungrateful in the slightest about being adopted by such a loving family—my luck in receiving such a perfect life was one in a million—but my adoption is not what makes me Madeline, or the only thing that makes me who I am. I am the combined result of everything in my life—every birthday, every crush, every pair of jeans, every song I sang in the shower, every font I used in a school report, every CD I put on my Christmas wishlist, every math equation I ever solved, and every color I ever painted my toenails—not just the event of my adoption.