

Spotlight: Celebrating the Holidays with Family, Friends

# Adoption Today

December 2010  
www.adoptiontoday.com

International and Transracial Adoption Resource

## Reconsidering Connection

*One mom shares perspectives on birth family connection*

## Inside the Orphanage

*A look at how the children of Guatemala are faring*

## Baby Bond

*Adoptive Moms Can Breastfeed Their Babies Too*

## Loving Manuel

*On a return trip to Guatemala, one adoptee experiences the love of a child...ultimately changing her life forever*



# Enter the World of your Child's Heritage



## 2011 Heritage Camps and Family Weekends:

Vietnam Weekend	June 2, 3 & 4
India Camp	June 23, 24 & 25
China Camp	July 7, 8 & 9
Korea Camp	July 21, 22 & 23
Guatemala Weekend	EBA
Eastern Europe Weekend	EBA

*EBA is an acronym families who have adopted internationally. Circumstances designed for ages 9-12.*

## 2011 Adoption-Focused Tours:

Visit China Tour	June 1 - 13
Visit Korea Adult Adoptee Tour	June 13 - 23
Visit Korea Family Tour	June 25 - July 6
Visit Haiti Tour	November 19 - 26

Visit India Tour - December 28, 2011 - January 7, 2012  
All birthland tours feature small travel groups, sightseeing, and "family-on-wheels" housing.

For more info on our camps and tours or to learn about Dillon's adoption programs from China, Ethiopia\*, Haiti, Honduras\*, Hong Kong, India, Korea, Nepal, or Russia\*, please visit our website or call 918-749-4600.  
\*services offered through our affiliate, AIA, Success International!



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# AdoptionToday

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### on the cover

Kathleigh, 18, is a Guatemalan adoptee living in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She is a second-year student in international development studies at Saint Mary's University. Gubault is a recipient of a Canadian National level Millennium Excellence Award Scholarship. She is a regional support partner assistant for Orphan Resources International. While on a service trip to Guatemala, she fell in love with Manuel.

# Reconsidering Connections

One Mom's Perspective By Trish Diggins

I can't begin to know how hard the decision is to relinquish a baby to adoption. I've never been pregnant, much less pregnant in a less-than-ideal situation.

However, once my husband and I adopted our daughter from China last year, I really began to think about my own birth parents. Through the years I'd thought about them occasionally, but it wasn't a big part of my life. An occasional "oh yeah, maybe that's where that

Considering those lost connections for my daughter brought up questions about my own birth parents. Did they wonder the same things? How did they deal with it? I could hardly stand to be separated from my daughter just to go to work. I can't imagine letting her go for a lifetime. The thought of what it would be like to give her up for others to raise was unimaginable. At the same time, I was grateful to my core that we were so blessed to have been able to adopt her. I not only love

who handle being adopted just fine, so of course, you wouldn't hear about them as much as the unhappy ones. They're probably not spending time creating Web sites that would essentially say, "I'm OK with it, no big deal." I expected the same regarding the birth parent sites. But, some of what I found shook me to the core.

The depth of anguish on some of the birth parent sites was astonishing. I found something I didn't expect: an abundance of stories about mothers being pushed into adoption around the time that I was relinquished for adoption. I couldn't believe the depth of pain from some of the stories — mostly from mothers. My heart would break again and again, reading how 10, 20, even 30 years later, they were still deeply grieving for the children they'd either given up due to circumstance or coercion. Many mothers' guilt, even decades later, was painful and raw. Many reunion stories yielded unhappy endings as well — once the immediate gratification of finding that long-lost parent or child was gone, the long, hard work of trying to create a relationship based on almost nothing but biological ties could be difficult at best.

I've always said if there was one thing I'd like to be able to tell my birth parents, it's thank you for giving me a chance at a better life. During my childhood I was told — probably like most adopted children — that my birth parents gave me up to a family who could love and provide in ways they couldn't at that point in their lives. Maybe they wanted to, maybe they didn't, but this showed they loved and cared about me.

But, I'd found on some sites that even thanking birth parents for relinquishing a child for adoption is sometimes considered offensive and hurtful. Especially for parents who were

**I reconsidered my entire outlook on adoption from my two sides of the adoption triad. I always believed there would more than likely be some pain and longing when relinquishing a child. But I was absolutely heartbroken over the idea that my biological parents could still, all these years later, be eaten up with guilt and loss about my adoption — something I'd pretty much ignored and taken for granted most of my life.**

came from" when I found I was really good at something my adoptive parents weren't. Occasionally a birthday or holiday would bring up a fleeting "wonder if they're thinking about me, too." That's about as far as feeling a connection to my birth parents ever went.

But in the months after we adopted our own daughter, I found myself thinking about her birth parents a lot. As she has no family history at all, there is virtually no chance she could ever find them, even if she wanted to. Did they want her, but couldn't keep her? Did they miss her as much as I already loved her? Do they wonder what happened to her? It weighed on me.

her fiercely, I also feel a love and connection to her biological parents I never felt for my own. Which led to the question: should I reconsider contacting my birth parents?

It was time for some informal and wildly unscientific research. I'd always talked to adopted friends about their experiences, but this time it was with a different perspective. As a confirmed Internet junkie, I also searched the Web for information on birth parents and how they'd dealt with their decision through the years.

My personal bias has always been that there are so many normal, well-adjusted adoptees



Photos courtesy of Ivo Moore, ABOJ Photography, [abojphotography.com](http://abojphotography.com)  
ONE-YEAR-OLD Mara Diggins was adopted in the fall of 2009 by Trish Diggins and her husband.

forced or coerced, there's nothing to be thankful for. They did not want to relinquish their child for adoption and a "thank you" implied they'd not have been as good a parent as the adoptive parents.

I reconsidered my entire outlook on adoption from my two sides of the adoption triad. I always believed there more than likely would be some pain and longing when relinquishing a child. But I was absolutely heartbroken about the idea that my biological parents could still, all these years later, be eaten up with guilt and loss about my adoption — something I'd pretty much ignored and taken for granted most of my life. And I really ached over the idea that my own daughter's adoption could become something that would cause her and her birth parents a lifetime of pain as well.

I hope when my birth parents think of me — assuming they do, of course — somehow they know I understand it had to be a difficult decision, no matter what the circumstances. I turned out relatively normal, and I don't have any lingering guilt, pain or regret about being adopted. My adoption was a long time ago (my vanity won't quite let me divulge exactly how long), and I truly hope my birth parents have led full, happy lives.

But I still can't bring myself to search for them to find out. There's just too much at stake. I realize it's selfish, but I can't take on the possibility of opening a Pandora's box that my husband and daughter can't escape. Maybe they don't even want to hear from me, maybe it would be fine, maybe it would be a terrible mistake — too many maybes.

My adoptive parents are my parents. They didn't contribute the DNA to create me, but for better or worse, they did the really hard work and raised me. They were there when I fell off my bike, when I had kidney surgery, and when Swimmy the goldfish died. They taught me to read, argued about curfews and clothing styles, put up with me through teenage boyfriend breakups. I am deeply appreciative that my birth mother gave me life. I choose — right or wrong — to believe she loved me and did what she thought was best. But when it comes right down to it, I'm confident and



convinced that my adoptive family is my real family.

I've been lucky: I've never had any major issues being adopted. Unlike some adoptees, I don't feel "different," never pined for my birth parents, never felt because I was adopted that I wasn't loved or was in some way incomplete. It's just a fact. I'm adopted. The few times I have felt weird about it, it's because other people had odd ideas about it. My parents always made my adoption "normal" — so it was. I don't look like my mom or dad, I have a completely different personality, and my skills and talents have in many ways been 180 degrees different from theirs. I am still their child.

And while I hope my daughter feels the same way, she may not. That's OK. My husband and I will do our best to give her whatever support she needs to be secure and confident.

There's no set answer. Whether biological connections or adopted connections, the adoption experience is not always easy to sort out. Right now, we'll concentrate on raising our daughter and trying to provide her with all the love, security and opportunities we can.

I'll let the "sleeping dog" of my birth parents lie for now, and pray they've moved on, that they're living their lives to the fullest, healed from any wounds possibly brought on by my birth or adoption. And hopefully, my daughter's parents are somehow at peace and in some way feel that on nights they're looking at the stars and thinking of her, she's with parents who support and love her while she looks and wonders the same about them.

*Trish Diggins is a freelance writer, graphic designer and Web geek who absolutely adores being a new mom.*