

**Bringing Mei Mei Home**  
*Chinese Adoption*

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## INTRODUCTION

They sat on the plane, anxious to meet their new 3 year old daughter. They had her picture on the refrigerator, in their wallets, in frames on their desks. It wasn't easy for Isabelle; she couldn't wait to care for this child. She knew the risks it was to bring in a child that had been left and not held, but she wanted to care this unique girl. Mei Mei had the most beautiful eyes and the kindest spirit that she could see from her face.

With China's one-child policy, this girl was neglected by the government and by her parents. She had a twin and the family could only afford her twin brother. In her heart, Isabelle wanted to take both but the boy had a family that would definitely take care of him.

Her husband, a very successful businessman, rested his hand on hers, gently squeezing it. To those who were on the outside of their lives, they would've thought that he, a VP at Dell, was way out of her league. She was a solely a dolphin/orca trainer for Seaworld with a vet clinic on the side. She had worked for her position where he had been born into his. But they worked somehow, some way.

After hours of waiting, they were able to meet their new daughter. They went straight from the airport to the orphanage that the little girl that caught their hearts. The agent that handled their case was there waiting for them. They quickly handled the last of the paper work while Mei Mei was brought into the office. As soon as she saw Isabelle, Mei Mei went straight to her. They filed for a child about a month ago and now they have the most beautiful girl they had ever set eyes on. She did have her challenges and as did they but they were able to get through it with help of professional doctors, therapists, and family counselors.

Chinese adoptions have become popular because of the one-child policy that China has enforced for almost 32 years. This allows families that wish to adopt a child outside of the country that they live in. The one-child policy is a good idea to help with the economy and the population of China. This paper will talk about the one child policy, the history of Chinese adoption, and the requirements that China has in place for adoption.

### **Part I: CHINA'S ONE-CHILD POLICY**

The one-child policy was created to help social, economic, and environmental problems within China. With one child, there is more room for other family members that may be living with the family. This policy also helps the family afford food with the salaries they make at work. The one-child policy was created in 1978 and was meant for 1979's first-born children. They have said that it will remain until at least 2015.

There are loop holes in this policy though. If you were to have a baby girl or a physically/mentally challenged child, you are allowed to have another child and hope that it's a boy. If you do continue to have children and the requirements were not met for this, there will be fines for each child you have after the first. The parents may also be denied bonuses from work

if there is more than one child in the household. Also, children who were born in another country or overseas will not be fined if they don't apply for Chinese citizenship. This is another way families can have more than one child and not be fined for it.

The fertility rate of Chinese women fell from over three births to 1.8 births per women in 1980 to 2008. The government had estimated that they had three to four hundred million less people in 2008 than they would've if the policy hadn't been introduced. Though the death rates are less than one million compared to births which happens every five weeks.

With the focus on population control, it helps provide better medical services for women and reduces the risk of death and/or injury associated with pregnancy. Not only is the medical system benefited but so has the people's savings. The individual savings had risen since the introduction of the one-child policy. It has also maintained a steady labor rate and reduced unemployment.

Though the policy has its good, it also has its bad. It has risen the rate of children, mostly girls, being abandoned by their parents. Many live in state-sponsored orphanages where they wait to be adopted by either Chinese parents or through international adoption. The baby girls who were born to parents who wanted sons, were taken through formal or informal adoptions.<sup>1</sup>

## **Part II: HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL ADOPTION**

China has contributed more than 4200 female infants per year in 1995 which became the largest foreign supplier of babies to the United States which is more than ¼ of current international adoptions annually. Many of the children that were put up for adoption were after the second world war. In 1948, 3000 Japanese, 840 Chinese, hundreds of German, and 1806 from Greece were adopted in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

International adoption was not practiced before so many countries did not have the requirements that were need for legal adoptions until the concern of child trafficking which led to the creation of a multilateral legal instrument to regulate intercountry adoptions. This instrument was called Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, which was in force on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1995. A number of countries have recently modified their laws to prevent abuse to the children and the system.<sup>3</sup>

The laws and regulations on adoption were set to protect the child and the family. Unfortunately one of the laws of international adoption is that the child will have no contact with their birth parents. In legal terms, international adoption is a closed adoption. But the adoptions tend to be quicker and can be less costly to the family.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>2</sup> The Soul of Adoption page 142

<sup>3</sup> Child Adoption: Trend and Policies pg 18

<sup>4</sup> The Adoption Answer book pg 9

### **Part III: REQUIREMENTS WITH CHINESE ADOPTION**

There are requirements for all kinds of adoption. Though intercountry adoption is a lot different than domestic adoption. There are costs, special requirements with each country, and requirements that the adoptive parents need to follow to insure the child's safety and well being. The following paragraphs will talk about the special requirements that China has in place, the costs, and the requirements or suggestions that would help with the child's well being and safety.

#### **A. Chinese Requirements**

The adopting parents need to be married, one male and one female, for at least two to three years with an age limit of 30 to 50.<sup>5</sup> They can't not have more than three divorces. If either one of the spouse's first husband/wife died, the current marriage has to be a minimum of five years. That includes the first two divorces. The family must show a net worth of \$80,000 and have an income of at least \$10,000 per person in the household including the adopting child. The parents need to have enough money to care for the children in their care. The parents need to have at least a high school education/GED or higher. The parents need to have not terminated parental rights to a child that was born after they turned 18 years old. Families that have life threatening diseases or problems are not eligible to adopt.

The CCAA (China Center of Adoption Affairs) ask that the maximum number of children already in the home is five. If the couple have children that don't live in the home, they are able to adopt no matter how many they had. It goes the same if they had more than four children and some do still live at home.

Since the parents are bring in another child, the adopted child needs time to adjust to the new environment and the family. So the CCAA ask that if there is a child that is under the age of one that the family wait till then to submit their request. And if they had adopted a child from China before, they need to wait a year before submitting another request for adoption. The CCAA doesn't have any requirements associating with religion other than that the religion needs to allow the child medical treatment if it comes to that. All that's required besides the medical treatment is that the religion is mentioned in the home study.<sup>6</sup>

#### **B. Costs<sup>7</sup>**

Here is a list of costs that are associated with intercountry adoption:

- International adoption- \$7,000 to \$13,000
- Home Studies- \$1,000 to \$3,000
- Legal fees- \$500 to \$12,000

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<sup>5</sup> The Adoption Answer book pg

<sup>6</sup> Great Wall China Adoption (website: ) Overview and Requirements

<sup>7</sup> The Adoption Answer book pg

- And other expenses that come with adoption:
  - Travel
  - Counseling fees
  - Agency fees
  - Advertising fees
  - Training classes
  - Medical costs
  - Translator/interpreter
  - Escort fees
  - Passport fees
  - Gifts
  - Document preparation

### **C. Tips to help the adopted child**

With adopting a child that is from another country and cultural, the parents and family members need to realize that there will be discrimination and cruel teasing. It's important to keep a positive aura in the home and in the family members when it comes to the racist comments that people who don't know about the child's background and think that's alright to be cruel to the child.<sup>8</sup>

It's important to the family to learn as much as they can about the child's cultural and country. It helps them remember who they are when the family knows what they had from. It also helps if the family has learned the language to prevent language barriers.<sup>9</sup>

The family also takes on the burden of learning and teach two different cultures and keeping a balance between their birth heritage and their new adopted heritage. Having the birth cultural in the home, helps them keep their cultural identity and a connection to their homeland.<sup>10</sup>

Most families change their child's name either because they can't say it or because they liked a different name for the child. When doing this, try and keep the child's name if they want and use it as a middle name or have the name that you want to call as their middle name. The child's name is their true identity and at first the older children might hate it because it was the name their parents named them before they were taken away from their birth parents.<sup>11</sup>

As parents, they want to make sure that each child is cared for. Chinese children tend to have attachment disorders because they weren't held and cared for by the people in the orphanages they were raised in. They act out because they aren't use to the holding and

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<sup>8</sup> Keys to Parenting an Adopted Child pg 94 to 100

<sup>9</sup> Keys to Parenting an Adopted Child pg 94 to 100

<sup>10</sup> Keys to Parenting an Adopted Child pg 94 to 100

<sup>11</sup> Keys to Parenting an Adopted Child pg 94 to 100

love that they are receiving. Here are some ways to tell if the child is suffering from insecure attachment: low self-esteem, clingy, food obsessions (hoarding, gorging, hiding, etc), difficulty with trust/intimacy/affection, behavior and/or learning problems at school or home.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Keys to Parenting an Adopted Child pg 94 to 100

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