

S P R I N G / S U M M E R 2 0 1 4

the
ASAC News

The Alliance for the Study of Adoption and Culture



ASAC News from the Executive Committee

Two new people have joined the executive committee: Kim Park Nelson and Kate Livingston. Kim is Associate Professor of American Multicultural Studies, Minnesota State University at Moorhead. Kim has given talks at three of our conferences and was the lead organizer and selection committee chair at the Third International Symposium on Korean Adoption Studies in Seoul in 2013. She has published in Outsiders Within and Adoption and Culture Vol.1, and has

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Save the Date!

Upcoming Conferences & CFPs 2014

The Adoption Initiative Conference will meet at St. John's University in Queens, on the topic "Sleeping Giants in Adoption: Power, Privilege, Politics, Class," May 29-31. Keynote speakers are Laura Briggs and Gina Samuels: also

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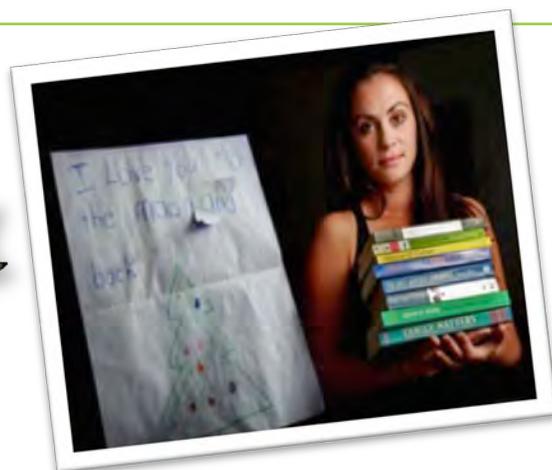
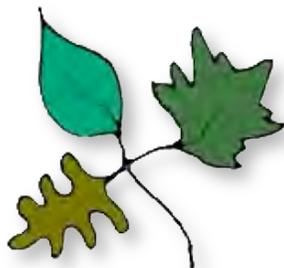
Member News

Many members gave presentations at the March 2014 ASAC conference at Florida State, hosted by ERIC WALKER. Go to this website <http://english.fsu.edu/asac/schedule.html> for an almost final version of the program.

E. WAYNE CARP's book Jean Paton and the Struggle to Reform American Adoption has just been published by the University of Michigan Press. Using previously unexamined sources, Carp offers the first-ever biography of the pioneering adoption activist Jean Paton's fifty-year struggle to reform American adoption. Paton, the mother of the adoption reform movement, gave adult adoptees a voice and provided them with a healthy self-image; facilitated thousands of meetings between adult adoptees and their families of origin; fought



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News from the Executive Committee Continued...

worked as an advisor to Deann Borshay Liem on the new documentary Geographies of Kinship and has contributed to other media presentations on Korean American adoption.

Kate Livingston is a Ph.D. candidate and graduate teaching assistant in the Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at The Ohio State University. She is writing a dissertation about the relationship between adoption and abortion politics in the U.S. Herself a birthmother in an open adoption, she founded and facilitates Ohio Birthparent Group, a birthparent led community organization that supports those impacted by adoption through peer support, education and advocacy. She has given talks at two of our conferences.

Places on the committee opened up for Kate and Kim because Karen Balcom resigned for family and health reasons and Lisa Marie Rollins' term ended. Margaret Homans and Cynthia Callahan are continuing as co-chairs, Emily Hipchen as treasurer, and Mark Jerng, Claudia Nelson, and Carol Singly as other members of the committee.

Past issues of Adoption & Culture are now available electronically through EBSCOHost. Members are encouraged to publicize it, and ASAC, through other professional organizations beyond the MLA, and to publicize their cfps for our members when relevant: for example, American Studies Assoc.; National Women's Studies Assoc.; Assoc. for Asian American Studies, where there is an existing adoption caucus; AHA (history); IABA (autobiography); Society for the History of Childhood and

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Conference Paper Award

ASAC would like to give an award for the best paper given at our conference by a graduate student or a student who had not yet received a doctoral degree at the time of conference presentation. If you are eligible and would like to be considered for this award, please send an e-mail with the following items to Marianne Novy (mnovy@pitt.edu) by July 5, 2014. In the interests of time and the environment, the judges (scholars in the field) will receive the submissions electronically and will not know the identities of the writers. For that reason, please submit two separate documents in .doc or .docx format:

- ✓ A cover letter with your name, the title of your essay, and your contact information (both email and postal addresses) and a cv. Please make this document separate from the one below.
- ✓ A version of your conference paper stripped of any identifying information except the title.

Please direct any questions to Marianne Novy.



ASAC 2014 As Seen By...

LORI ASKELAND

Jackie Kay's opening keynote reading—rooted in warm-hearted yet critical reflections on her experience as a transracial adoptee in reunion with her Nigerian father and first Scottish mother—exemplified the “Crossing Boundaries” theme of this year's ASAC conference on the Florida State University campus in Tallahassee (March 27-29, 2014).

Indeed, Kay's talk also enacted what the ASAC conference consistently enables: telling stories of adoption, foster care, and assisted reproductive technology in all their complexity—and sometimes in all their absurdity. (“Comedy and tragedy share the same bunk beds!” Kay quipped, laughing, in the Q&A.)

Perhaps due to the economic climate in academe, with many people from all walks of life experiencing budget constraints that affect travel funds, the conference was a little smaller than the most recent conferences in Los Angeles and Boston.

Still, as Kay also gently speculated about the risks an open adoption might have posed in the specific situation she faced growing up, I was challenged again by this conference to notice and question the grooved, approved paths that even “marginalized” stories can wind up traveling—at least in my own brain.

Thus, at the session where I presented, Cynthia Callahan helpfully opened her own discussion of adoption novels by Richard Wright and Robert Boles, by quoting a 2012 plea from writer and academic—and our co-presenter—Shannon Gibney, that “we need more stories [that are] steeped in a black transracial adoptee consciousness.”

As the academy understandably remains critically engaged with the complexities of transnationalism and

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KIMBERLY McKEE

The fifth biennial Alliance for the Study of Adoption and Culture conference was held at Florida State University's Turnbull Conference Center from March 27-30, 2014. This year's conference theme, Adoption: Crossing Boundaries, reflected the interdisciplinary nature of Adoption Studies and featured the multiple identities of individuals in the field – scholar, activist, adoptee, adoptive parent, birth parent, and others. ASAC continues to recognize how the field of Adoption Studies is growing in response to an increase in birth mother and adult adoptee scholar voices and the intersections of adoption with other fields such as Disability Studies, and it supports creative, cultural productions.

Laura Briggs' plenary session, “From Baby Veronica to CHIFF: Questions of Power, Race, and Justice in Transracial and Transnational Adoption,” explored how boundaries are created, upheld, and transgressed as she located adoption within neoliberal and reproductive justice frameworks. Situating adoption at the intersection of power, justice, and race, Briggs framed her discussion around two ethical questions: 1) How and why does adoption proceed even in the face of birth parents who love and want their children?; and 2) What is the significance of legislation such as CHIFF in shaping a narrative that assumes families in the Global South are unable to care for their children, while simultaneously obscuring the United States' role in generating sending country conditions? These questions require the reconsideration of the concept “reproductive choice” in the US and abroad.

The two documentaries, *Resilience* (2009) and *Somewhere Between* (2011), screened at the conference clearly captured the ways in which choice may be constrained and limited for various members involved in adoption practice. Following the reunion of Brent Beesley, a

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LORI ASKELAND Continued...

globalization, this panel highlighted the perils of the pervasive marginalization of African American history and culture—which are so central to US engagement in transnational contexts—in most areas of academic and cultural life.

For a similar reason, and as a former kinship foster care provider myself, I was especially drawn to sessions often held in smaller rooms that were devoted to foster care, with which due to the socioeconomics that structure university life, most academics in the liberal arts and sciences have less direct experience than adoption or even reproductive technology.

A scholar like Dee Michell, of Adelaide University, for instance, who herself aged out of the Australian foster care system, is to my knowledge one of the few people in the humanities any where in the world who are exploring the literature of foster care. Immediately after her, anthropologist Shelley Harshe examined the emotional labor performed by foster mothers for what was the booming, if corrupt, US-Guatemala transnational adoption market prior to its closure in 2007. In the audience at that session, moreover, was another foster care alumnus, of the US system, Gary Matloff, who connected Mitchell's work in Australia to his own presentation seeking to collect oral histories of displaced children from around the world.

Given that [former foster children are almost twice as likely to suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\) as U.S. war veterans](#), I found fascinating echoes of that important work on foster care in the sessions where wartime displacements were explored, such as Rosemarie Pena's work on the Afro-German adoption experience and Emily Cheng's interpretation of Aimee Phan's fictional work on Vietnamese adoptees and foster children who migrated to the US as boat persons or as part of "Operation Babylift."

As should be clear, many sessions explored the knotty and disruptive intersections of intersectionality: such as the junctures of queer experience with the transnational reproductive / adoption industries in the very different presentations by Johanna Gondouin (looking at a televised story of a Swedish gay couple hiring an Indian surrogate), Margaret Homans (examining transnational adoption in light of queer theory) and Theresa Cain (exploring lesbian identity formation through social work with a foster child). Or Emily Hipchen's argument that the hyper-achieving adoption story submerged in Steve Jobs's official biography seemingly echoes the "super cripp" narrative that disability scholars have problematized.

Thus Laura Briggs' keynote talk was especially on point, as it brought together the impact of the "Baby Veronica" story on the ICWA, in the context of the corruptions of the Guatemalan adoption industry that led to its closure, and US foster care predation on the African American community.

The richness of experience that I hope I'm conveying is only

possible because of ASAC's signature mix of writers, filmmakers, activists, child advocates and agency professionals, as well as scholars from across the humanities and social sciences.

In addition, and very critically, many attendees have complex, intimate histories as birth parents, as members of adoptive families or kinship care providers, domestic or transnational adoptees, and foster care alumni—experiences that often deeply inform our work, whether overtly explored or not. These positions often place us at odds; ASAC provides a space where we can seek to make the conflicts fruitful and invigorating.

Lori Askeland is an associate professor of English at Wittenberg University. She focuses on adoption, foster care, and human trafficking in literature by American women, and is currently working on projects related to Phillis Wheatley, Octavia Butler, and Jane Jeong Trenka.

KIM McKEE Continued...

Korean adoptee from North Dakota, with his Korean mother, sister, and extended family, [Resilience](#) shows the multi-dimensional nature of post-reunion. Complementing this narrative, [Somewhere Between](#) provided a nuanced examination of the lived experiences of Chinese adoptees in the United States. Following four adolescent adoptees, [Somewhere Between](#) captured their negotiation of adoption, identity, and birth parent search/reunion. The commentaries provided by Beesley ([Resilience](#)) and Jenna Cook ([Somewhere Between](#)) in the plenary sessions following each film provided a unique lens into how the subjects felt during and after filming.

The breadth of discussion concerning how boundaries cross at varying axes was also evident in the panel sessions. In "Adoption and Political Ideologies," Sara Fieldston's research highlighted how child sponsorship programs during the mid-twentieth century were utilized to generate goodwill towards the United States and position the nation as a humanitarian global power. Fieldston further argued that these programs naturalized an imbalance of power between the US and the rest of the world, situating Europe and Asia as children to American parents. Another panel, "Adoption, Medical Practice, and Disability," opened the discussion of the intersections between adoption and disability studies. Panelists suggested that the ways in which international adoption framed medical conditions was changing in response to the overall adoption market. Overall, this year's panels represented the depth of Adoption Studies and captured its origins and future possibilities as an interdisciplinary field.

As we look at where we have been and where we are going as a field, I believe ASAC will continue to ensure that the multitude of voices within Adoption Studies are heard and

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included. The presence of panels focusing on new reproductive technologies and surrogacy, the medicalization of international adoptee bodies, and the links between adoption and reproductive justice demonstrates the interdisciplinarity of the conference. While traditional disciplines are still represented at ASAC and within Adoption Studies, the integration of non-traditional fields of study provides new insights into adoption policy and practice and speaks to the way in which adoption crosses and transgresses borders.

Kimberly McKee, Consortium for Faculty Diversity Postdoctoral Fellow at Grinnell College. In Fall 2014 she will join the Department of Liberal Studies at Grand Valley State University as an Assistant Professor. Her primary research focus is Korean international adoption.

Membership Renewal!

If you have not renewed your ASAC membership in 2014 through PayPal, it's time to!

Our PayPal address is adoptionandculture@gmail.com. Membership, which includes a copy of our newsletter and our biennially-produced journal, Adoption & Culture, is just \$20 if you're in the US. All current members will be listed on our listserv; if you wish not to receive messages from members of ASAC through the listserv, indicate you'd like to opt out by sending a private message to emily@hipbo.org as soon as you see a message from the listserv.



ASAC Film Session at MLA in January 2015

ASAC will sponsor a panel during the Modern Language Association convention in Vancouver, January 8-11, on "Narratives of Displacement: Transnational Adoption in Film." This panel will bring new films from new countries into dialogue with the more familiar films of Deann Borshay Liem.

Panelists:

1. Eunah Lee, English, MSU. "Be White, (my daughter, Jenny)!": Internalized Racism and International Adoption in South Korean Director Chan-wook Park's Lady Vengeance (2005)"
2. Jaehyun Jeong, American Studies, Rutgers. "Queer Ethnic Subjectivity and Nationality of Transnational Adoptees in the U.S"
3. Catherine H. Nguyen, Comparative Literature, UCLA. "Approved for Film: Graphic Experience in Couleur de Peau: Miel/Approved for Adoption."
4. Jessaca Leinaweaver, Anthropology, Brown University. "Colonial Guilt, Xenophobia, and Shame: Transnational Adoption and Migration in La Vergüenza."

Marina Fedosik of NYU will chair the panel, and there will be a brief response by Mark Jerng of UC Davis, author of Claiming Others: Transracial Adoption and National Belonging.

Film selections span the following transnational adoption contexts: American/Korean (Deann Borshay Liem's First Person Plural and In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee), International/Korean (Chan-wook Park's Lady Vengeance), Spanish/Peruvian (David Planell's La Vergüenza), Belgian/Korean (Laurent Boileau and Jung's Couleur de Peau: Miel/Approved for Adoption). Lee contextualizes Lady Vengeance with Korean popular culture and global capitalism. Jeong uses the frameworks of Butler and Eng. Nguyen shows how animation complicates the approach of previous autobiographical documentary films about adoption. Leinaweaver shows how film can explore the vexed relationships between adoption and migration, drawing on research for her recent book Adoptive Migration: Raising Latinos in Spain.

Details about the time and place of the session will be available in mid-July from Marina Fedosik (mf107@nyu.edu).

Member News Continued...

tirelessly to open sealed adoption records; and indefatigably explained the adoption experience to a wider public. Patron's struggle to reform American adoption was never easy; she faced resistance at every turn. This, then, is Jean Paton's story: one courageous woman's struggle to overcome American society's prejudice against adult adoptees and women who gave birth out of wedlock; reverse social workers' harmful policy and practice concerning adoption and sealed adoption records; and change law makers enactment of laws prejudicial to adult adoptees and birth mothers. Additional material can be found on Carp's blog: The Biography of Jean Paton. jeanpaton.com. The book is available on Amazon in hard cover and as an e-book. Carp has also written a couple of bibliographic articles that will appear in the next issue of Adoption and Culture:

"The History of the Law of Adoption in the United States: A Bibliography," Adoption & Culture 4 (2014): 32-42.

"The History of Orphans and Orphanages in the United States: A Bibliography" Adoption & Culture 4 (2014): 43-51.

KRISTIN CHENEY is now Senior Lecturer, Children & Youth Studies International Institute of Social Studies The Hague, Netherlands. She has published "Giving Children a 'Better Life'? Reconsidering social reproduction and humanitarianism in intercountry adoption," European Journal of Development Research. (Contact her at cheney@iss.nl for a full pdf copy) She gave a talk, "Addicted to Orphans: Donor influence in Uganda's child protection system," at the Young Lives and Globalization in Africa workshop, University of Liège, Belgium, 21st February 2014, available electronically at <http://bit.ly/1iG9k>. She is organizing the upcoming meeting of the International Forum on Intercountry Adoption and Surrogacy, August 11-13, 2014.: iss.nl/adoption_surrogacy. Her book Crying for Our Elders: African Orphanhood in the Age of HIV and AIDS is forthcoming from The University of Chicago Press this year.

JENNA COOK was awarded a Fulbright grant to continue her research on Chinese adoption. She will be in China for a year and a half beginning this summer--in Beijing for 6 months at Tsinghua University, and then she will be in Wuhan for 10 months at Wuhan University. Jenna was one of three undergraduates receiving Yale's Porter Prize for her research "Constructing Kinship: Longing, Loss, and the Politics of Reunion in China."

SHEILA GANZ's documentary Unlocking the Heart of Adoption, about the lifelong process of adoption for

adoptees, birthparents and adoptive parents in same race and transracial adoptions screened at the American Adoption Congress Conference in San Francisco in April. www.unlockingtheheart.com. She also spoke on a panel at workshop "The Loss Never Goes Away: the Birthmother Experience Pre and Post Roe vs. Wade" with Denise Roessle, Barbara Shafer, Kathy Waddil and Jenny Barnes. Sheila's recently completed documentary On Life's Terms: Mothers in Recovery, about 5 moms struggling to keep their children as they battle addiction in a women and children's residential treatment program in Northern California, premiered at the REEL Recovery Film Festival in San Rafael, CA, in April. www.onlifeterms.org

SALLY HASLANGER of MIT has been named to a Ford Chair "in recognition of Sally's significant and distinctive research, and her distinguished leadership within the field of philosophy," according to Dean Deborah Fitzgerald. Sally's most recent book, Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique (Oxford University Press, 2012), includes several essays dealing with adoption.

MARGARET HOMANS has been awarded Yale's 2014 Harwood F. Byrnes/Richard B. Sewall Teaching Prize for exceptional support of undergraduates.

JESSACA LEINAWEAVER has published an article, "The Quiet Migration Redux: International Adoption, Race, and Difference" (Human Organization 73(1), 2014, 62-71). She also has a new book, Adoptive Migration: Raising Latinos in Spain (Duke University Press), which focuses on Peruvian adoptees and immigrants in Spain, and explores adopted children's experience of growing up in a country that discriminates against their fellow immigrants.

For more information, and to order the book directly from Duke University Press, please visit <http://www.dukeupress.edu/Catalog/ViewProduct.php?productid=50811>. To save 30%, use the coupon code E13LEINA during checkout.

GARY MATLOFF has published a book: See You Tomorrow... Reclaiming the Beacon of Hope. He describes this as "A true story about resilience, and the journey of a lifetime for a pair of brothers and their new father against the sometimes all too uncompromising reality of older child adoptions within the context of domestic and international adoption."



Executive Committee News Continued...

Youth; Children's Literature Assoc.; Association for Research in the Cultures of Young People; Motherhood Initiative for Research and Community Involvement.

Our use of electronic and social media is going to be more frequent with the help of Rosemarie Pena, Ph. D. candidate in Childhood Studies at Rutgers University-Camden, and president of the Black German Heritage and Research Association, who is formatting this newsletter.

We have a possibility of holding our next conference (2016) at a university in an eastern city near an international airport, but in case this does not work out we would like to hear from others interested in hosting.

Conferences & CFPs 2014 Continued...

featured are three panels of activists—one each of birthparents, adoptive parents, and adoptees. Website is www.adoptioninitiative.org

The Re-Envisioning Foster Care in America (REFCA) conference will be held at Holyoke Community College, Holyoke, MA, May 30. Contact Jen Dolan, jdolan@psych.umass.edu for more information.

The Korean American Adoptee Adoptive Family Network conference will be June 27-29 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. See their website kaanet.org. Many participants in past ASAC conferences, and many we would like at future ones, will be there.

The Summer Intensives Conference sponsored by the Adoption Resource Center and Pre/Post Adoption Consulting and Training, both headed by Joyce Maguire Pavao, will be held in Provincetown, MA, July 7-8, on the theme Adoption on the Edge. For information email eakinnect@gmail.com

Orphanhood, Foster Care and Adoption in Youth Media:

A Special Issue of Children's Literature Association Quarterly

Edited by Sarah Park Dahlen and Lies Wesseling

Deadline: November 1, 2014

This special issue of ChLAQ will focus on the different ways in which orphanhood, foster care, and adoption have been depicted in media for youth past and present. We also aim to take perspectives from birth countries and birth parents into account. We invite papers that both extend and disrupt existing adoption discourses, including but not limited to:

- ✚ the cultural construction of "adoptability": constructions of children in need (deserving/undeserving children); of birth parents, foster parents and adoptive parents (deserving/undeserving parents)
- ✚ presence/absence of birth parents and birth countries in Western stories of adoption and fostering
- ✚ the genres of orphan narratives: the sentimental novel and beyond
- ✚ adultism and the hidden adult in orphan narratives
- ✚ the (ab)uses of children's literature as a socialization tool in raising and educating adoptees
- ✚ representations of intercountry adoption in birth countries
- ✚ the politics of belonging; intersectional perspectives on race, class, nation, gender and sexuality in orphanhood, foster care and adoption
- ✚ the adoptees write back: adoptees' perspectives on the cultural construction of orphanhood and adoptability
- ✚ the impact of narratives and visual art (action art, intervention art, etc.) on adoption laws, policies, and practices

Papers should conform to the usual style of ChLAQ and be between 5,000-7,000 words in length.

Queries and completed essays should be sent to Sarah Park Dahlen (spark@stkate.edu) and Lies Wesseling (chlaq.adopt@gmail.com) by November 1, 2014. The selected articles will appear in ChLAQ in 2015.

Executive Committee

Cynthia Callahan (English, Ohio State University at Mansfield), *Co-Chair*

Emily Hipchen (English, University of West Georgia), *Treasurer*

Margaret Homans (English, Yale University), *Co-chair*

Mark Jerng (English, University of California, Davis)

Kate Livingston (Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at The Ohio State University)

Claudia Nelson (English, Texas A & M University)

Kim Park Nelson (American Multicultural Studies, Minnesota State University at Moorhead)

Carol Singley (English, Rutgers University, Camden)

Marianne Novy (University of Pittsburgh) *Newsletter Editor*

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