

Equal Rights in Adoption

Lately it seems like the word change has been elevated to “new favorite word” status in the everyday people’s vocabulary. This year we have been blitzed with unexpected changes in weather patterns, presidential hopefuls are promising non-specific changes in government, and loose change is about all I have left from a trip to the gas pump. In recent years, change has been the order of business for intercountry adoption and looks to remain that way for some time to come.

Take for instance the changes that have occurred in the list of Top Twenty Source Countries for International Adoption. Country popularity and momentum has shifted from Eastern Europe, to Asia, on to Central America followed by the recent rise in Africa soon to be joined by South American countries. We hopscotch these countries in search of our dream child, pushed by changes in wait times, changes in single-parent acceptance, changes in the open and closed status of sending countries, and changes in which countries have been put on hold for investigation of suspected violation of adoption ethics and practices and may soon be closed for international adoption. We may not like some of these changes but our love and dedication seems to prevail in spite of the difficulties dictated by change.

One change I would like to see implemented is the elimination given that we are usually the recipients of these changes, I would like to turn the table and throw my request for change into the mix for consideration. One change I would like to promote is the elimination of the “immigrant” status attached to our foreign-born adopted children in order for them to travel and enter the United States as a member of their adoptive family. Many people are surprised to learn that a foreign-born child adopted by an American family is not accorded all the same rights and privileges under some state and federal laws as a child born into the same American family.

To wit, a child born in a foreign country to U.S. citizens can travel back to the United States on a U.S. passport

and enter the country as a citizen. Our laws require that adopted children be treated as an “immigrant” to the United States requiring the adoptive parent to apply for an immigrant visa before their child can enter the country. This is an unnecessary waste of time and money and a source of frustration for many adoptive parents. Even then, there are some government offices and agencies requiring the child’s parents to pay for and complete paperwork to obtain a Certificate of Citizenship.

But are these children really immigrants? Our adopted children are not immigrating to this country in the traditional sense of the word. They are not choosing to come to America, but rather American citizens are choosing to bring the children here as part of their family. Once a full and final adoption has occurred, then the adopted child is a full-fledged member of the family and under adoption law is considered as if “natural born.” As a child of an American citizen, the foreign-born adopted child should be treated as such, not as an immigrant. This is a call for change I can live with. Such inequities and disparate treatment should not exist in America, the land of opportunity.

Fortunately, we have an advocate for changes to the law at both the state and federal level who is on guard to provide equality for all children of American citizens, whether adopted or not. This organization is diligently working on behalf of our children. EACH, Equality For Adopted Children, is a child advocate organization in Washington trying to rectify this inequity in our laws. To learn more about EACH and register to show your support, visit the EACH Web site at www.equalityforadoptedchildren.org.

Be the advocate for your child and support the call for equality, for all our children.

For the Children,
Richard Fischer

