



CCAI Delegation to China

January 12-17th, 2002

Members of Delegation: Senator Mary L. Landrieu (D-LA), Congresswoman Anne Northup (R-KY), Kerry Marks Hasenbalg, Executive Director of CCAI, Scott Hasenbalg, Director of Shaohannah's Hope, Barbara Walzer, CCAI Board, Valdur Koha, CCAI Board, Brooke Roberts, Legislative Director for Senator Larry Craig (R-ID), McLane Layton, Legislative Counsel for Senator Don Nickles (R-OK), Kathleen Strottman, Legislative Assistant to Senator Mary Landrieu, Elizabeth Barr, Legislative Assistant to Congresswoman Anne Northup, Lynette Cole, Miss USA 2000, CCAI Program Manager.

Goals and Objectives:

- Strengthen relations with Chinese officials who oversee adoption and the care of children in need of homes.
- Demonstrate that the US government is a strong advocate of adoption for children who cannot remain in the care of their biological family.
- Obtain a deeper understanding of existing and planned laws, policies and systems related to domestic and international adoption, foster care and at-risk families.
- Advocate against China imposing an annual quota on the annual number of children.
- Encourage the Chinese to ratify the Hague Convention on inter-country adoption, which they signed in 2000.
- Explore ways in which our two countries can work together to streamline and improve the system of international adoption worldwide.

Overview:

The delegation began this trip with a visit to the China Center on Adoption Affairs (CCAA). During our meeting with Director General Lu-Ying and his staff, several topics were discussed. The main message conveyed to us by the CCAA was that they were anxious to



broaden relations between the US and China because they see both countries as playing a vital role in the shared goal of protecting the interests of children and families. In giving an

update on China's Hague status, Director Lu stated that China is guided by two principles. First, they think that there should be increased government involvement and oversight in the international adoption process, mostly to avoid corruption and exploitation. Secondly, they are excited by the notion that the ultimate outcome of The Hague could be a universal framework for adoption, thereby making the international process more standardized and transparent.

The delegation also had the chance to meet with the Minister of Civil Affairs, Duoji Cairang. While most adoption decisions are deferred to the CCAA, the Ministry of Civil Affairs provides the official recommendations to the President regarding the allocation of resources to support the CCAA and their work. Since it was our understanding that a large part of the reason for considering a quota was the lack of sufficient government resources to meet the adoption demand, the delegation stressed that the backlog of 10,000 cases and the subsequent quota implied that there made be a need for additional resources and staff for CCAA. We assured them that in doing this they would send a very important message to the members of the US government that the Ministry was doing what they could to place all waiting children in a loving home as soon as possible. Minister Duoji met our concerns with great interest and sympathy.

He said that they were committed to increasing the resources and staff for the CCAA and whatever else might be needed to ensure that more orphans are placed in homes as soon as possible. In exchange for this promise to increase the number of adoptions, Minister Duoji asked the US to consider some of the barriers created from our end, including the fact that US INS/DOS adoption services are currently only processed in GuangZhou and he asked the processing being in Beijing as well. Senator Landrieu and Congresswoman Northup agreed to seek the fulfillment of this request and said they would do all they could to address these and any other barriers that might exist.

The absolute highlight of the trip was our hour long meeting with President Zemin. The President expressed to us that China was pleased to be a leader in the area of adoption and that they consider it an important way to strengthen the relationship between the US and China. As he saw it, it was a win-win situation. He said he recently learned that 1 in 5 American couples experience problems conceiving a child. In China, he said, the problem is just the opposite. Despite their economic growth, many in the middle class have decided do not to have any children and so are not likely to adopt.

The President asked Lynnette Cole, Miss USA to make some remarks. She began by thanking the President on behalf of all adopted children and that as an adopted child herself she knows first-hand what having a family means in the life of a child. The



President was noticeably surprised to learn that Lynnette was adopted and her remarks demonstrated for him two important points. First, many of those we met with asked us why Americans were so anxious to adopt foreign-born children. In answering this

question, we thought it important to point out that in actuality, only one out of every 10 children is adopted from outside the US. Many were surprised to learn that Americans adopted 127,000 children last year (only 15,700 of those were international). Lynnette gave a face to those statistics. Secondly, the Chinese officials, at one point, expressed concern that an adopted child may be treated as a second class citizen or somehow be denied the opportunities and rights that US citizenship affords. Lynnette's story personified for the President that adopted children, whether adopted from Akron, Ohio or Beijing, China, grow up to become Miss USA.

At our dinner with Deng Purfang, Chairman of the China Disabled Persons Foundation, we shared stories about the 26,000 special needs adoptions that were processed last year in the US. We told him about several cases involving Chinese children who had found homes with American families. Chairman Deng assured us that he and his foundation fully supported our efforts to promote adoption of all children and to dissolve the barriers that continue to exist for children with special needs. He offered their help and assistance in this regard.

During our meeting with US Ambassador to China, Clark Randt, we spent a great deal of time discussing two main areas. First, we discussed with them the frustrations voiced by the Chinese Government and families in the US about the orphan visa process. In particular, we were interested to learn the reasons behind the current policies that require that all non-immigrant visas be processed in a single counselor office, regardless of the size of the country or the number of adoptions processed there. It was explained that since adoption is treated along with all other non-immigrant visas usually the reasons for these policies surround around effective allocations of resources and concerns with fraud or abuse.

The second issue discussed was how the US could work with adoptive families and the Chinese government to address the need for homes for older children and children with special needs. Current policy in China is that children are pre-selected for families by the CCAA and therefore parents do not have the details about the child until late in the process. As a result, there is not often a sufficient opportunity for parents to relate to, be prepared for, or even consider an adoption of a special needs or older child. The delegation suggested ways such to create new opportunities for recruiting parents for these children such as the Internet and summer camps.



As always, some of the most memorable moments on this trip were the ones spent visiting the children. In addition to visiting several of the government run children's home, we had the chance to tour a home for deaf and blind children. At one orphanage, members of the delegation were invited dance with the children.

Outcomes:

Members of the delegation came away with the confidence that the visit achieved its purpose of laying strong foundations for relations between the US and China in this area. They also were pleased to learn that as a result of the visit, Chinese officials were moving away from plans to institute a formal quota on the number of adoptions.