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## INTERNATIONAL ADOPTEE MAGAZINE



**GUILLAUME DURET ■ THE NEW SOCIAL ORDER**  
**ADOPTEEBRIDGE ■ SARAH HALLSTROM**  
**NEST ■ KOROOT**

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November 2020

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**iam** INTERNATIONAL  
ADOPTEE  
MAGAZINE

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## MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL

**In 2019, the number of overseas Koreans reached nearly 7.5 million. This makes Korea one of the largest exporters of people in the world per total population (52 million). Adoptees make up about 2.5% (200,000) of this particular statistic, and can actually even make up the majority of the overseas Korean population in some countries.**

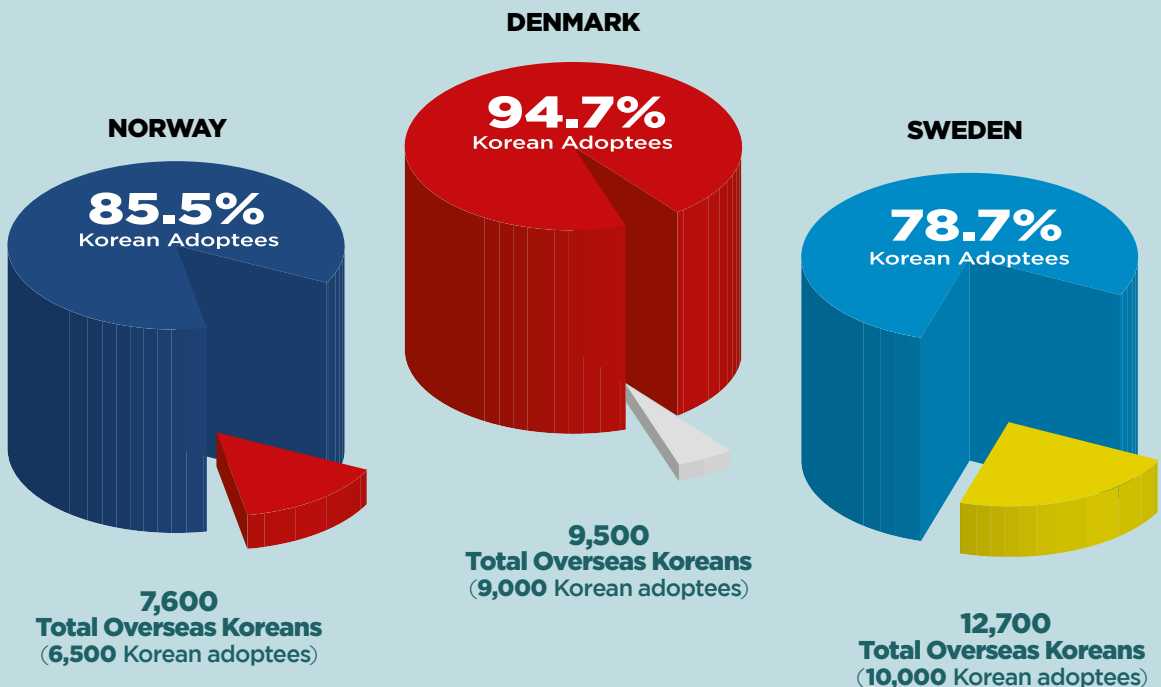
In fact, while overseas adoptees make up a significant percentage of the total overseas Korean population - and are even the majority in some countries - we are still overlooked by the Korean people and society. We are lumped into the category of "overseas Korean" and seen as another hyphenated Korean label, when the reality is that many of us are more so representatives of the country we were adopted to than that of Korea itself. More often than not, when adoptees return to Korea, we are much more alienated than the average overseas Korean who comes back. For many of us, we are culturally and linguistically foreigners, yet when we are first met by Koreans, we are expected to know and understand like your "average" overseas Korean. Instead, adoptees return more as individual ambassadors of our adopted country, and are less equipped to be ambassadors of Korea.

IAM was first initiated to inform adoptees around the world about their motherland and the adoptee community that lives here. We also wanted to provide a platform for other adoptee organizations in Korea who provide post-adoption services, as well as international adoptee groups who represent their unique country and its culture.

However, when we recognize the percentage of adoptees that make up the total overseas Korean population, this magazine's purpose is to reach more than just the adoptee community. It also becomes a way to show Koreans the diversity of our overseas adoptee community that consists of over 200,000 individuals from over 15 different countries.

■ G.O.A'L. S.G. Eirik Hagenes

For example, in some Scandinavian countries (estimated numbers) the total overseas Korean population is as follows:



A portrait of Guillaume Duret, a man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and a blue and white plaid scarf. He is standing outdoors in front of a white wall with greenery. The wall has the text 'INSTITUT FRANÇAIS' and '주한 프랑스문화원' (Korean Cultural Center in France) visible. A small red square is on the left side of the wall.

INSTITUT  
FRANÇAIS

주한 프랑스문화원

# GUILLAUME DURET

“THE MORE YOU STAY HERE,  
THE MORE YOU GET MESSED UP  
AND THE MORE YOU LIKE IT.”

**In this series, we meet adoptees from around the world who have returned to live in Korea. We want to discover how adoption has shaped their life and what their experience in Korea has been like.**

Lee Koo-hong's story began in 1985 when he was found on train 115 in Busan station. He knew his name and that he was 3 years old, but nothing else. One year later, he was sent on a transcontinental flight to France. His journey ended in Brittany, France, where his new guardians, Patrick and Marielle Duret, christened him Guillaume. “My parents couldn’t naturally have kids,” he explains, identifying a common reason behind many adoption stories. Even still, they wanted to have a family. “I don’t know if it was trendy or the only way at the time, but they chose Korea.”

With no memories of Korea, Guillaume found it easy to adjust to life in France. “I felt French, except when I saw myself in the mirror,” he muses, thinking back on his childhood. He compared this early life to a small river, gently carrying him along.

His initial disregard for his heritage was not by design. Guillaume has fond memories of his father, a professional chef, cooking a myriad of Korean recipes at home. Perhaps this was done as much to combat his disinterest in Korea as it was to ease his brother’s integration. Adopted at 7 years old, his brother Manuel had strong memories of Korea. Once in France, Manuel struggled with the cultural differences and language barrier. In addition to Korean cuisine, his parents tried to expose their boys to Korean culture through books and the latest editions of a newspaper

made by the French Korean adoptee organization, Racines coréennes. “Obviously, they can’t hide it or lie [about adoption]. They were always fair with me. They shared all the information they had.”

This fairness with their sons seems to have done the trick. Manuel is now a manager in a company in Northern France, a place he comfortably and happily calls home. Eight time zones away, Guillaume is thriving in his position as Secretary General of the cultural arm of the French Embassy, the Institut français de Corée de Sud. It took time, though. When asked about his parents’ persistent efforts to share his heritage with him, “I will not say I rejected it, but I was just not interested.”

It was 27 years before he felt the call of his homeland, and even then, it was little more than a whisper. “When you are no longer 20, you begin to feel the concept of time passing... And the more you become conscious about your life, the more you want to know about your roots.” He reiterates that, at least initially, there was not a strong emotional magnetism to Korea. “I had the opportunity to quit my job and still have payment for 2 years,” he says, explaining a major reason he was motivated to come here.



And so it was, in September of 2011, that Guillaume and Manuel boarded a plane to Korea for the first time since they left for their new life in France. “The plan was not to settle down here forever, it was just to discover [the country] on vacation,” he laughs. There was certainly no indication at the time that he was even interested in staying long-term. “I didn’t even know how to say ‘bonjour’ in Korean,” reminiscing about how he had to ask the flight attendant how to greet people in Korean. For a whirlwind of a month, Guillaume and Manuel established a basecamp at a guesthouse in Sinchon, getting to know returned adoptees and (trying to) meet Korean girls, as well as attempting to delve deeper into what it meant to be Korean.

While one month was enough for Manuel, this small taste of adoptee expat life ignited something in Guillaume, and he extended his stay. “When you look at Korea from the outside, it seems easy; going to barbecue, going clubbing, sightseeing... But I became more curious about the society, the culture.” He enrolled in the Korean language program at Sogang University and studied up to level 3 (out of 6). He continued to make friends and explore the city. One night he found himself in Itaewon with a group of friends. At another table, a Korean woman caught his eye. “We ended up sitting next to each other and started a discussion. Day after day, we messaged with Kakao Talk and would meet again.”

After he finished his third semester at Sogang, he suddenly found himself with no job, shrinking savings, and a new reason to stay. “I got lucky” is his standard response when asked how he landed his job. “I just found a posting on the website of the French Chamber of Commerce. There was this little announcement that they were trying to find a secretary general [for the Culture Institute].” What made him qualified? “Actually nothing,” he says with a laugh. Nonetheless, he applied. In his interview, he explained that with his master’s degree in industrial process engineering, he had extensive experience solving problems, and from his role at a pharmaceutical production company back in France, he also knew how to manage a budget.

What he believes sealed it, though, was when he explained how he can operate comfortably in new situations. The proof, he said, was his unplanned long-term relocation to Korea. He put in the effort to learn Korean and adjust to the society and culture. With this, he was appointed Secretary General of the French Culture Institute. As the right hand to the director of the diplomatic extension, he found himself in charge of human resources, hiring, and budgeting.

With a job settled, Guillaume began to build a life in earnest. He continued to date Eunmi, though they had moved on from nights out in Itaewon, now taking trips all around Korea, hiking mountains, going fishing, dating like a regular Korean couple. Almost. “Even though she speaks English [and was] an English teacher, there were cultural problems.”

He discusses how he had difficulty with the expectations in a Korean relationship. “In France when you date someone, you are also able to have your own boundary and private [life]. In Korea, that is not possible. When you date, you have to be one hundred



percent dedicated to your [partner].” The biggest shock to his system, he says, was that in Korea, “Men have to pay for everything!” That wasn’t enough to stop him, though, and they began to think about a future together.

Guillaume talks about how difficult it was when they began to consider getting married. He mentions that in most western countries, it’s quite common for people in a serious relationship to live together, “but [with Eunmi] we had trouble at the beginning because for Koreans, it’s not in their culture that you can live together before marriage.” He says she was initially worried about what her family and friends might think.

Not that they didn’t like her dating Guillaume. “They were very good with me. They accepted me but they were very curious. My wife told me 3 or 4 months later, ‘you know, if you were 100% foreigner, they would have acted differently.’ Because my face and blood are Korean, it made things easier.” Their curiosity, he elaborates, stems from the discomfort many Koreans feel when the subject of adoption comes up. “They feel sorry for me but don’t want to tell me. I told them, ‘I had a very good life in France so I have no anger or anything; I can speak freely about this,’ but my wife told me they [still] feel uncomfortable.” Now, Guillaume says, he isn’t even comfortable spending a month away from Korea, so he understands their pity and even guilt about sending children away to grow up in foreign countries.

It did take him a while, however, for him to understand how serious the subject of adoption is, both for Koreans

and adoptees. Shortly after he came to Korea, he went to Holt to review his file. “It was empty,” he says nonchalantly. Sometime later, Eunmi told him about a TV show that featured adoptees, helping them spread their stories to more Koreans than ever before. This was meant to be an emotional program, so much so that they even hired an “audience” to cry off camera, hoping to evoke emotion from the participants. For most participants, it was genuinely emotional, but for Guillaume? “I was smiling the whole time because they wanted it to be dramatic, but for me, I was clear in my [introduction] that I’m okay with my life. I’m just here to do a search and erase the question mark in my life.”

The timing of his wedding a couple of years after that experience coincided with a change in his mind and heart as he began to consider Seoul as his hometown. “For the first 2 to 3 years, I felt like France was my home and it was a bit hard to say goodbye and come back to Korea [after vacation] but then, step by step, it changed. I don’t feel like France is my home anymore. When I come back here to Incheon airport, I feel safe.” Of course, he concurs, that in many ways it’s just a matter of time, but he also believes that adoptees change.



“At first when you arrive in Korea it’s a culture shock and you say, ‘Oh, they’re [messed] up,’ but the more you stay here, the more you get [messed] up and the more you like it.” The turning point was on one of his visits back to France. “I was blind to it, the safety of life. Here, it’s so convenient and so safe,” echoing a common cliché about Korea. His evidence: “in France when you take the subway, you have to take care of your bag,” he says while he simulates hugging a backpack tightly. Thus far, he’s never felt similar danger in Seoul.

That’s not to say he isn’t without complaint. “Koreans are too [about] the rules... They are very square.” One morning a year and a half after he first arrived, he recalls, he was running late. He ran to the bus stop,

where he found his bus had pulled away from the bus stop but had only moved one meter forward before a red light halted its journey. “I knocked on the door and the [bus driver] didn’t even look at me, he just...” Guillaume reenacts the dismissive wave of the driver. “I still had a foot on the bus stop and I [called out] more and more, getting louder,” but to no avail. In frustration, he kicked the door of the bus strongly enough to damage it. “This made him open the door,” Guillaume quips, finding humor in the situation now. After a failed attempt to run away, he was hauled off to the police station. It ended up being simple enough to remedy (paying the bus driver enough to have the door fixed), and, he remembers, “the policemen, they were laughing about this. They told the driver, [you should have] just let him in.” This was the only time, he says, he really hated Korean society and culture.

Luckily, he’s been (relatively) incident-free since then. Luckily for him, for his wife, and now for his daughter Lucie, who turned four this year. Inching closer to 40, he’s settling into the next chapter of his life in Korea. He does the usual Korean things; barbecue and soju, chicken and beer, and football with his friends (sometimes). He takes family vacations and loves spending time with his daughter. “It’s just life,” he says.

He says that now, as a father, he could never imagine abandoning his own child, no matter the circumstances. “It seems unhuman” to do so, he states, but, “what is done is done, [it is up to us to] move on and build with a different culture and tools” that give adoptees a unique cultural perspective in our motherland.

When asked if adoption played a supporting role in his story in Korea, he says emphatically, “No! There is no [positive] to being adopted here. It’s about how you fit yourself into society, because [Korea] will never adopt you back.”

He highlights the fact that he has never had a male Korean friend. “They live in a kind of brotherhood of military service for 2 years, which gives them a club that we will never [enter] because we didn’t participate in building this country.”

To explain why he was totally disengaged from the adoptee community for years, he declares, “Before, [I made it] a point not to hang out with adoptees. I met some and it was not a happy experience. They were always angry... I just wanted to enjoy [being here].” He feels there’s a kind of natural selection in Korea; adoptees that really want to stay here find a way.



He describes the story of a fellow adoptee from Europe, for whom the dime-a-dozen English teaching jobs (and the relatively comfortable income they offer) is unobtainable. “Even though he says money is a big struggle because of his low-level job, he is not grumpy. For me, these kinds of people deserve respect because they assume what they do. If they want to stay in Korea, okay, they find a way to stay here.”

A couple of years ago, he slowly returned to the adoptee community when he joined the adoptee football club and took charge of the finances. He admits that the community fills a void. “With being adopted, there are a lot of stories and [it takes] understanding, so when we speak about adoption together, we understand; we don’t need to explain.”

That question mark about his adoption he mentioned on the TV show? It’s still there, but he’s okay with it. When it comes to his French parents, “I consider them my parents... They feel pain [because I live so far] but they are happy for me.” Even if he found his biological parents, “it’s not going to be a game changer... Even if we have a good connection, I will never feel the same [way about them] as I do for my parents in France.”

He smiles brightly as he plays the movie of his childhood in his head. “For me, adoption was not a pain in the ass. It was just the story of my life.” It’s a story that isn’t over yet.

■ Tom McCarthy



# THE NEW SOCIAL ORDER

HOW CORONAVIRUS HAS CHANGED SEOUL ..  
AND HOW IT HASN'T

As 1 o'clock approached, I left my apartment in Itaewon and headed to the bus stop, bound for the G.O.A.'L. office in Jongno. Before stepping out my front door, I ran through my usual checklist: keys, wallet, phone. There has been one new addition since February; mask. After the explosion of COVID-19 cases (still called "Coronavirus" in Korean) in February and March, masks have been more commonplace than ever.

Western news media have placed an emphasis on the prevalence of masks year-round in Asia, from flu season to pollen season and heavily-polluted days in between. Eight months later, precautionary measures are still in place, largely without the resistance found in other countries.

As I rode the bus toward the heart of Seoul (and the location of several outbreak clusters in the previous months), I watched riders carefully adjust their masks before boarding at each stop, ensuring that their face was fully covered. As passengers made their way onto the bus in front of Myeongdong, the driver suddenly barked at a middle-aged man attempting to board. "Put on a mask!" he said in Korean. The surprised passenger immediately pulled a mask from his pocket, apologizing half-heartedly to the driver and averting the stares of fellow passengers.

As I reached the G.O.A.'L. office, I passed throngs of office workers making their way back to their offices after lunch. Swarms of mask-wearing, hand-sanitizing professionals poured out of the restaurants around the We've Pavilion building, home to several businesses, embassies, and other NGOs. Enough has been written about the source of proactive measures in Korea when it comes to pandemics. Even still, seeing such universal compliance in action has been eye-opening.

As I entered the office building, I doused my hands in hand sanitizer, a new standard feature in all buildings, subways, and buses. I accessed the office's floor by pushing an elevator button covered with an antibacterial film. After greeting the office, I immediately departed with Eirik, Dave, and Kara to explore downtown Seoul and document the new normal.



Our first stop was the grand central plaza, Gwanghwamun Square. On this tower-lined boulevard leading up to Gyeongbokgung, the fallout from the virus was immediately noticeable. Despite the nearly-unbearable tropical weather, June to August is



statistically peak tourism season. Where once there were endless rows of tents offering various cultural wares and experiences, the square was nearly desolate, save for some persistent protesters who seem to be as permanent as the King Sejong and Yi Sun-shin statues at one end of the pavilion. A glance inside the palace at the end of the street revealed a significant absence of visitors, proving this, paradoxically, to be an ideal time for a quality photo shoot.

We turned east toward Insadong, the fabled tourist shopping street. Here, the virus appeared to be dealing devastating blows to the shopkeepers that line what was once one of the most expensive real estate areas in the city. This trend continued as we ventured south toward Myeongdong, the retail shopping hub of Seoul.

On a Friday evening any other year, this district would be suffocatingly dense with tourists from all over the world, drawn in by employees positioned outside their stores appealing to Asian passers-by in their presumptive native languages (a risky but surprisingly accurate gamble when it comes to Asian shoppers; non-Asians are uniformly greeted with English). On this day, however, the sales people could only be heard soliciting in Korean, such was the lack of tourists. We snapped some surreal photos of a relatively empty Myeongdong and moved on.



Like in other countries, many stores were killed off by the pandemic

As with all stories, there are two sides of the coin. On the street and in tourist (or foreign) districts, the danger of the virus is typically of paramount concern. A lack of consumers is hurting business in major shopping areas frequented by non-Koreans. After an outbreak was traced back to Itaewon, the result of sheer misfortune really, the restaurants in the



Places popular with Koreans like Ikseondong were continually packed

area had to demonstrate even more aggressive “social distancing” posturing, closing off half of the seats in their restaurants in a largely-inconsequential attempt to show Koreans that they shared the same level of concern for safety. However, a quick jaunt into a “Korean” district or neighborhood would prove that caution stops at the water’s edge, or rather, the door’s edge.

After Myeongdong, we took a stroll through Ikseondong, bustling with post-work activity. An Instagrammer’s dream neighborhood, it has been rising in popularity for its traditional Korean exteriors paired with modern, minimalist interior design. Here, cafes were packed to maximum capacity.

After witnessing how not-affected this charming district was, we decided it was time for dinner. At the southeast corner of this neighborhood is a famous Korean barbecue street, lined with restaurants offering dense indoor tables and breezy (but equally compact) outdoor seating. Once inside a barbecue restaurant, time appeared to have stopped and we were transported back to 2019, save for the employees



"Foreign" districts like Itaewon, usually overflowing on weekends, were totally empty

in masks. In "Korean" Korea, little precaution is taken compared to the diligence exercised when venturing into the likes of Itaewon or Myeongdong. We were packed into a set of grills so close to the neighboring tables I accidentally bumped into fellow diners while simply adjusting my posture. In this enclave of Korean salary men and trendy millennials, we nearly forgot we were in the midst of a pandemic, and clearly every other patron had, too.

After dinner, we decided to see if this was a city-wide phenomenon and went for a second round near Jongno 3-ga, one of the few streets that still host pojangmacha, the street stalls that the government has sought to eradicate since 2012. On the walk from the restaurant to the stalls, there was a prevalent awareness of epidemic etiquette as everyone sported a mask.



The popular Jongno street seemed pandemic-proof

Once we reached a stall, there was a prevalent disregard for precaution as we were seated next to another table of thirsty clientele. Despite the vast breadth of this street littered with tables and stools, we were somehow closer in proximity to the other customers here than in the preceding restaurant. We carried on as we had

pre-Corona, and only disbanded because some of us had our usual adoptee football match the next day. Fields in Seoul have been closed for some time, but outside of the city proper, you simply had to register sub-fever temperatures and write your name on a form, and then you were free to pant and sweat on 21 other people.



This piece should have ended there; juxtaposing the uniform acknowledgement of danger up to the point where you want to have a traditionally-Korean good time in a country growing ever safer. But on Liberation Day, August 15th, a far-right "church" hosted an anti-ruling party protest. The core of the city pulsed with the enraged chants of the 20,000-person crowd. Depressingly similar to the first wave of cases in the late winter, many members of the church refused to comply with government requests that members get tested. As a result, the number of positive cases rose as high as 441 per day in the subsequent weeks, and the Seoul government tightened regulations to prevent clusters from spreading. Such measures included shutting down all indoor sports facilities, closing restaurants at 9:00 PM, moving all schools and academies to online lessons, and reducing the number of late-night buses.

Lockdown-lite seemed to have worked, with the Seoul city government reducing the caution level from 2 to 1 in October. However, there is still a tension throughout the city as we try to get back to business as usual. At least, we remind ourselves here as we look at news from our adoptive countries, it can always be worse.

■ Tom McCarthy



# ADOPTEEBRIDGE

**MINNESOTA**  
United States of America

**Christine Heimann is the founder and president of AdopteeBridge, a not-for-profit organization based in Roseville, Minnesota.**

*When was AdopteeBridge founded?  
What were your goals when you started?*

AdopteeBridge was founded in 2017 as a response to the large number of transracial and transnational adoptees in the United States. We wanted to provide positive post-adoption support services and give adoptees and their families an option outside of an adoption agency to receive support.

*What are you most proud of accomplishing as an organization?*

A great achievement of ours has been when our first tour went to Korea which was a great success.

Local achievements include our mentorship program for youth adoptees and discussion group for adult adoptees. Both programs have been greatly needed for quite some time in the adoptee community.

*What is your personal connection to adoptee groups?  
How did your organization grow?*

Previously, I volunteered and later worked at a large adoption agency in Minnesota. I learned a great deal from my time at this agency and my passion grew for helping adoptees find connections and answers to their adoption stories.

However, I did see the agencies were focused on serving the parents, not the adoptees and the voices of adoptees were being silenced and not respected. Because of this, ethically it was too hard to work there so I left. After much reflection, I decided to found

## INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION



AdopteeBridge to create programs and services for transracial adoptees designed especially to listen to the voices of adoptees, something that has not been done. This is why AdopteeBridge places the adoptee first in all of our programming, with supportive staff, volunteers, and board members who are all adoptees.



### *What does AdopteeBridge do in an average year?*

During the U.S. school year, our organization provides in-person and online group mentorship programs and online discussion groups for youth and tween/teen transracial adoptees. Year-round, we provide a discussion group and retreat for adult adoptees and a separate discussion group for adoptive family members.

Prior to COVID-19, we offered three annual birthland tours to Korea (two in the summer and one in the fall) that are available to adoptees and their family members. We hope to continue these tours in 2021!



### *What kind of services do you provide for your members?*

In addition to the birthland tours to Korea, in-person and online mentorship programs, and discussion groups for adoptees of all ages and adoptive family members, we also offer online language classes, Korean translation services, and educational webinars. In the future, we hope to offer behavioral and mental health services.

Even though Minnesota and the United States have a large number of Korean adoptees, there is also a large number of transnational adoptees. However, they may have less resources than us Korean adoptees do.

AdopteeBridge welcomes all and strives to create a warm and welcoming community because we all share the commonality of being transracial adoptees.

**Learn more at [www.adopteebridge.org](http://www.adopteebridge.org)**

■ Responses by Christine Heimann



# SARAH HALLSTROM

**SARAH HALLSTROM IS AN ADOPTEE FROM THE TWIN CITIES IN MINNESOTA, USA. SHE IS ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR ADOPTEEBRIDGE, WITH A PASSION FOR FACILITATING PERSONAL GROWTH IN HERSELF AND OTHERS.**

*Tell us a bit about your background.*

I am Sarah Hallstrom and my Korean name is Jae Nee Kwon. My adoptive parents were not able to have children of their own so they chose to adopt and adoption from South Korea was popular at the time.

My birth parents were not in a good place in their marriage when I was born so they chose to put me up for adoption and they later got divorced.

*What do you do for fun?*

I like to spend time with family and friends, run, read, travel, and spend time outdoors. I love trying new foods and I will eat pretty much anything.

*What are you doing professionally?*

I work in Human Resources for a pediatric hospital system in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. I got into the field because I wanted to help people find work they are passionate about. I also like helping people improve so they can be successful in their jobs.

*At what age were you adopted?*

*What was your childhood like?*

I was adopted when I was about 4 months old. I grew up as an only child in Minneapolis, Minnesota. My parents both worked out of the home but we always had dinner together, when we would share about our days.

## MEET AN ADOPTEE



### *How did being adopted affect your childhood?*

I grew up in a predominantly Caucasian suburb of Minneapolis so I was one of the few people of color in the school while growing up. I was not bullied because I was Korean American.

### *How connected were you to Korea as a child?*

I was not connected much at all. The local adoption agency my parents went through offered a Korean culture camp during the summer, which I attended for a few years. We always celebrated the anniversary of my arrival to the United States. Those couple of things were about it though.

### *Have you been back to Korea?*

#### *What was your first time back like?*

I traveled back for the first and only time during the summer of 2017. I was there for two weeks and I loved every minute of it. The tour group I traveled with spent time in Seoul, Gyeongju, Daegu, and Busan.

It was the perfect mix of city, country, and beach with delicious food. Everything there felt oddly comfortable and familiar, even though I had not been back since I was adopted. I loved trying all of the foods. I found it surprisingly easy to find my way around without knowing how to read or speak any Korean. I remember being impressed with how clean each city was that we traveled to. It is obvious the people who live there take great pride in their country.

### *When did you start getting involved with the adoptee community as an adult?*

#### *How has it benefited you?*

I became a mentor in an adoptee mentorship program about 10 years ago. I was a mentor for several years to an adoptee from China who was in elementary school at the time. I think it benefited me because I was able to share my experience as an adoptee in a way that helped her navigate certain situations she was encountering. She also became comfortable asking me questions that she did not want to ask of her parents. I am currently a member of the Board of Directors for AdopteeBridge. AdopteeBridge is a non-profit organization based out of St. Paul, Minnesota. They offer education, resources and service to the transnational and transracial adoption community, which is available to everyone regardless of location. They also lead birthland tours back to Korea that offer experiences a person would not have if they traveled on their own, such as visiting a Korean school or childcare facility.

### *How has being adopted affected your professional life?*

I think being adopted has been an asset to me in my professional life. It has allowed me to provide a different perspective when it comes to discussions and decision-making.

### *How has being adopted affected your personal life and relationships?*

It can be difficult for me to trust people at times, specifically in romantic relationships. I have also noticed I struggle more so than others when someone close to me passes away.

### *What are your ambitions and dreams for the future?*

I want to continue to learn and grow in my career. I want to be happy and be fulfilled in all aspects of my life.

### *How does Korea fit in your future plans?*

Korea will always play a role in my future because it is where I am from and I am very proud of that. My adoptive parents and I were supposed to be traveling there with AdopteeBridge this fall but we have decided to delay to fall of 2021 because of COVID-19. I hope it works for us to be able to meet up with my birth mom and some of her extended family while we are there.

■ Responses by Sarah Hallstrom



# NEST

**Nest Korea is a non-profit organization that was established in 2007. Our main goal is to help overseas adoptees adjust to living in Korea. The staff at Nest Korea views each adoptee as a part of our family. We have our doors open to all Korean adoptees, and we are always here to help and support them.**

**Nest Korea provides many services including trips all around Korea, social incubating scholarships, Korean language courses, Let's Go to Korea, and overseas aid. Our hope is to make the world a little brighter and more beautiful through our small gestures. Nest has been able to provide safe, fun, educational, and enlightening activities for Korean adoptees. We hope that we can continue our work in the future, as well as continuously seeing our little family, while meeting new adoptees!**

## 1. TRIPS ALL AROUND KOREA

### July 11-12, 2020 ■ Gunsan Trip

The first trip of 2020 was our historical trip to Gunsan! This was the first time the new staff at Nest met some of the adoptees! We explored a lot of historical sites and enjoyed our time together!

### September 18-19, 2020 ■ Seosan Historical Trip

We had the opportunity to visit Seosan, which is a small city outside of Seoul. During this trip we visited many historical places such as Haemieupseong Fortress, Royal Tombs of Baekje, Jeongnimsa Temple, Busosanseong Fortress, and Goransa Temple. We ate a lot of delicious food while learning about history.

### October 17-18, 2020 ■ Gangwondo Food Trip

During this trip we were able to visit the province Gangwondo, and eat food that is special to the area such as charcoal dalkgalbi, Korean beef sashimi, makguksu, and dried pollack. We were lucky to visit Nami Island, Woljeonsa Temple and the fir tree forest at Odaesan mountain when the fall leaves were changing colors.



### November 21, 2020 ■ Healing Forest Trip

At the end of November, we will be escaping the busy city life to find some peace and breath in fresh air at the Hwadam Botanic Garden. During this trip we will get to ride in a monorail, while admiring the leaves change colors.

## ■ ORGANIZATION IN KOREA

### December 26-27, 2020 ■ Ski Trip

In December we are planning to go skiing!

This is a chance for adoptees to learn how to ski or snowboard. It's also a change for individuals that already know how to ski to experience Korean mountains like the Olympians did during the 2018 Winter Olympics!



### 2. SOCIAL INCUBATING SCHOLARSHIPS

#### Scholarship

We are currently providing scholarships to individuals that want to obtain a certificate to gain more experience in their future job fields.

Nest provided scholarships for game development, coding, TEFL, barista, yoga and other courses. It is our hope that adoptees can get their dream jobs.

### November 7, 2020 ■ Beach Volunteer Trip

This was our chance to give back to Korea by cleaning up the beaches.

During the summertime there was a big typhoon that hit Korea. It left a lot of debris on the east coast beaches. So, we took this opportunity to clean up the beaches so that we, as well as other can enjoy the beaches next summer!

### 3. KOREAN LANGUAGE CLASS

Thanks to our Korean volunteers we are able to provide 1 on 1 Korean classes for adoptees. This is a chance for adoptees to learn Korean so that they can live an easier and more comfortable life here. We provide the classes at a low cost, once or twice a week. Many adoptees have said this has helped them become more confident when speaking Korean, as well as making their lives a little bit easier.

### 4. LET'S GO TO KOREA!

This is a one-of-a-kind program that we provide to overseas adoptees. The first time that you visit Korea can be overwhelming, stressful, and emotional. But we are here to make it a little bit easier! This is a trip to explore Korea with fellow adoptees. It's for individuals whom have never visited Korea before. We set up adoptees with a bunch of fun and educational activities, as well a chance to eat all different types of Korean food!

### 5. OVERSEAS AID



Nest Korea provides overseas aid to developing countries like Peru, Indonesia, Mongolia, Cambodia, Myanmar, Senegal, the Philippines, Marshall Islands, etc. We focus on medical services, educational support and ways to help make the community live more comfortably. We have helped to build a dental clinic. Nest has also provided scholarship support and dressmaking education.



Website [nestkorea.or.kr](http://nestkorea.or.kr)

Instagram [nestkorea](https://www.instagram.com/nestkorea)

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# KOROOT

**KoRoot is a guesthouse for overseas adoptees built with the heart of hospitality. It is a civic group that advocates for the rights and interests of overseas adoptees and seeks a thoughtful perspective regarding the formation and development of adoption discourse in our society.**

**KoRoot (The House of Korean Root) is a non-profit organization founded in 2003. It supports overseas adoptees born in Korea to visit and resettle in their mother country as well as contributing to the advancement of human rights of adopted people. KoRoot aspires to work together with adopted people to raise society's awareness of overseas adoption through active interaction between Korean society and adoptees as well as empower adoptees as they build their identities. Furthermore, we aim to contribute to the establishment of birth family centered child rearing in Korean society in solidarity with adoptees, birth families, and unwed mothers.**



## Our History and Our Achievements

For the past 17 years, more than 4,000 adoptees stayed at the KoRoot Guest House. The guesthouse acted as a community hub for tourists who are visiting their motherland from all over the world.

Here at the guest house, there have been many reunions with birth families.

KoRoot has also played a significant role in advocating for adoptees' rights. KoRoot has represented the adoptee community and worked with overseas adoptees to achieve key milestones. KoRoot worked with TRACK and ASK (adoptee-run organizations) to convince the National Assembly to pass the Amendment to the Act on Special Cases Concerning Adoption.

This amendment moved the overseas adoption process from the private sector to the public sector, which allowed Korean children to obtain the IR-3 visa at the time they were sent to the US for adoption. It also opened the door for human rights protection for adopted children. Under the new system, deportation of adoptees became impossible.

## ORGANIZATION IN KOREA



Last but not least, KoRoot participated in commemorating the “Single Moms’ Day,” along with the overseas adoptees’ community, birth families, and unwed mothers from 2011 to 2019.

It is an unforgettable success in the 17-year history of KoRoot. This “Single Moms’ Day” paved the way for a new discussion in Korean society. Awareness of unwed mothers has changed significantly as a result, and the Korean government finally clarified that “raising a child by his or her family of origin takes priority over adoption.” In line with this perception, the government established Single Parent Day in 2019. KoRoot played a part in driving the Korean society to accept the principle of protecting a family of origin, which is an international standard, as a fundamental value.

KoRoot regards these three achievements as the highlights of its 17-year history and has been deeply grateful to the communities of overseas adoptees, birth families, and unwed mothers.

It has been such an honor for us to work together to create a dynamic transformation in the society.

### Our Services and Major Projects


- **Overseas Adoptees Shelter Project :**  
Operating a special guesthouse for overseas adoptees
- **Motherland Living Support Project :**  
Supporting the needs of overseas adoptees living in Korea or finding their birth families as well as celebrating traditional holidays
- **Human Rights Advocacy Project :**  
Improvement of the system and solidarity activities that advocates the rights of overseas adoptees and birth parents
- **Research Project :**  
Research to improve the perception and institution of overseas adoptions
- **Publishing Project :**  
Publishing for diversification of discourses on overseas adoption.



Website [www.koroot.org](http://www.koroot.org) (Kor) [www.korootgh.com](http://www.korootgh.com) (Eng)

Facebook [www.facebook.com/koroot.ngo](https://www.facebook.com/koroot.ngo)

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*Far from my roots,  
Questioning my origins,  
Whom I resemble...*

*Turning over every stone !*

*Only to discover, at last,  
that I am who I am...*

*Ultimately finding fulfilment  
in my own being,  
And in the gift of conveying myself  
through mine own art...*

## **COVER ARTIST** **KIM DAUPHIN**

I was adopted by a Belgian family when I was 2 years old.  
My Korean name is Kim Eun Ae. I was born in Busan, in the south of Korea.

By returning to my country of origin and performing a birth family search, I found my birth family. From Belgium to Calabria in Southern Italy, Korea remains the main source of my inspiration. A few trips to Asia offered me the serenity and stability so sought after...

I find in my painting a quietude and an inner peace that carry me on a daily basis. I am very grateful for what I received in my life...

■ [www.kimdauphin.com](http://www.kimdauphin.com)

