Music ([00:00:07](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=YHQUHDztus4mjJGIsQvyyP4H-rUrwtRf1D8DWvb_ZdZtWp4Qme0rI0bkggN_jh1DfYEhH_PexCv3_W9g-quRmdF8k80&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=7.55)):

Yay.

Adapted Podcast ([00:00:09](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ZgQptiz3Z0CWh-P_dSyaaIovoxkshH7FG47GHH5DGSi2q7zh19bw2XqjLf-wt159VqFiPxUeQrLLZ2DQl8H7RjjFCn8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=9.5)):

Welcome to adapted podcast. Season five episode 19 starts now

Music ([00:00:19](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ka4jq7hZ7eSJu6_cZ2S88vuzbhZI5CQHFfurZGnKs_g9TXmMbfnW5dN7BHU-exTNqMEV8vJHIxHnYLLLuGTrcGfdqvg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=19.03)):

Feel the here the sun rising from below. I keep running. I keep running to a place where no one knows it's a,

Jenny Town ([00:00:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Y0EyVs7x9fofuDABGYNHAexGiOjjiyEOBPY9KVqyErWSy5cWFu7eZLNv2JSrRsfDWDfuMpyowd5V4wvMMzctHM-z_jM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=29.02)):

I grew up in a small town in Northern Minnesota. That was very white, very closed minded. My brother, this is also Korean, also adopted. We were, I think the only minorities in like a 50 mile radius.

Adapted Podcast ([00:00:44](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=nHMhc-1gdrjZwn5U1PqcMunOUkJMa2Tm91T1uGzYUs59LS-h1bn7B8TXT6TWVoBsgzhNZeg4TH1UwQSNr2CdnQUS6b0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=44.87)):

Hi, there I'm Kami Lee. You're listening to one of the first Korean adoptee podcasts ever created with nearly 120 adoptee interviews. We talk about all things related to the international Korean adoptee experience. Thanks to Jae Jin for our show opening music to find out more, go to Jaejinmusic.com. If perseverance could be embodied in a person, it would be my next guest. Jenny town was adopted at a young age to Northern Minnesota, not happy with her environment. She dreamed of one day returning to Korea. In the next episode, she recalls some of those experiences being one of the first waves of adoptees who returned to Korea. We talk about dating and the notion of parenthood, especially when one is never really experienced that parent child bond. And now here's Jenny.

Speaker 4 ([00:01:41](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=m57JmyLw2jJNZkTS-HP65jxCLz_368-2nd8JYaM1Ua6Len66-UIKHDPga1U1Q6Y-YU_iXFhmml1RPnfO-r1R1FZhZ3M&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=101.28)):

Hi, I'm Jenny town. I am based in Washington DC. I'm happy to join you. Thank you.

Adapted Podcast ([00:01:50](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=XMl9b-BFWUoo8SyS69tKLkwZcnqbNBh_Mlwkm5ODMMf38CjT6PYSi4_rSiS-bsavXd6fv_I7Qw7iSvGtuHyjkGGGsGk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=110.13)):

Okay. And how old are you Jenny?

Speaker 4 ([00:01:53](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=miz3Nc-e0nP-jXEKpCY1O5v2NHIyk3fSc39E7b-c5teRHwl4gOIFOrO18e1B4Lv1ptbgE_YBaDGs54yJvjoosZUB3fg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=113.65)):

I am 46.

Adapted Podcast ([00:01:57](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Fkaz8qYXVvWQG-m4Wur3u5ioHdU2BLlYQnE0_bcjEMruQykyq7BLjC_RBmm4ktNUOSSNcNR5umZ8jDWn34RkUDeBYFk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=117.36)):

Okay. And I think <laugh> <laugh> well I, yeah. And so where do you wanna start your, your story?

Jenny Town ([00:02:06](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=bnC9M_0ilXx9N1Ok_2-j95jh_j8wFxVbk0vLjAdkH5BFAIu4RUeR2oRE6tq7hFvWDxEudFz_lLzdZ_YrHX324lEImgc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=126.11)):

So my origin story, actually, I found out when I was 20 as part of I was living in Korea at the time, going to college at university doing a study abroad program. And while I was there, I was able to do the birth family search. So I always knew I was three when I was adopted. I knew I was from Pusan. And that's about all, I knew everything else was sort of estimated or made up and all that. So I'd made up a lot of fanciful stories. <Laugh> about my origins but was able to follow the trail paper trail which first led me to Korea social services which was the Korean adoption agency that I was brokered through where then we found the records of where, of what orphanage I came from.

Jenny Town ([00:03:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=IB5Fbq2jatd-YJT8gpRsgt5JTAzrSUpw4DqM0GiSdfFKIHDip19AYKRCvNZSCdnMPqlQrK4l7rNMtGJedkI6oDnsTT8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=183.46)):

And so it was a small orphanage out on the outskirts of Pusan. My first Korean adoptee boyfriend who I met in Korea who was Swiss Korean adoptee happened to be from the same orphanage just at an earlier time. And so one time he was going to visit his mother. He had met his mother several years before that and offered to take me with him. And he and his mother took me to the orphanage. So I found I had a very distant picture in my head that I always thought I'd seen on TV or something. But it was always kind of lingering there and it turns out it, it was actually the orphanage you know, being there. It was exactly how I remembered it. And I've, I felt, you know, very oriented <laugh> there.

Jenny Town ([00:04:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Vy99r4TpPE6UB_hoZx8v3L2jj_hBcLnkfHXBOm-LTnye2aAUQrX5txV05D33WUgru1_xDOQuZeg0r7t2HwhQx13hyhk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=244.53)):

It felt very natural to be there. But we were able then to find the, the intake records I think I was the only girl that day. Actually, there were two girls that day, but it was very distinct, which one was me <laugh> and then when the, cause the picture was from right before I left the orphanage, not obviously when I first got there and then we were able to find the police report of how I made it to the orphanage and go to the police station, check out the records. And then it had the actual story of I was my mother was young, presumably unmarried. She was in labor when she went into an obstetrics clinic, they admitted her immediately. The doctor after she delivered me, went to another patient who was in labor. And by the time she came back to check on my mother, my mother was gone and had left me there.

Jenny Town ([00:05:06](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=SfFIyunOsmt8Vpu04fRhni0Yoi7Bq4ZSgA1jrdaWolYaI147yAY43_2TWYlmHf8lsu2kf2s-dZSMgI-7XmdZqJXVdSM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=306.4)):

So then the doctor, you know, turned me over to the police. The police gave me to the city, the city gave me to the orphanage. Cuz back in those days, if you, if I had had parental information, they would've sent me directly to an an adoption agency. But since I didn't have parental information then they sent me to the orphanage. And so this was all part of a documentary that was done at the time. So the documentary crew that was with me of course, is calling the clinic. It still exists or at the time it still existed. And the doctor who delivered me then own the clinic. So we were able to go there. And I met her and you know, it's one of those things where, you know, you hear so many lies along the way when you're doing birth family searches of people discouraging you from, from from searching more.

Jenny Town ([00:06:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=hbHElzqVLI5KOxOjIJ71LcwtWwU9m3TDsdXMG-UzvA4LuDiojcMmJHJB18488YPtpWqRkeWdMs3sRtZLQLjwLL8Xm88&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=364.18)):

And so there's always questions of like how much of this is true and, you know, meeting the doctor, the idea that they would admit a patient and not have any information on her seemed unbelievable. But when I was able to talk to her <laugh> she did say it was the only time it happened in her clinic. So it was a very distinct story if my mother was ever looking for me. But she also said that it was the only patient who never paid her bill because they didn't know where to send the bill to, which is the only reason why I really believe her. But I did, I do remember being on film, telling her, well, don't send it to me. I won't pay it either. <Laugh> so in my head I was like, oh no, is she gonna now bill me for my own birth, that would be wild with interest.

Jenny Town ([00:06:57](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=CBahUjEHou-VulAXa1sJHi98bKtYA551-aqXAEADEyZOo7PPKgM4MpyfGaDg2088XhR74B48QCEvWe0fluLXR1X1rAE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=417.089)):

Right? And so at that point you know, I think there's something very validating about finding someone who witnessed your birth when you spent, you know, your whole life feeling made up, like everything was made up. So it was a, it was a big turning point in my life. So you know, it was, you know, finding out those, the particulars of that story. It helped me kind of fill in a lot of holes of like, you know, knowing more about what the social climate was like at that time. And I think it was a, a way for me to find some reconciliation with both myself and I'd always had a very I think, you know, before that I was always a little, I was always very angry at the situation and at her and you know, the whole idea of like, how could someone do this? And then the idea of, you know, finding out more of the details that it started to make a lot more sense than to me,

Adapted Podcast ([00:08:07](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=UTeoNcsjG7YqjYEEwJIT1m8yWfF9tKPLBZkwkcf7xH7CCkgY77Ouz3LqIf8TpYZUuUreORSyIF5md0L68pNDsNOsPwk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=487.91)):

Do you know was the clinic required to register your birth?

Jenny Town ([00:08:14](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ZAD6wML2NGRU45mHh0a-Pty2SXKqckLJjNuv3QjaSSQzq2BVvN6PzVO12dnMUYmlfnZJQxGbsDO4_C-Cd8KBfxOfaZ4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=494.15)):

So the way that Korean law works is no, they're not the clinic's the hospitals, it's not their responsibility, it's the parents' responsibility to go and register birth. And that's, you know, one of the loopholes in south Korea's in their adoption system now, because a lot of times adoptions that did happen, especially within families were not legal adoptions. It was just instead of registering, you know, their parents registering the child you know, they would just have someone else register the child. So there was no real records of, you know, that kind of domestic adoption.

Adapted Podcast ([00:08:56](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=zPD1YfhmSfxCkv8EvAKkQvnrHSHmissAOohQ0gs4E5Asyp0SFNLj3dBlYlMIV4CPoc25sItWvzfHK09ziDHCd2vaj54&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=536.9)):

And so were you and your, your adoptive family, you were told a different story by the agency?

Jenny Town ([00:09:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Hk-F0NNURn8rdsS4uHG3ylA89SobsSDY4KNIJdtT_m1IcUsgE64YYqirq-66EHroOxL6ps95NA-bD0YPeKjLJ7wo8Uo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=543.7)):

We were told no, nothing. You know, the, the agency in those records basically only had from the time that I was at the adoption agency. So I actually ended up growing up then at the orphanage from birth until I was three and then transferred over to the agency. And then I was in the agency for like eight months or something before I was adopted.

Adapted Podcast ([00:09:30](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=A5thmpNkTuQIvvfc-tZy3jq742WRJ_Ew8JsX5ui1bmgOJMBhGvGCExrZv1b0o5QSVD9w5iyca-HvMDifBvcdjGBHNXU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=570.25)):

You said it was kind of, it was satisfying to meet someone who had the person who had, had she birthed you, the, the owner. Yeah,

Jenny Town ([00:09:39](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=GcnaMhCxRmmyT6UFbWAGk4aOddwQdnk-DidC7rKRx8dwosaE1hj1SCoMrGWyP9VPpCUyC8E_p_JCzYPqRqus38mREI0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=579.85)):

Yeah.

Adapted Podcast ([00:09:40](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=yTLBiRXKfZsjf2l5rIzqnOjLi6Ww6OMtt1_SoUOI2h49gyBmRoD3ta9R_0vHbTddyG_IDHWmfWnbz6iqLMx5lBv9D2U&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=580.6)):

Wow. Yeah. To go from, you know, your whole life up until that point, not knowing anything really. And then to have, you know, people kind of crystallize that knew you before, you know how did it feel going back and retracing your steps and,

Jenny Town ([00:09:59](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=YJ0Y6RFYVwFPJVKqt5-yQaGphDf8LhEBbLAaWlrYyN1Bld5BHjk7n_Jmka2mGJYopmvy8M2KKkgGx7x2a1JVXfwpU5w&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=599.04)):

Yeah. When I went to Korea I did not intend to search it. Wasn't the point of going to Korea? I really just wanted to go to Korea. And I had, you know, I grew up relatively poor in a rural area in Northern Minnesota where people didn't know where Korea was <laugh> other than, you know, the Korean war and, and watching mash which my parents watched every night growing up. And so when I was there, you know, there, there's sort of a, a funny story that goes with this or an odd story that goes with all of this is and it goes back to when I was 13. I remember distinctly I was, there was a traveling exhibit at the local museum of these two Chinese guys that were going around teaching Chinese teaching about Chinese calligraphy and as part of the CLA it was a class.

Jenny Town ([00:10:58](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=nFMxKBZ3CRWfScBXLOE9c1K6uh3bH6pRxYwb5hfH9kDnV4IW6C4NqfnujA4oY7uYlLnc9URZGE2cfNGO_kWBNC85Cs4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=658.929)):

Then, you know, they, they gave us this long boring slideshow, and then they had us actually practice. So they, they started everyone out on a specific character and easy character. And then based on how you did, they would go around and assign you a different character. And so I remember they assigned me pair blossom and some, and so like, obviously I didn't think of anything of it at the time other than these were like the first Asian adult men I had ever met <laugh>. And so I felt a little weird about it. And I remember when my mother came to pick me up she was talking to them and then when we were leaving, he shook my hand and he held it a little too long. It was all very creepy to me. And but it really stuck in my head and starting then I had this weird dream that it always felt like a college campus.

Jenny Town ([00:11:59](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=94VcpPrKCk9sSQefwcrKvVtwPBBGDAGhJ0926M9ScRUte2Qo4I8fVUwQ9ARzt_yn20jVL4wQL12BhoxAYkqPIKnUqp4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=719.14)):

And it was daylight when we were leaving it and it was basically a big gate. And then later on, we came back and the gate was closed. And so it'd be dark out. And my friends who I was with we knew we had to get back inside. And so you had like this huge iron door that was closed. But next to it was just a rod iron fence. And so we would go and start to, you know, jump over the fence and get back inside to wherever we needed to go. And I did this, I had this dream, it was a recurring dream, probably three nights a week until I went to Korea. And when I was in Korea the EY program at that time was new and, or not new, but relatively new. It wasn't well known.

Jenny Town ([00:12:55](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=DAEdQmiGBGMzuuFodtRfh9kWEv8eyQJ7B8wy4TZdIAmyStMHnuLrLnZO3XOnCl2UJN68sQ4OvxQNUbNPHywaww0XoCg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=775.2)):

Most people would go to like the Yonsei university international program. And they didn't know that the Ewha international program was actually co-ed. So you had a campus of like 30,000 women and like two boys in this international program who always were really amused for the first week. And then they realized they're living with like 30,000 women and that really drives them nuts. So <laugh> we all got to be really close. And the first weekend I was there we had a curfew we had a curfew every night of 11 o'clock. And the first weekend I was there, one of the boys who had stayed over from the summer program was teaching us how to break curfew. <Laugh> I'm gonna get you what in trouble now? And so the way Ewha is set up and the back gate is a 10 foot concrete wall.

Jenny Town ([00:13:49](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=hCJuzd1gYPUQjFaaeyjADa7eDpaAuePEXhFLOX5cWZvkQTHKFrFKKoKrVT2HeMdzJVyAZG4Aepid3AbXIL-UdfgqE34&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=829.16)):

The front gate is an old style iron door, gate door and a rod fence. And so we would leave during, you know, the afternoon evening, we'd go out, we'd come back somewhere around two in the morning. The guards in the guards den would be asleep. The gate would be closed. And then we would jump over the fence to get in. And I remember doing that and about halfway through the first time I did it, I was like, holy crap, I've done this before. <Laugh> like, I've been doing this for like seven years. You know, it was pretty nuts. And like a lot of other, just sort of things happened where when I was in Korea, to me, it, and being on Ewha campus and stuff, everything was very familiar, very, it felt very home. And I had no idea why, you know, this was before the internet.

Jenny Town ([00:14:52](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=qQZwWT-qCIhyh3AmQtaDCqDpZCZTonp3A5kVGUz3JXiFs3cq8ZvD8Wr77b-ot3dr3euvPkdq2giB_O1mhwuM638uf5U&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=892.27)):

It's not like I, I hadn't seen pictures of Ewha campus. But I had dreams about it before I went and like, to the point where I knew where my dorm was. And I knew how to get there from like the back gate and everything, even before I was there. So when we were driving there, I was like, wow, <laugh>, this is all very familiar. And then when I went to do the search, each leg of the search was documented because, you know, back in those days, it was there, there were a lot of impediments to searching. And so the easiest way to access records was to have media with you cuz nobody wants bad press.

Adapted Podcast ([00:15:35](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=6vNDfKOYKRQ9AofwWK86xDKGZSG4KQW0ghX1juiYICgV75iM6QhcXRDlN-e7rjDBF3s90TcHxePu9UG0qENI2N17wFY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=935.85)):

This was in the, this was in the nineties, in the

Jenny Town ([00:15:38](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ZzuZcCBSRN7j6Nv0xBG2Ghhpq6W57HcMFP-IwuiyBnCj1Mn-62Ilg0k7v8xCxcTB1mNO3MNjamL_QWTwYGZ4WRF7VgM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=938.14)):

Nineties, yeah. In the mid nineties. And so as we went along and, and this is all being documented what I started to realize was, yeah, the clinic where I was born in Pusan was also named Ewha obstetrics clinic. And the doctor who delivered me was Ewha graduate, one of, one of like their first graduates of their medical program. So there was all these Ewha connections, which I thought were really bizarre at first. And then somewhere along the line, it hit me that the character for Ewha is pear blossom <laugh>. And so like everything had sort of been pushing me in that direction throughout that, throughout my childhood to sort of be there at that time. You know, there were a lot of signs along the way. And you know, in those years too, there were a lot of encounters that were really hard to explain and a lot of connections that were really hard to explain, but all sort of pushed me in a certain direction to get somewhere quick, quickly <laugh> and it all stopped after that, you know, that's, the other thing is, you know, I didn't really have those kinds of signs or encounters. After, after the story, after I found out the story,

Adapted Podcast ([00:17:26](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=J4WZHz9axZPhB8hpgzC1wjRrdMzbX9wNT5i96jN0-bguxlJjDC-1PRIjeyaMqrlf13Yr2qVkuMFal7MEnLLWGZu7HI0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1046.71)):

It's almost as if, as it was, it was whatever forces or these dreams were getting you to create or telling you, you needed to go. And yeah, there was something that was gonna happen there for you. So how, and, and, and how did that time? Yeah. And how does, you know, you grow up, maybe I'm, I'm assuming kind of isolated in Northern Minnesota in the seventies and eighties. Yeah. How does, how does one make it to Ewha?

Jenny Town ([00:17:56](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=_mWYpmr43ue30zJN8fawRFWxK_BazWULwBHbY3TvLG9nrx7sr4Xavy548hUw0vixavZrYxN1vkEpIazKqU707lIptxM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1076.74)):

It takes a lot of effort <laugh> that's for sure. You know, yeah. Like pre-internet before international travel was really that popular and that easy you know, for me growing up, I was adopted when I was three, so I always knew I was Korean. I always knew these weren't really my parents. Like I wasn't really from here. And I was young enough where I didn't remember anything bad in Korea either. So I had very, very few memories of Korea itself. So I was in that age of awareness and you know, really questioned the whole process along the way, right? Like how did I end up here of, of all places? You know, I grew up in a small town in Northern Minnesota that was very white very closed minded. You know, there's my brother, this is also Korean, also adopted.

Jenny Town ([00:19:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=BQea6R0PcITBWwtFa2ec0WcTtEWvViYupFWkC5ro7TSjSbgszPth0yfEDMOlHT-NTOs86XxecAYiDj89-KdupDmvuLA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1144.98)):

We were, I think the only minorities in like a 50 mile radius, I except at some point there were, there was another Korean adoptee and there had been two other Korean adoptees before that cause it's Minnesota. And you know, there's so many adoptees in Minnesota. But it was hard. It was when you grow up, because one thing, if you grow up in an immigrant family, for instance, in an all white community where you have at least a certain recognition and understanding when you go home, that things are hard. When you're adopted, you don't have that right when your parents are white and they don't understand what is racist, what isn't racist and, and how it all fits together. Knowing I was Korean. I always wanted to know more about Korea and I always knew the world was bigger than this small town in Northern Minnesota.

Jenny Town ([00:20:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=UGv3oZcPy0xIJU91M1ZkDdMnVBRXb0F2buAKDtiA55yzOLMJHsPkYm1WhS8trpTPY4SuQoxZtMsgxBA-czFXvyte27A&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1203.57)):

I also knew like no one else was gonna help me get out <laugh> so if I was gonna do it, I had to do it, you know, on my own. And, and I had to be very focused about it cuz it's just so easy to, to get lost and get stuck. And so, you know, I did as much self-study as I could about Korea. And I also knew if I was gonna get out, like I needed to go to college, I needed to get out of this small town. So I ended up, I was a model student mainly because I had a plan and I knew how to, how to execute. So I was straight A's and I was, I did all the extracurriculars to look good on college applications and try and get scholarships and stuff. So I was a first chair flute and at one point varsity volleyball and I did knowledge poll.

Jenny Town ([00:21:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=bn9e6ODFFe-LvcvGKLqcMoQzQ0D8jQRDx4O3hDGW9cgFOSQHMcCqS7E3HI4xakiQKi448J3GPTXLr5RHGEhsONrl2pg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1262.88)):

I, I was state speech champion one year. I did speech throughout high school. So I was the biggest nerd <laugh> and and I worked two jobs on the side cuz I, you know, I basically started earning money for myself when I was 13 doing any odd jobs I could and then eventually, you know, working retail in, in the local community to try and save up. So like when I went to college, I paid for, you know, it myself through loans and, and through my own earnings based on readings I had done I'd really wanted to go to the university of Chicago and then I had a backup plan <laugh> and there was a small university in Iowa that in the nineties was affiliated through a Japanese educational consortium. So they had a real east Asia focus, which was less common at that time, uncommon at that time.

Jenny Town ([00:22:06](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=LQy9Ug4FXzXE9Vg8iKXXW-GySopQDi0H7rQefGgcZsymZZIpHVbcLIXn0hFijh0MK0_8jUBXAZ5asNrcz8kmr74_n0s&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1326.58)):

And and so I, I got into university of Chicago but I didn't get the scholarships that I wanted or needed. And then I got into the Southern university in Iowa and they also had an exchange program with the ol wounds university in Saul. And so I was, they were also excited cuz they're like, you'd be the first person to go on this exchange program. Which I was happy to do, but yeah, like back in those days buying one way tickets, it was my first time having a passport. It was my first time on a plane from, from when I came to <laugh> America. <Laugh> was when I was 19 and going to China for two weeks and then going to Korea for a year, no backup plans, no return tickets. <Laugh> just two suitcases. And you know, I, I, I just gotten my passport before we left and then I had to get a visa. I had to get the visas too. And so everything came through about three days before I was leaving. <Laugh>

Adapted Podcast ([00:23:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=KOn2GpKsF2Q7ZQCI3HDlQsoSDCYoCPfKldpRtcjxYL2FwyWCyAvDbAM4--DsG4PURtKotyW65ISTZFKSSipPu79JiqA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1392.4)):

What can you tell us what was so like in the nineties and were you one of the few adoptees there at the time?

Jenny Town ([00:23:19](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=V2l66df8XMRmN0ih5jHb1uNIkAQYaM58Y1CZcdUjLQj70iM6OcGoqjvxI1SMtWq4xqx7ucAaQRB7WNIFn8liEM8TqR4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1399.83)):

Yeah, so I was sort of, of that first or second wave of adoptees going back. Soul was a lot, it was culturally different and it was, I mean it was different now. It's just kind of more of everything. But also, you know, culturally it's, it's really evolved a lot as well. Like back in those days there was higher anti-Americanism people didn't speak even if they knew how to speak English and everyone studied at least a little bit of English. But there was less willingness to use it and, you know, high intimidation, if you were a native English speaker which was, which really forced me to learn Korean, cuz when I went to Korea, I'll tell you, I taught myself enough to like I knew the alphabet so I could sound things out and I could, you know, name a bunch of fruits and vegetables, which isn't very useful.

Jenny Town ([00:24:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=WpxvuBfqmnBn4pW70FcP5rCw_R8ew0NRpGUK_JMr3BfTwC1RrVlTisPVGqphc3ttiLcwDjsNYoas1bvMEwgsA0jUaek&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1469.76)):

And I knew, you know, one of two number systems, the, the one that everyone knows the hana du sett, I didn't even know there was a second number system <laugh> but of course it's, you know, the one everyone learns is the least useful one. Cuz it's used to count stuff, but it's not used for like money. So, you know, I'd go shopping and they would speak to me and I would just sort of hand them money and hope it was enough and hope they would give me the right change, which they, which I think they did <laugh> but yeah, I knew enough to say like, hello, thank you, goodbye. My name is Jenny, which doesn't get you out of the airport. And so it was funny cuz I was learning Korean at Ewha at the time. And I remember the first day of class going in and the, the professor looking back on it now I can tell you, she was talking about the proper usage of articles like unknown or, or, and I knew, hello, thank you, goodbye.

Jenny Town ([00:25:30](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Dxut91fNxZueh2jGZDBpXr0gX_yVzzjarfG8Z1gC0x_pmrSiM6PqNZCLP1-KHlJCPBUiSnIbAbnKoW4-9EsEQH5Xx8U&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1530.77)):

My name is Jenny <laugh>. And so at some point she's like standing in front of me talking to me very concerned face and I have no idea what's going on the girl next to me kind of nudges me. And she was like, she just asked if you understand anything. And I was like clearly not <laugh> but she refused to speak English to me. So, you know, the class was taught in Korean. It was a lot of grammar taught in Korean. And she and I had sort of a, a will a P like a battle of wills going on for about the first month or so. And then, you know, being immersed, being so fully immersed in the language I did start to learn and I learned pretty quickly, at least the basics. And I remember by, by time finals came, there was oral finals.

Jenny Town ([00:26:30](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=YFpyem4XAzdhrN615p1MaOs8LbDXOAQfQr5cqMORL_lQfoQkWLaRashui59fUw-xbWaChvOTDECWHuORXDE8wOj-O1s&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1590.98)):

So she's asking me basic questions and I'm giving her basic answers. We're having like a, you know, a pretty conversational Korean conversation and <laugh>, she starts to cry and she's like, oh Jenny, I remember your first day. You didn't know anything. And look at you now you're speaking Korean. She's like, I'm such a good teacher. <Laugh> and I was like, yes, yes, of course. You know, you take all the credit, it's fine. As long as I get my a but she, she, the next semester she explained to me, she was like before me they only have three levels, beginner, intermediate advanced. And so since I passed beginner, I should go to intermediate. But she explained, she was like, but we'd never had a real beginner before <laugh> cuz most of 'em were like KPOs who, you know, spoke Korean, but didn't know grammar.

Jenny Town ([00:27:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Dv1eUCpQWC0potyu1quh0xVBEFVExtBSGHCCZ_Ue1xSK-yqAVve6IySfOgaxtdkg8r_tvQJI6Djl9y6dfTYlgii1rkA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1649.56)):

And so that was sort of the, the baseline that they had been working with before. Whereas because of me then they created a beginner, a for actual beginners taught in English and then a beginner B, which would then be basically basic grammar taught in Korean. And so she asked me to stay in that class in the beginner B just because I had started out from nothing and which I was happy to do, that was fine. And then the KPOs would come in and the Korean Americans would come in and again, they didn't know what she was talking about. She had explained something, they'd all look very confused and she'd look at me and then I would explain it to them. And then she would beam of like what a great teacher she was. She was fabulous, but yeah, it was a different time.

Jenny Town ([00:28:18](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ot8Tv0kWfW2YjzpQXYrKvgbdneSaoPtHHXnqxjHdhS1ZCWVBdJhLM9B_SrHiD7z7taWDzRUYCQTEQa39Hvi7nDcHFyk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1698.93)):

And especially for adoptees, there was a lot more stigma and a lot more shame to the situation. Like if you, you know, for people to find out you were adopted it was always very much like I'm sorry, and either quickly changed the subject or, or really express all of this guilt. Or <laugh> the other thing was like, if you're taking a taxi and the taxi drivers love to chat all the time you know, one of the first phrases I learned how to say was, you know, I'm not Korean American because if you get into the taxi and they say and you don't speak Korean, they'll yell at you for a while of like, didn't your parents teach you anything, blah, blah, blah. So I learned how to say, I'm not Korean American, I'm Korean adoptee, and I've only been studying Korean for this long in Korean.

Jenny Town ([00:29:17](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ZtYJQJtnzNH0qAMd6OtGyiUQIMnYCtpuRAzgeC1Cf5_4nc5WcidMsEz96MpxR-WcCNtzLJK6oUT532AkGrEL8dxnfL8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1757.22)):

And so they would very quickly be like, oh, your Korean is so good. You know, and I have a son around your age and blah, blah, blah. But yeah, there's, there's definitely you know, you get a pass where not knowing the Korean stuff, like the traditions and holidays and all the, what you're supposed to do. But there's still the stigma of being adoptee, like not having family. And like I remember the first Korean American guy that I dated in Korea. We had been dating for not that long, like maybe three months and his parents moved back to Korea and he moved back in with his parents when they moved back to Korea. And I remember one time I called and his mother answered the phone. And so I was, so she had lived in America for 30 years. I knew she spoke English.

Jenny Town ([00:30:20](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=GPYmmWe8q0mxE0nb2m8KwaIBQkfdz1_qQxh9BC1fqVMuKBwsNa8narcQIXJXiZBwn4EfISNHiXNyqeC1UooR-r0uymo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1820.93)):

I was trying to speak Korean to her cuz she was speaking Korean to me. And at some point I sort of understood that I, I was like, you know, 10, 10 to say, like please speak slower. And when I said that, then she started speaking faster and and basically saying not nice things. So I hung up on her and I remember afterwards my boyfriend kept telling me like, oh yeah, you know, sorry, I can't do something tonight. My mother set me up on a blind date and I have to go and blah, blah, blah, cuz you know that she wanted to set 'em up with some good Korean girls <laugh> but you know, when you go to Korea now I, I think, you know, those first waves were so visible. We were before they were organized, you know, there were so many people who were going, who were searching, doing the birth family search.

Jenny Town ([00:31:19](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=B4YiDymeiAyG_Mfm-JKvL6Gma6tYoPkoOeKKUj6scPQEH3qSIX4qPJT0jHscISWWblm88ZhMGIQ3hKS4keLAf-vtEqM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1879.98)):

And again, we had to use the media a lot because we had no rights because we had no access that people started getting comfortable talking about adoption. And I remember the next time I went to Korea was maybe 10 years later. And I was talking to the taxi driver and I, again, I told the story of like, oh, I'm not Korean American, I'm a Korean adoptee. And then he started telling me, oh yeah, you know, like I have an aunt who gave up a child and we never knew what happened to her and stuff. And so like now when you talk about adoption, everyone knows someone who's connected who has some part of that story, whether it's a family member or friend or they've met adoptees and stuff, it's much more normal. <Laugh> one time I met a taxi driver, we were on a really long drive.

Jenny Town ([00:32:15](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=9Sc6M8cVwpPnhTdBRA9LuV6lz9HICeYH9wzqbZUKt2pw1mj1k2mm4W2he5txCnmACNqaOVdCIgmULtrmiHbFpTcBchw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1935.81)):

This was just probably about five years ago from the national assembly building up to Korea university. And I was going there. I was speaking at a goal conference. I forget about what, but like my Korean now my conversational Korean is okay for about 20 minutes. And then I run out of vocabulary <laugh> and so we had had that sort of obligatory minute talk and it was a really long drive and we still had about another half hour to go. And he asked me in Korean, like do you know, goal? And so I was, I was so confused for this taxi driver to ask me if I knew goal. And so I was trying to figure out if goal was a Korean word and if it meant something else. And so I, I didn't know how to answer. And then he asked me in English, do you know this organization called goal in turns out he speaks perfect English.

Jenny Town ([00:33:13](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Ff8Tt5t4lFbXKE-0rUwLs73W0juHexrKEv1FUk-27a7oMGWiCip7iVus39pcJEGADViYXOyMstI12XvyiwqhMo254cE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1993.33)):

And I was like, bastard, you know, <laugh>, you'll put me through all of that. And I was like, but how do you know about gold? And so he, so he was he told me that so this man was in his sixties. He said during the Korean war, his father was killed during the war. And so his mother was raising him, but couldn't afford to. So she had actually put him in an orphanage and then six years later came back and got him. So by then she had gotten remarried and gotten settled and, and, you know, could afford to have him back. And so he was never adopted, but he had grown up in the orphanage for like six years. And so he'd always felt, you know, connected to adoptees and orphans. And so had then done, used to do a lot of volunteer work and stuff with adoptees and orphanages and had learned about GU through that way. And it was really an interesting experience, but yeah, like now people talk about it very openly. There's still, I think some shame to it, but some guilt to it. But it doesn't have this stigma that it used to.

Adapted Podcast ([00:34:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=iV2NdRQBab0s2GDpnVGMsaYAiIQ6F0HJ8Lq3SUMQH8OdHLv1VRENZZJA10M7AWNG8ROtARzoCR1-4HWTJiMOzmz84Fo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2069.52)):

How did you deal with that going, you know, as a, you know, really in your young twenties, right? Being there and faced with all of a sudden who you are kind of carried all this shame with it.

Jenny Town ([00:34:43](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=N5Q7rg1vOApiTd7OOUQ0DHwq8ox7aXmmNyCz7eXx4VUuLM0MG3xhyiBs49EQAMZRChfMtUV6qtWGCtZ35cEM-lxExT8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2083.45)):

I think at the time I expected it so it didn't come as a big surprise to me. And I had met through our circles some other Korean adoptees. So I had Korean adoptee friends already, I think, before really fully absorbing it. But I, I, I think I knew that this was a big taboo. And so when that came, like I was, I was mentally prepared for it. I think I would've been more surprised if people had been like super helpful and, and super nice about it. And I think for myself, I also felt, I guess I felt it was appropriate, right. Like I, I wasn't, you know, the right stock <laugh> being, you know, being adopted, being the orphan and especially then after learning, you know, my origin story I think I was pretty accepting of that. It was a different time and a different era.

Adapted Podcast ([00:35:59](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=lG-iwT4Zs-W-4CO5qQt7M4hFfCFMKtbGRhn8TLZ6umnzK3clBj-QD6airQkoNZLsfyMJlijA15xNvjLbPBqlw6uR5dk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2159.13)):

Did you feel like you were maybe defective in a way, I mean, especially, like you said, maybe you weren't Korean enough in some circumstances.

Jenny Town ([00:36:11](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=AV30ruaBloY7fywrgvh2quQmLGbeeCSVQW2ZrPO9-O9eIvVad2IuRY_74RfGEh3IXuDP-aX7VvE4nAS0MMoJysnJMZs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2171.1)):

Yeah. I mean, I, we're always, I was always just, you know, on the outskirts of everything anyway. And I think at that point I was just used to being the outsider. And you know, I didn't go into Korea expecting that I was gonna blend <laugh>, especially, I'll tell you my first week at UA cuz it's the women's college and it's prestigious and you know, I, I didn't realize how, what that meant in Korean society. So I went with my college student gear of all jeans and sweatshirts and sneakers and coming from Minnesota, like I didn't blow dry my hair. I didn't wear a lot of makeup. I was pretty tomboy for the most part <laugh> so going to <inaudible> I was like, my, my roommate was actually Korean, Korean, and she you know, she would get up two hours early and do her hair and makeup in the morning before she went to class.

Jenny Town ([00:37:13](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=lHF_cCEUmDbjtOBFFlYGnNAjYLYwxOtvQqqxWxKGgKaKs2dP7NHaokKWE_bXkIhC2M3f9zkTys-zfCk1Eb7sGAIwKI0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2233.61)):

And I was like, but it's class, no, one's gonna see you. And this is a women's college. Like literally no one's gonna see you <laugh> it just felt like so much effort. But by the time I left Korea, like I was, I was in it, I, I had bought a whole bunch of dresses and high heels and I wear heels all the time and, and that really stuck with me too. Like I still wear like four heels all the time. And then yeah, like learn to like blow dry my hair style myself <laugh> so yeah, I think it was, there was a lot of like adaptation there and just kind of finding myself and learning to be okay with who I was becoming. But at the same time, I also went through like a midlife crisis at 19 at 20 because you know, my whole dream growing up was to go to Korea and I thought it was so difficult.

Jenny Town ([00:38:21](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=4qpMFSc-hHcMPacnXqhi_ZwJ_0aPS03_BK6g8APDKYfcRMuAJ6dko4bm9fqL2HhxTSbA-rn8cJLKycIWWdCcoGLbhM0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2301.53)):

Like I thought I would, you know, I, I wasn't sure I would ever make it so to do it at 20 <laugh> I did like rethink my whole entire purpose in life. Right. Like I was, I was, so I had such a clear vision before that, and then yeah, accomplishing it at 20 was like, well now what do I do? <Laugh> and you know, like who, who am I? Who am I now? And how is that gonna turn out? But yeah, there, so there was a lot of that more so than, you know, what do the Koreans think of me?

Adapted Podcast ([00:39:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=oMiTqg5r-0urVEW4sqDah6ISgN0LET-68-9VA_voScBaSHgv30jnftxDsJsdRKzANhzih3HSpv8bdH5X_ZhJhyLv3kU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2342.77)):

So one of the things I wanna talk to you cause you mentioned the dating what was it like to go to Korea and suddenly, you know, have all these Korean romantic partners available, you know, or Korean adoptee, I mean, was that just mind blowing?

Jenny Town ([00:39:21](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=vPobOrtS9JHuUgF6y94ooOgK8QSf1W7Y5kDTqaNiHfoCKvIFiOKnDPqIk-9RfF9irxvLf5Zo4AGfPzLQAN3b9AQSiuY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2361.61)):

Yeah. <laugh> it was, it was it was very, you know, it, it's the one thing when you go from being the minority into the majority, there there's a real empowerment in that. And you know, being adopted, there's so many unique kind of subculture experiences that, you know, Korean Americans don't go through Korean Koreans don't understand that it is also a truly powerful connection. Especially when it's new, when you're new to the community, new to awareness there's a lot of attraction in that, you know, being in spaces where you don't have to explain yourself you can just exist and people get it and, and they get, you know, the things you wanna talk about, the things you don't wanna talk about or things that you, you have to come to on your own. But yeah, there was a lot of really attractive <laugh> Korean men around. And it was, it was a fun, fun time. I had a great time in Korea <laugh> but it was, you know, there, there was always those differences and cultural differences dating Korean men versus Korean American men versus Korean adoptee men. And and especially Korean Americans, whether they, whether they're more American or more Korean or if they're also kind of straddling those lines as well they all bring up different issues in, in trying to connect and trying to, to understand each other

Adapted Podcast ([00:41:20](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=0RMqVtFU8Ltfw1IHQwauDOcmN6foJtZ5F56CY8bpW16tgcBDfxunvdeMyzSPAAgmDPaCy_1lLydVmmCocUcyStVPyJA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2480.2)):

You've dated like a range, like in Korea, there were Korean Koreans. Okay. And KPOs and adoptees. Okay. Yeah. Wow. Okay. I would love to hear your perspective on that. Like the, I mean, it's, it had to have been so fascinating actually.

Jenny Town ([00:41:39](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=1cqy7NuRN8N6uErYnT2N6QzVjkt6Ei7ww274PXil2HIdPoYev8Mh-6xWvZ0lYvEQuVCB2lZhkVcFuQHmMpotrK5XWW0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2499.62)):

It was, you know, it was and, and frustrating. I, I think for me, the, the most frustrating were Korean Americans because, you know, for Korean Koreans, you sort of understand the cultural nuances to it and why they think certain ways. And and, and that there are just cultural differences, right? With Korean Americans, it was always fascinating to see which of those cultural values they hung onto and which they chose to discard or which ones they would, you know, pick and choose depending on what benefited them the most <laugh>. So they were much harder often to, to date because it felt like they always chose the wrong ones, staying onto <laugh>. You know, this idea of like this Korean American guy that moved back in with his parents and then was very worried about, you know, what his parents would think about stuff and was still going on these, you know, dates, even though he had a girlfriend <laugh> things like that. It was really frustrating.

Adapted Podcast ([00:43:01](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=uMblk8p1bK9lKhhL1uyiwQTNk_c04hPJrx5DpWPJUH47RJu3O8Ux6KqrDHewIdZXqMRXbz9Hw62mQkh_tK2RA5X47zI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2581.691)):

Well, a lot of the Korean immigrants came in like the seventies and right. And their, and that was from they're very conservative at that time. Right. And so, and

Jenny Town ([00:43:11](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=jhZsbBpXcQcQMmsqWqMDlusWIOAykrFs5SdLg-wRck_bHzaTc_u4ZE3WfwTLEPAJt1dHbPlbrpX1JaHT42s39TaOMqU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2591.4)):

Then their values get time warped, you know, like they, they really,

Adapted Podcast ([00:43:15](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=6jKdnsFPwY89bJSVs74O-GF2REEqbxha-c_OKwV5hFIeT6zD56dWvFM2ysNjNgyGmT-6y4Gd48funXI4fARIjmIxG4s&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2595.48)):

So in Korea they may have become more progressive. Right. But the immigrants to America stayed time warped in seventies and

Jenny Town ([00:43:23](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=sB9RjiBCARHnvLYY7SIRoMUh7057w0vSab5MZyEyUBG-UCM3NnpLY4cjkLeMpIFCGgH7xuEene6BJfd1S35t8HfrjTY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2603.35)):

Well, that's a, you know, I always found also interesting was this idea of, you know, I understand that there was there's, there is a chasm that tends to exist between Koreans and Korean adoptees because of the focus on family and bloodlines and all of this. But what I didn't understand, especially early on was why Korean Americans bought into that? Like, why, why did it persist? Especially once you got to like second, third, fourth generation, why were they hanging onto this sort of bloodline fast, you know, fixation? I used to run some forums back in Minnesota that talked about that, you know, got Korean adoptees and Korean Americans together. And I think, you know, what we found was that it was less about this, I, I think for Korean adoptees, we tend to think of the Korean American community as all encompassing <laugh> where I found a lot of the Korean Americans that I talked to thought about community around specific institutions. Like, do you mean the Korean American church or do you mean a Korean American organization rather than the imagined community of Korean Americans? And that I think helped me better understand sort of where these rifts were and, and how much adoptees tend to romanticize. <Laugh> what it means to be community. Also,

Adapted Podcast ([00:45:01](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=KbpYywLsrx7viV1lw9qgnoehwIhLJ4G-B8oYMA8xa56PUjFn6J7Agpa4Eh7EyhLf4qtXy0HvZY53O4Nh4QsC4aM-J0I&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2701.56)):

I guess it would make sense that those more on the fringes would tend to wanna look at more, an exclusive look or inclusive look of what it means to be Korean and those who are more in the center or what it means to be Korean or who's included is maybe a smaller group, you know,

Jenny Town ([00:45:25](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=GxMarPePd5WKhzRlh6Utu8bk5u8vGOw8CC_15-pCGLzGcc4Xz7Jrh3qMaJdPplLjGnTL8E_gdAKRVaWPX03O15lMn00&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2725.11)):

But I I've also had Korean Americans, especially women <laugh> in their twenties would be like, oh, well, you're not really Korean because you know, your parents aren't Korean. And it's like, well, I was actually born in Korea. Where were you born? You know, <laugh> like, so there, there was a long time where I really, you know, after living in Korea I really identified better with Korean Koreans than with Korean Americans or even with like immigrant Koreans rather than, you know, second, third, fourth generation Korean Americans, because to me it just made more sense. And Korean Americans to me were very exclusive. Like they, they didn't want us <laugh> as part of the community. It wasn't just the stigma of it. It was just, again, this, whatever they considered to be community was a, a very different vision than what, again, we had romanticized it to be.

Adapted Podcast ([00:46:27](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=YT0U_mJhAs-XMrXnFV1y0yDDWiBrlXn0XNZOR4lZeQ2aS1vi08yDMNqhP73-1zF0_imD8gyJCLEzmET7X2EcOImpuvY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2787.45)):

Yeah. That's, that's really interesting that, yeah, that whole that's a whole topic. <Laugh> what about if, if you don't mind sharing a little bit about your really when you dated an adoptee and how was that different and was it, you know, and if, I don't know, if you can speak about how did you find the kinship in the community or in dating other adoptee men?

Jenny Town ([00:46:55](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=etfscZe9ggeAqRirMyvh_VzFv17AT9rKDurjrr801dYeez4iH4GL-SlnGr2AnAviWrh4nbGKmUssaAzgMz4gmKofxvo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2815.25)):

I think again, there was a, a sense of there's an attraction in, in shared experience and, and not having to explain who you are and sort of where your pain comes from and what it looks like where it, where it's easier to get deep, faster, but then it's also, you know, it tends to be trauma on trauma <laugh> where, you know, the it's, it can be also just incredibly complicated especially if you get to other level. So for instance there was a Korean adoptee who I was dating for a while. And then he, he really wanted to go back to Korea and do his birth family search. He hadn't done it. I gave him some advice he ended up going and then he ended up through a long, drawn out process, eventually finding his birth family.

Jenny Town ([00:48:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=mAqi1m_bK4VmwpoxdYyuXpLUBAkT90s0sSZEVWRZ6_6CmJg4k8K8yo_ohUn5V1dU9gElM-RNrrutUT97_sqXJh2jPmU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2885.21)):

And I, and it's hard. It's hard. <Laugh> like when you're at those different levels and where then someone has then more than you, that doesn't include you, it does make the relationship very difficult to maintain the complication of it. But then also, you know, the jealousy of it, of like, oh, those are things I also want, but I know in my situation, I don't have that opportunity. And it's, it does, it does create RIFS we did break up. But yeah, I, I think there, there's definitely, there's definitely the, the attraction to get closer, faster, and it feels safe and it feels very real, but then it, you know, it's a relationship <laugh>, it will also evolve. And, and again it's also just multiple layers of complication as, as both of you deal with, you know, wherever you're at in that, that process.

Adapted Podcast ([00:49:14](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=fb966HmOQQb0x8AI_Oxf1SHecPWFjU4Y1bh2jGMtR7V91rACmK_McoP1eQwdXvuc36zvyDJxom6FiLViPUuoDB1Pa7Y&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2954.29)):

And I think even that the, for the community in Korea, you know, you're, you're already as adoptees dealing with so much processing and pain and being in Korea that adoptee relationships there sometimes can get unsafe. Did you feel not in your own situation necessarily, but like, did you see that in the community then?

Jenny Town ([00:49:41](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=RWzDRp4LN8SAXqHuHOuT-PSUk6hnspmqElWlJndmmwMIxD5WzOF2QK6U-fBSfdtFOk9CKGkh4aKtcs_CP5q9ceu7iaA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2981.92)):

Yeah, I, I think so. There's also, you know, like when you're, when you're that close and you understand, and again, if you're at different stages, it's like, it is really easy to trigger each other <laugh>. And, and to get caught up in that also where you, like I said, you don't have that grounding force to understand that you've triggered each other <laugh> and you kind of just spiral out of control. <Laugh>,

Adapted Podcast ([00:50:20](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=zd3cGK2jlsp-KUKoHZnnE8LReRcltFaW1mZgkwxYmdg8IukxnkOK9BfSKJX_CUsFqByE3arDLRm7klFZtO5skoNt8Sc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3020.38)):

I've heard it, I've, I've heard, it explained as, you know, in some, with some adoptee men, they, they might you know with anger towards their birth mothers, they might direct it towards their adoptee female partners or doesn't have to be necessarily female, but their adoptee partners who, you know, maybe also are, you know, very vulnerable.

Jenny Town ([00:50:46](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=SqCEk2hGx9Sv7Uc2NYSwCTSGskuw4SwF7Cn-vR7iFfh2FrbUlY6EsqOdx-eTUIuoXpgbaQLzMUvFHW7g8NPE7uuYBYQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3046.54)):

Yeah. I think you have all levels of all of that going on all the time, where again, like in the beginning it seems kids met. But it's a very difficult relationship to keep up because of all of the layers that both of you are dealing with on, in different ways that are triggered by different social interactions as well.

Adapted Podcast ([00:51:18](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ErNyule3IPBRT1BKpFcq74S5Lj5JB3coFL1UK_KNVQIBQHR4L_-WflWzArTFoItTkRZlLQKgqNCYO5VrfiZYNKoyfkc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3078.57)):

Who do you feel most comfortable with now as a partner?

Jenny Town ([00:51:24](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=R4UxWgWIGNi9FPCGJdLCw6PcfHOgSWJ-FOJnjrm78KiA5XD5poXLqvnwbDlYi3wlKIQErRfiP31ql_7QYal2E8gRhKY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3084)):

You know, for me now, I'm I prefer someone who's, I don't know. I don't really, I don't know that I have a type <laugh> but you know, someone who understands the work that I do and, you know, and kind of is supportive and gives me the space to be a little crazy when I wanna be <laugh> when I need to be. But also you know, just good companions, I think, more than anything.

Adapted Podcast ([00:52:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=t_C_LXbBSYR3JqiRkEihjCsNuXNgDm1ZbNWHmPIQ-L2_d8lDJhCMxZGYK89pXlZpJmoS8gYJOYChiUlxQv-pxb0HHKk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3125.7)):

Did you do find any biological family through the

Jenny Town ([00:52:10](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=zx4ylbxfTxBN4hbMTTC2_CJVXnVX-wFi0P1lzul46mqDo0aLnDIv3mK64-wXTQVhnkAfw2OxNWR89AlSobiiok4wMLs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3130.84)):

Years? I did try several times like in the media every once in a while that documentary will play again. When I was in Korea in the nineties and doing actively doing the search <laugh> for some reason, because I was searching, they would actually publish my contact information in like, like the one time I was in a national magazine they had like a whole full page spread of me crying. And then as part of the story, it's like, oh, and she's also looking for her birth parents and here's her contact, like literally my address and phone number <laugh>. So I used to get a lot of strange mail from lonely men. One time I had a famous murderer write to me from prison <laugh> wow. Yeah. Where he had read this article about me. And he actually, it was an interesting intro cuz he told the story of basically he had been like the chauffeur to a Korean drama star manager and that he felt that this manager was exploiting, you know, harassing, like treating this star poorly.

Jenny Town ([00:53:48](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=KwbxcUauO0dkjbS0sB2sES19_SR9RIZoTj62lm0AY3xuKP_knTTMNP2K7nRXEyo7Al3o2AXnBnpxtVkr_cpZq5vuZV0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3228.17)):

And eventually basically tried to stab him to death <laugh> and so it was in prison for the next 10 years. He's writing to me from prison. And then he said after he read my story, he really wanted me to go visit his family who lived in shink, which is near IWA. Because he had a little sister who is 13 and he said that she doesn't have a good role model in life because of what he did. And he really wanted me to befriend his little sister and there was part of me that was like really touched by this request. But then also really creeped out when he's like, yeah, next time I get phone privileges, I'm gonna call you. And it's like, no, no, no, that's not a good idea. <Laugh> and then I, I did get, you know, a couple marriage proposals and I got like all kinds of crazy.

Jenny Town ([00:54:42](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=jK-n1hOW95DO5_2YQnOOs5RiSdLb_f12ZqyIOPzU9qdy3smTnfPDGtD5IsLbW-DwigCsoC8cZIbQcOKGk5oKJe77LLY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3282.64)):

I had a couple stalkers from it who would look me up like one time there was this man who called me, he didn't speak any English. What I could tell from what he was telling me, it sounded like he had information on my family. So I agreed to meet him in a very public place. And it turns out, yeah, he didn't have any information, but he was an orphan who was never adopted. So he kept saying he felt this bond to me. And then he had grown up after he aged out of the orphanage he ended up becoming a city bus driver and he had just gotten fired from his job. So he was really angry about that. And then he wanted to take me on a long trip out in the country and I was like, no, that's okay.

Jenny Town ([00:55:32](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=g_oUeBSqVJ7nYPz8HQVl5Y0IDqZfnPyb8_qYSLKfzLb9lfkYb9HWc4devf3ieTR2X6YWWUSlmTCwI7qGEEcXiLr54WI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3332.95)):

<Laugh> but he would call me incessantly also to the point where before answering machines and stuff, I used to have to get my roommate to screen calls and it was a whole big thing. But you know, like there was one time several years later there was an article about me in Pusan newspaper. And I did get a phone call then and this guy said, he thought he was my uncle. And based on the story, it sounded familiar. It was around the right time. He had said his brother had been killed in a car accident. And you know, his wife was pregnant at the time. And they, they didn't know what happened to the baby basically. And so he, he was sure it was me. And he wanted to come visit me here in DC.

Jenny Town ([00:56:38](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=xEykBFaTKqsgv9jPnldM4QrTXaXflz4SOzdctFBg7K0BFaDi7-Ga6RbOI0TFpVvWWf2bCOKlzBTyvEILdLU4cUzhDOM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3398.28)):

And I was like, no, no, <laugh>, let's figure out first. And so we started talking a little bit, it was always this request of like, I would like to come see you, you know, can you send me a ticket sort of thing? It's like, no. And then at some point every time I talked to him though, the, the story changed just a little bit. And so when I started questioning the details because he is an uncle on my dad's side you know, you can't do a DNA test like female. Oh, right. To be like, yeah, male on the father's side. We'd have to have my father's DNA. So at one point he did offer to exhume his brother's body in order to get the DNA to do the test, which then made me think, well, wow, this is serious.

Jenny Town ([00:57:31](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=IMkQX48kxR2-N9oM8lmuWC4D8oDEwvgpM5-AaSGilZpWdUUuyfQHFF8FFF3abhnf-BncoyHlwxhz6bToh2VVTKAI2h0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3451.85)):

But then in doing so he was like, yes, but you would be like two years younger because this happened in blah, blah, blah. Instead of in blah, blah, blah. And I was like, well, no, I met the doctor who delivered me. I'm pretty sure of the date I was born. <Laugh> so you're looking for someone else, but you hear this a lot of, you know, families coming forward who think you're rich, who, you know, wants stuff. You know, there's always that story of like topi Dawson when he won the Olympic bronze medal, suddenly 300 families came forward for him. And he had been searching for 10 years. One of 'em ended up being his parents, but, you know, he was obviously pissed because, you know, when he wasn't famous, nobody wanted him <laugh> and suddenly he's famous and then everyone wants him. But yeah, it happens a lot where people think that, oh, well, you know, you're living in America, you must be rich. Like, you know, let's, let's, you know, we're willing to take you sort of thing. And it's like, no, that's not the point either. <Laugh>

Adapted Podcast ([00:58:42](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=NC8ITXVtgNWJsJyHkpi7-U0wib9WivjkvIS7FYWMg9f5jh8T9WUIOZTFdBisGYd79CCIor9moU9zTkIQRXCcE_v-dz8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3522.24)):

And it's, it's such a hard thing that I, you know, a lot of people maybe don't understand that, you know, just how vulnerable you are as an adoptee, going back and doing a search. And you're basically throwing your story out in, into the public for public consumption and public, you know, people to talk about you and talk about your story and, you know, and just having, having to field calls from complete strangers and weirdos. And, but you have to, because you never know,

Jenny Town ([00:59:14](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=hFzVEWvrBxAgVZven9Va3Ham9zSOvy30TQk3IKbS6x8KpxAIad2QopamoXRnGsWbfHRiloLRBl6lvXPvbbbZPRJzjjY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3554.75)):

Well, like one time I was on a, it was like a three hour telethon, a live telethon in with a panel of like 20 adoptees. It was a weird experience. <Laugh>, you know, like if you, if you recognize any of these children call us now. And so I think of the 20, I was actually the only one though, who didn't get a call.

Adapted Podcast ([00:59:39](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Mnoes_TiPmtnVdb2wOiXRuYpsIPCPxzHZ6lk8EnfKRGATTubkBxcr7MdgykfvrBiyxfYk0WN3wAVoOMSmhNv5Ynn31g&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3579.19)):

It's like a game show. It's like a game show.

Jenny Town ([00:59:41](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=2YCwurq7IW34FL0KH66iloLXbI2A63KNm2rs7-GSk_Z2IlAmtzJONrVDc7x34u-IlmUxXMEPKtmnvz_2Er0Vb8ZMQcA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3581.55)):

Yeah. Well, on top of that, they had, they pulled a couple out. And one girl, for instance, she was six when she was adopted. And so they had her talk about her last memories in Korea. And so she, she described a scene where she was basically in like a marketplace running around and then next thing you know, she's, she's being adopted away and stuff. And while she was talking, a phone call came in and this guy was like, I think you're my friend's daughter recognized the picture, the, the story sounds familiar. And so the studio, of course they love the drama <laugh> and we were a three hour show and this was in the first hour. So they were like, can you get your friend down here? And so the guy actually came down and it turns out it actually was her father.

Jenny Town ([01:00:32](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=6ZM5cM_5vYJyNOpzMu9GGROsSwJrk3XyOO8vIb3_7CMg1QlHY1o4BYkJbeK1Tdjms0j1r-zetfwZKbeEW2Q429uxGN0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3632.81)):

And you could tell, they looked exactly like, you know, and he, so, so by the end of the show, they had him on and he told his side of the story and it turns out that his, his mother, her grandmother had taken her, was at the market that day and had been carrying her around, but she's sick. So she was heavy. So she put her down to like, have her run around a little. And at that time it was so common to abandon children that the police saw a kid running around and assumed she was abandoned. And so picked her up and took her to an orphanage. And so of course the grandmother was like destroyed. <Laugh> like ended up committing suicide. The parents ended up getting divorced. Cuz you know, they blamed each other for losing the child and here they were on live TV reuniting after, you know, 20 years, it was pretty incredible.

Jenny Town ([01:01:31](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=IXW4AmYZhCU7r9c_J-pvEcGLbrtXxcLxn62X-Udo1EYZMt0vTQ3bkt5E4275BvBAjLO3GaZghbGgx0vLB7vR7P_cGPo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3691.27)):

And I have another friend who, yeah, he, he was in Korea for a little under a year and then his adoptive family told him, by the way, since you're in Korea, you might wanna look up your parents and here's their contact information. And so it turns out his parents had been corresponding with his birth parents, his birth family for more than 10 years and never told him about it. So by the time he did actually reach out to his family, they had his, both, his mother and father had died within six months of him actually contacting them. And but he had, he was the youngest of five children. They were poor. The orphanages had gone out and recruited, you know, young children and said you could come get him at any time. But then ended up sending him out for adoption instead. And so his family had been trying to get him back for like, you know, 15 years. And so there's a scene. They, he told her story on this, on this telephone also. And so there's a scene where he's showing his family pictures from his childhood and they're like, oh yeah, we've seen that one. You know, your parents sent us that one and it's like, holy crap. I would be so pissed.

Adapted Podcast ([01:02:49](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=CqOWmGJbD6AvxCf9nbTciSyzNmfpOUp7DptQ67mZoAY1LhP9N8rkbNMxtetTcLQaRRz3jBQgsOHt3I1377d99D6ZyRo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3769.39)):

<Laugh> how did it feel when your people around you or on the programs you were on, they, they would find and connect with their bio family and then

Jenny Town ([01:02:59](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=KSsaLQh6F582Mp6h07VGr5Oir6EZk9pttvMM_KhSTtbPO7XLkKet-P5Rhi5JZ80C7V2kIB5HaoVpcJtfi-s9dYsxjow&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3779.53)):

Yeah, it's, it's it's not good. <Laugh>, it's definitely not good. There is a lot of jealousy that goes on. It's a lot of, a lot of mixed feelings. Like when I was on the telephone, I knew I didn't have enough information. This was before the documentary where I actually found the rest of the story. So, you know, I still only had what was in my adoption agency records. And I knew, I think what orphanage I was from, but I, no, I think at that time I only, yeah, I knew the name of the orphanage, but I hadn't been there yet. Yeah. So it's really, it's really depressing, you know, when, when basically everyone else got a call and like nothing, but there was also nothing to go on, you know, other than I'm from Husan, that's basically all I knew.

Jenny Town ([01:03:59](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=YqfjhFLCvx3cT_rz75US6vT5ophEmoJQJXckWEuUUOHwvveC7E-MciyaKSsFpbqBm_aHAWIVkeym9xC8TVNuVXBngWo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3839.79)):

And, and at that time too, I still had the wrong birthday because when I went to the orphanage they assigned me a birthday. They weren't given the whole story of how I got there. So I must have been a really big baby because they made me two months older than I am <laugh>. So, you know, the birthday that I have in most of my media about my birth family search is the wrong birthday. And so if anyone was looking for me, the dates wouldn't match. And so, you know, only media after that would be accurate. And I think I've, I've now it's taken me a long time, but I've pretty much resigned myself to the reality that, you know, unless my mother is actually looking for me I'm not sure there's anyone else who really even knows I exist, but it's fun having two birthdays. I do celebrate both. I enjoy celebrating both and anyone who misses one, I tell them it's okay. I have another one coming. And then a one time, one of the Korean adoptees I was dating. He had a similar situation where he had, you know, an estimated, a legal birthday and then had found out what his real birthday was. And so it turns out mine are like December 10th and February 10th. His ended up being March 10th and September 10th. So then we used to just celebrate the 10th of every month <laugh> because why not?

Adapted Podcast ([01:05:34](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Xf7fxDlibG9Kz0OvLHzb4HAX5km0iSJFma6V8H7SAB9ktFJIfeBfAw3hKY8gLP-N6XhPJA4DSJxO9jUTO9be6QVpIc8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3934.64)):

So does that make mother's day or any things that have to do with family difficult for

Jenny Town ([01:05:43](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=rl8dMVxpolbrzQrht61fER7Sm7om-wdBCddo7pJhKSwk2ZK6yxFx4Mmb7O2Q1cTSQuFUr3zuDN5ttQ8Us3okMBKoZ1E&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3943.07)):

You? I, yeah, you know, growing up it did plus like I don't really get along with my family. Well we're, you know, my parents have their own issues <laugh> and so we never really, we never really got off on a good foot. So, you know, a lot of the mother's day father's day kind of stuff, I tend to just tune out at most of the time. I forget, unless, well, I guess all the TV, all the media about it is how I remember. But most of the time I, I just ignore it. There was always this notion of if I ever have children, would I even have any idea what to do? <Laugh>, you know, a lot of, a lot of contemplation of what motherhood means over the years, and now that I'm older and probably I'm not going to have children, there's a lot of, you know, processing now of, of what that means as well. You know, being adopted and being, you know, the only gene pool you're aware of, you know, my genes die with me now. And coming to terms of that too, is, is a whole new stage of processing.

Adapted Podcast ([01:07:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=u6UdpNVBD4kXBBXTtmykiMr-Omce2MmahN1RGtgLvcYc7NZ-ykuhEy3W9QYtFjLMWADjJKNETDp6S2WTghNcWo-eZUM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4032.48)):

There's a real grief there too.

Jenny Town ([01:07:15](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=izDk6BS5Irsk0pXf0jUev5eMvGMCtg85O6hJOytWGvNvW_2bW6uVvIGYFs2zi14fSeC6oj4L1LNsx34b90uQBVqzZEs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4035.43)):

And I think, you know, there's also, you know, there's, there have been times when I've thought about, you know, do I wanna adopt and you know, if I'm not gonna have children, if there is something I can give back, but, you know, I, I think emotionally, I don't think I could do that either. I think it was just too many things. <Laugh> too many things to too many complications to work through to make it a positive experience, especially for the child.

Adapted Podcast ([01:08:06](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=HjrlhoVIWloYfPKgdQtXZ-IVu9BJYoi3G2a8cfJ0HFZnTZg6v0zRGY8blZNdhvocHAr9w-4mmQ8mux71swucjss2SOY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4086.16)):

Do you have time to talk about what you're doing now with North Korea, right. You do some policy work or okay. And then if you want to, if you don't want it to be part of this, we don't have to, it's totally up to you. Cuz you know, this is enough for an episode already, but and also the name of your documentary, what is the documentary called that you're in?

Jenny Town ([01:08:28](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=VzjMAHYnvBjx_Pte-Rx-F2AgL--2edsY51QfZidYL0elbJp_4y94SXZpCIkcHpA6Ge2WuQKgAmkIXJr6ZLoIml7WFiY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4108.1)):

Oh, I don't even know. It was it was put out by SBS back in the, you know, the nineties. And it was actually, it's a documentary about Cho Mihee who now goes by Kimura Byol, but she was, you know, one of, sort of the godmothers of our, of our community. And so it was really focused on her and her birth family search story, her adoption story. And I was included because well one, cuz she was really good about bringing others with her. Whenever she got any opportunities and two, because she's also from Pusan. And so at one point they, they went to Pusan to do a reenactment of her meeting her birth mother. And it was like a secret meeting where she at least got to talk to her and you know, and, and learn her side of the story. Even though her mother ended up not wanting a, a broader relationship with her, but so in the documentary, I, I it's actually the back of my head when they're doing the reenactment <laugh> of her meeting, her birth mother <laugh>. But yeah, it was really about her and the work that she was doing, helping other adoptees search for their birth families. And so I was one of those others that she was helping and being in Pusan it was a good opportunity for me <laugh> to find the whole paper trail.

Adapted Podcast ([01:10:01](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=brx_Zsok02mOuw13iKqiqveXajA7Ld_gpAURvTeeb8U3U0eOlYTGrNrGg6_egK6pBP5rzuIU63kEzHkxnigo2gifULw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4201.21)):

And so can people watch it it's on SBS or is it online?

Jenny Town ([01:10:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=en_vH5nTl0J156H3H-yT-LMnueZo6zE3CDAuVPzuCL4pn3O3B5UiURZI3b365jYzzDbkLYc5oC3kcr7EHUaj55veJgs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4205.27)):

I don't think it's, I think it is on YouTube somewhere. I have a VHS of it, but no VHS player anymore. And I know that they air it every once in a while. Because you know, even since I've been doing work on us Korea relations and on north Korean stuff, every once in a while I'll be in Korea and someone will call me and be like, Jenny, I think I just saw you on TV, but you looked really young <laugh> so every, every few years bill they'll play it again. <Laugh> just to show everyone my nineties look

Adapted Podcast ([01:10:46](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=EoajcnoOf23xGpDD4wmrzWpuoP3J3QWZxv5jNPfFZs0dHmNZkCI5lQPpxsEaF0AMvJq64UDkZiEkKJPJ8jDy6uY_PJY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4246.84)):

<Laugh> okay. And so your time in Korea, you really it's part of your work today, the what's going on the peninsula, what, what are you doing now?

Jenny Town ([01:10:57](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=zqH09DibroXx_TDgn-1vCHQmO_IUQoyKJ_xPUgQjPrOwviSLXRgpw9ZT6zTcScBZcL2AVIerv-2rRADBxKFslfbs2aA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4257.721)):

So these days I do work on Korea policy largely focused on North Korea, us relations with both North Korea and South Korea. And a lot of Alliance cooperation issues. Yeah. So it's been, it's been a long road to get here, but I, I think deep down it's something I always wanted to do was to work on Korea in some way. But you know, I didn't necessarily knew, know what, that I didn't necessarily know what that looked like or what was possible. And you know, it took me about 10 years of my career before I was able to find an entry point into the career policy world. And since then have really tried to make my mark there.

Adapted Podcast ([01:11:47](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=eEvqk5xH3UlX8llfC_Q2Jv9FFkr6q1XYu0fg3J6kUe8sGHfBMfQEinykiubpSa118U-TrwVbuTRmegXwvGeSmacHNFU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4307.17)):

Has it been have you felt you've had barriers being a Korean adoptee trying to get into Korean peninsula policy work?

Jenny Town ([01:11:59](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=nmYUiVR3Z4wq27iZM7n5IuW3UZE7qP-3E6mO7KQywot7CFhCapvg7P0qtWa2d0iFyyPKG03uFFMSfXeOiqbjN7ilxY8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4319.29)):

Yeah, I think there there's a lot of barriers in, in my dealings with Koreans. I think the Koreans who I've met have actually been somewhat embracing of that part of me. I'm, I'm pretty open with people about it. I think the, the bigger challenge is being a woman in this field that is still very male dominated, white male dominated on the American side, Korean male dominated on the Korean side. And so being a woman in this field, there's many times where I'm, you know, the only woman speaker or the only sometimes the only woman in the room <laugh>, or the only woman in the room, who's not serving coffee. So it's still it's a real struggle sometimes to, to be taken seriously. Even when I'm saying, you know, there's times where, you know, in discussions, I was at a conference recently where I made a point and then one of my American colleagues basically repeated the point that I made and agreed with it.

Jenny Town ([01:13:10](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=EoWoRJP2RRYVxG-XRwKIqYMd6ZjyN5OPU37HUm8uxQrg1E6EMxuWZrjLnrIDEWPLzY3PsBJI6JsnzRt0IH0aJUP7Qa4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4390.21)):

And then when the two Korean speakers were responding they kept responding to his point as, you know, like he made a good point and it was like, no, he agreed with my point <laugh>, you know, so there's still a lot of that that goes on. I, I think in the early days, I, you know, I, I felt hindered by the fact that I didn't speak Korean fluently. But I found in the process that actually it helps that I don't because in, in working with Korean, in working with Korean men, especially when I speak in English, I have authority. If I speak in Korean and I've seen this happen to a lot of my colleagues, female colleagues is, you know, then, then they'll treat you like a Korean woman which is a much different level of respect and authority than, than what I would have when I speak English. So yeah, <laugh>, there's, there's parts of it that are advantage and parts of it that are, like I said, the parts of it that are advantage too is, you know, I don't feel necessarily constrained by my position in society as I would, if I was Korean or Korean, even Korean Americans, I think still feel a bit more of that obligation when they get into those situations where I can play my American card of like, no, I didn't grow up with those values and that hierarchy and all that kind of stuff.

Adapted Podcast ([01:14:55](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=m6z0WH4gvp-A-Uom__ttGKmh1EQi_88_7GcOU_P2TdLbLDCLFGq-MKUJXbCKFySzaLQ9TbRyIXchFPB9r4iv49fjPq0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4495.96)):

Why North Korea, Jenny

Jenny Town ([01:14:58](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=QBT_jnRMRQsf6QnhcOuA_MWF7y1uYZIBEwpGX59eak9-VlVyueNB6G387qS8xO-z9u3iGZHe2deeQ4lixgT4Txzroo8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4498.07)):

North Korea has become sort of a labor of love for me. But it, it started out actually my interest in North Korea started out in the nineties. Cuz when I was there for college, I do remember that's right when the famine was hitting North Korea. And I remember the reports that came out of a there's famine in North Korea. But my south Korean, you know, friends and colleagues, no one believed it <laugh> and it, this really blew my mind of like, why wouldn't you believe north Korean media about what's happening in North Korea. And it really got me studying more and learning more about North Korea and about the division and about the, you know, how the two Koreas have evolved in different directions. And a lot about, you know, north Korean kind of culture and politics and political evolution. And so when I actually started my first job working in Korea policy, it was actually on north Korean human rights issues.

Jenny Town ([01:16:08](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=O7JyIQlCu9WDgp12lAs3zaNpjFd2I8sAxJRLprVSzoUOx7ECwAmvpc61z9mpxnnlxlDqYwtnLDUnP49zqdvYoUODhoE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4568.52)):

And so I had read several accounts of defectors talking about their escapes from North Korea and the conditions inside North Korea. And so I, I actually started working at freedom house. They used to have a human rights in North Korea project. And so it was a great experience to, to kind of get to know the community, get to know the issues but to also get to know the nuances and how to better evaluate defect our testimonies, first of all. And then, you know, again, really learn more about the realities on the ground in North Korea. But it just so happened that the director of that program ended up becoming the director over at Johns Hopkins school of advanced international studies of the new us Korea Institute at that time. And so since we had worked together before he ended up making a position for me to help him build the Institute. So it was kind of my dream job of like working on Korea, creating something new creating, you know, working towards making an impact on policy, on the relationship on going to Korea several times or business and really feeling like like I am somehow impacting the relationship.

Adapted Podcast ([01:17:45](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=UoBtwiYdwT6nGKZf6kEN1ipKnq1XKU1x_WYIOS6C-fwqbwxz9rEY_Q_jqtYoYhQPu__PfQ5kloAwQsaXCz1UWDwEZYE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4665.75)):

Well, we need people like you, Jenny to watch the developments and help us analyze them. So thank you. Thank you for being on today too. I really appreciate it. And if, if folks wanna Jenny, if they would like to get in touch with you after, is there a wait or to follow you

Jenny Town ([01:18:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=uzQwjfxhPZoCXKke1P69d01-6cEGrzwBHJSW8J45p6EYR0TPzasH0JI4QbGK5Hs07hZeoJzzrFWmEZzPxs-QTSHFMAE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4685.93)):

Or so they can follow me on Twitter. It is at J3NNT0WN So it looks like Jenny Town and you know, they can also find me on LinkedIn and reach out to me through those venues,

Adapted Podcast ([01:18:36](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=EKMovHBjByryayzcDoVBxUNLJYc38oSIHQ9qOQBvyEas3eHWuAdF7z4t0HBEbPWgj_SeMfQ_ivr-MwPB4haztvDe2jo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4716.04)):

A special call out to Joyce Shim. She's an adoptee ally and has joined us as a patron supporter. This season. We started to transcribe our episodes for greater access within our community and this summer we're also starting a media campaign in Korea about the podcast. If you would like to join us, please go to patron.com/adapted podcast. Season five is winding down. Our next episode will be our last, before we go on summer break. Next, we'll be talking to an accomplished poet with a new book out, stay tuned and be well I'm Kaomi Lee.