Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Welcome to season five of Adapted podcast. And episode two starts now.

Adam Crapser:

You didn't ask for them to help you find your birth family. That wasn't in a spoken agreement, but then they find them. You want to feel grateful, but you're also terrified because it's going to bring up a bunch of stuff, but then they also want to exploit it and make it super public.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Hi, I'm your host, Kaomi Lee. Welcome to the second episode of season five of Adopted podcast. The longest running podcast on Korean adoptees, Adoptees Empowering Our Own Voices. Our theme music for season five it's provided by Jae Jin. He's an amazing singer songwriter. You can look him up on Jaejinmusic.com. That's J-A-E-J-I-Nmusic.com. His music is also featured in a variety of music streaming sites. Check it out, jaejinmusic.com.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

In this next episode, I had the pleasure and the privilege to talk to Adam Crapser. He's a Korean adoptee who was deported back to his native country, Korea in 2016. And his story has been one of the most written about, talked about. And his story is now arguably on the big screen with a film by Korean American filmmaker Justin Chon in the indie release called Blue Bayou.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

We're going to get more into Adam's thoughts about the film, the controversy, his story, his feelings about exploitation and what his life has been like since being deported. We'll also hear about his experiences of coming to terms with his own adoption, as well as trying to help other adoptees and what he's learned in the past five years. And without further delay, here's Adam Crapser.

Adam Crapser:

Well, my name's Crapser. I'm 46 years old this year. I came to know about the Korean adoptee community right around 2014, so I haven't been around it that long. Unfortunately, most of how I know a lot of fellow Korean adoptee is because of the circumstances around my deportation, and the stuff that's been attached to that over the years. And then my wife Anna Simonse is sitting here.

Anna Simonse (Adam's wife):

Hi, Naomi.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Hi. I'll follow Adam's format. I'm 40 years old, also born and adoptive from Korea. And I grew up in the east coast and spent time in New York for school and then over to LA for work. And we're in Mexico city now.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

And you met in Korea.

Anna Simonse (Adam's wife):

Yeah.

Adam Crapser:

Yeah. During [inaudible 00:03:24], which I wasn't part of. But during that time is when Anna and I met each other. And we've been fortunate enough to be able to spend quite a lot of time together over the last few years, getting to know each other, not only because of the pandemic, but just because of the way that our lives were structured at the time, along with moves, the many moves that we've made together over the last year, especially.

Adam Crapser:

So that's been really cool. We were married in Korea, and just for the record, I guess. My ex-wife who's named is Anne not to be confused with Anna is also remarried to a Vietnamese guy. Their life is going good and my children are doing well. Sometimes people like that information or they need that information. But anyways, Anna and I were married in Korea. And now we are in Mexico City via Cabo since February, is when we moved from Korea. So we are here now in Mexico City and the Roma district, and we love it here. And so far things are going really well. That's about it.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Yeah. And I'd love to talk more about your move back to North America and how that's been going in Mexico too. But first, why don't we just dive into... It just strikes me that everything that seems to happen to your life story, Adam, that you never asked for any of it. All of it just sort of keeps happening to you. And you've been thrust into this spotlight as being, whether you want to or not, kind of the voice of deported Koreans, or Korean adoptees. How has that been for you? I can't even imagine.

Adam Crapser:

I guess for some context, before I ever found out that I could never be on immigration radar with the United States government. I grew up around Latino communities and then later on in life, I was around Southeast Asian communities. So the presence of immigration in their lives and their stories, I was aware of them as they applied to them, but never to myself. And so once that became an actuality or reality, I sat up and I paid attention and I was like, "Wow, this is crazy." One of my biggest arguments would be that I understand notice. I understand notification about stuff, like pay your electric bill or else, pay your water bill or else, pay your cell phone bill, that kind of stuff.

Adam Crapser:

So had this been on my radar early on, you better believe that I would've got involved in order to do whatever I needed to you to rectify the situation. So there's a lot of misinformation around there. Like, "How could he have never known?" And then people call me undocumented, all these things and they have no idea what they're talking about because I was never undocumented. Having an expired green card or permanent resident card is completely different. I'm still a permanent resident, I just don't have a valid plastic card. So when people throw me into this undocumented category and, "How does he have a driver's license or social security card?" Or, "Did he ever pay taxes?" They obviously don't know very much about what's going on.

Adam Crapser:

I understood early and that my welfare and my children's welfare, our livelihoods, everything was dependent on whether or not I was committed to fighting as hard as I could to get back to them. And that's still when I wake up and go to bed with everybody for people I'm accountable to, people who I love, who are my family now, that's all I can do, that's what I'm supposed to do, right? That's what anybody's supposed to do.

Adam Crapser:

And when we have these discussions about what makes you an American, there's a lot of things that I feel make myself an American and things that I use as some form of a measurement or metric, as to what makes a person an American, right? My own personal belief systems. But one of them is not doing all this talking about a lot of stuff all the time. But backing things up was commitment to labor, getting your hustle on, doing what you need to survive. Not always having your hand out, begging everybody for money.

Adam Crapser:

Money causes problems. We know this, right? It can cause problems when there's emphasis on it, when people have a motivation for it. Greed is just a step away. And so for my whole everything, I got too much pride, I guess. But I'm not begging anybody for it, that's in and I'll do this on my own if I have to. And fortunately I haven't had to, but somebody has to stand up. Somebody's got to speak out. Somebody's got to say, "This isn't right. We know this isn't right." And I'm not just going to go and sit down quietly because other people tell me to, or because it's not a super well known issue. And that it's a complex intersection, especially for the rest of adoptees.

Adam Crapser:

I mean, I've had adoptees message me, I don't know them, and tell me, "I'm glad you were deported. We need to keep our country safe," from an adoptee. And I had a chug while I laughed because I was like, "That's one of the most ridiculous things I've ever heard from a human being, let alone another Korean adoptee." But as the years would go on, that would not even grace that the surface of how many weird interactions I would have with other adoptees. And I think people who know me well enough know that I don't need to get all dramatic on Facebook or on social media and talk about all these things all the time, not really into all that gossiping. But people feel the need to act out and do weird behavior sometimes, especially within the KAD community.

Adam Crapser:

And it's alarming. Contacting me, lying about going to be deported. And then when I'm asking about the immigration status or I'm asking about their adoption records and stuff, so I can try to point them in the right direction to get some assistance. They avoid all that. Then they finally admit, "Okay, I'm not getting deported, but I'm facing domestic violence charges and I'm going to get a year in jail. If I don't get a new lawyer." I'm in Korea, I'm not quite sure what they thought I could do for them. But I understand how retainers work. I've had to retain lawyers, have been around the criminal justice system. I don't don't know what you want me to tell you, but you need to do what other people do. And you need to go get a lawyer, however you need to do that. But my job as a stranger to you is to not sit and listen to all this stuff about deportation and have you play games.

Adam Crapser:

There's been numerous situations. And I Don I get into every specific one, but suffice to say, I have a book in my inbox of just unbelievable stuff from people. And I want to be classy enough to where I don't just say, "Hey, guys, I know something you don't know, you want to know something stupid about somebody else today?" I'm not into all that. I just want to live my life. I'm halfway through my ban almost. I'm getting back. I better believe that. If somebody's going to get back, I'm going to get back. I paid attention. I fought my case. I'm the only one that fought my case all the way to the merits hearing.

Adam Crapser:

When people act like I haven't been involved in any of this stuff, or they're surprised when I'm like, "Hey, I've been advocating for this bill since day one. I've been advocating for myself since day one. I've been advocating for others since day one." If we really wanted to sit down and do some accounting, how much money I raised for other adoptees. And I didn't ask people to raise no money for me. Going and fighting with the Korean government to make sure that other Korean adoptees who don't want to come forward and talk about what they did to go to Korea, whatever their issues are. I will still advocate and fight for them so that they can get housing because they haven't had it. They did didn't get, they weren't getting this kind of help.

Adam Crapser:

And now the Korean government, three years later, or four years later, they don't really want to provide any post-adoption services, which is messed up. But I haven't been meeting their help. But I've also been on welfare in Korea. I've also lived really meagerly in Korea. But I ain't sit there and cry about it, and expect everybody else to take care of me. Because to me, and it's not new to me. I've been on my own since I'm 16, since I was 16 years old. And I've had to do what I had to do to take care of myself, and to not get in trouble. And I know how to do that.But it's important to me, like I said, not just how we live, but how we'll be remembered during this period in life. I want my children to know that I did everything I could to get back to them as quick as I could. That I didn't take none of this laying down.

Adam Crapser:

And people can say whatever they want, but The United States government tried to deport me for three different felonies. And they were not able to deport me, those charges were all dropped. And then I was recharged. I was deported for two misdemeanors. People need to go and look up the criminal code definition of what those charges actually mean. And they can throw around all this conjecture and all this, but unless they're criminal prosecutors within the county that I fell in, I don't really think they're qualified to talk about any of it. And then in terms of my actual criminal record, I've posted it on Facebook before. Back in the day in 2015, I uploaded it. "Here it is, man, get your screenshots, whatever." Go pay your 20 bucks, whatever, background checking.

Adam Crapser:

What it is that I've ever been, that anybody's ever said about me in a restraining order, or said about me in a police report or whatever, those are not convictions. That's this hearsay, anybody who understands how the criminal justice system works, how family court works, how a number of different things work, understand that those don't always bring out the best or the truthfulness of people. And so people should also understand that back then, I could barely take care of myself, let alone, how was I going to go get big lawyers and all this?

Adam Crapser:

So a lot of these things had ever happened in my life prior to what ended up being getting actually deported, is that all these things happened with public defenders, with court appointed lawyers. People who haven't been involved in the criminal justice system really shouldn't speak about it. And even as in regards to this kind of a film, like I said, I have a lot of friends who are Lao, Cambodian, Vietnamese, all kind of other Southeast Asian ethnicities that don't think it's cool when privileged Koreans, especially, go and present themselves and try to represent themselves in a way that their communities have never been affected by like that. It's disrespectful for one, but it's also inaccurate because Koreans don't really end up in a system like that for the same reasons.

Adam Crapser:

So like I said, there's a lot of intersections here. A lot of people have their own personal belief systems and opinions about, about things. And it's weird to me that this stupid movie stuff is what would make people start having all these pretty serious conversations about immigration, about deportation. All these people who are really late to the party who haven't done any research and they're just like, "That's impossible." We just start things off with stuff like that. Or don't really understand how it affects people at its worst.

Adam Crapser:

Me, I'm equipped for some of this because at been through a lot and I've become resourceful. And I have a lot of survival skills. But I've known people personally who have had a really hard time, super hard time because they don't really even have the ability to help themselves. And that sucks, but it also sucks when other people try to help them too, to kind of give them a leg up. And they don't know how to use that either in order to affect the positive change in their life. And that really sucks too, because the Korean government, for instance, they don't understand these nuance, this within our lives as a marginalized community, that's inside of another marginalized community. And nor do they care.

Adam Crapser:

They really are unable to have a perspective the way that we do as Americans. And that's not from a place of entitlement or a place of [inaudible 00:17:20] or anything like that. It's even on just a basic social welfare or basic social work level. They should have this understanding about basic needs and the ability to meet them, let alone thrive or have any kind of programs to assist.

Adam Crapser:

And that's part of our fault too, as adoptees is that, like me, obviously, I didn't know about this issue until it became an issue. But the people who have been dealing with this for 15, 20 years, I tried telling the best thing you can do, is speak up for yourself, man. Write a book, get your thoughts out, man. Get us the source and a dictionary and do whatever you need to do, man. But put the Xbox down and stand up for yourself. Raise your hand, man. Be heard. Wake up early, stay up late, commit to labor, hurt your hands, do whatever you got to do, man. Save some money. Do some things to invest in yourself in your own life, man. So that you can get something going for yourself.

Adam Crapser:

But that's my approach to everything in life because I'm not going to lay down and accept the lot that I was given, a hand that I was dealt. I seen where I was born, and it was like a closet with a dirt floor. I know where I come from, but that doesn't mean I got accept it. I know what I experience as a child. I know my upbringing looks like. I know what... Everything that I experience, that's why I've been taking notes. That's why I've been keeping records. That's why I've been documenting stuff because that's what people believe. As an American, I understand that too. It's not what you think or what, or what you know, or what your buddies cosign on. It's what you can prove. It's what you can prove in a court law. That's what people believe.

Adam Crapser:

And so that along with, again, this belief system I have about being an American is taking care of business and doing it the right way. I'm not going to sit and call everybody out and want fight everybody and do all that. That's a younger me. I understand how things are done now, they're done in court, they're handled to court, they're done behind the scenes. Not everything is a TikTok video. Some things are done on a little bit more adult level.

Adam Crapser:

And I understand that now, and before when I didn't have any help, I didn't have no family. It's just me like, "Yeah, I just wanted to flail because I didn't understand what was going on." And I didn't have any way to effectively ameliorate any of the situation by myself other than just trying to pay attention to what's going on. So it didn't happen again. A lot of times went by now for me, and there's been a lot of growth and understanding, not just about myself, but about us as Korean adoptees, as a whole.

Adam Crapser:

When I went to Korea that I had no idea that there would be these contingent of adoptees that are just pissed. They're pissed for no reason. They're just pissed. I can't tell you exactly why they're so mad or scorn or bitter or whatever, but I'm thinking, man, from what I do know of you, you had a good adoption, a pretty good, you're the only child and you said your parents were nice to you, and you got like three or four different degrees that are awesome. And you got like two apartments. One of them your college gives you, you're professor, you speak multiple languages, all these different things. I'm thinking, "Wow, that's freaking awesome." Just the proximity to you makes me feel like more better, more important.

Adam Crapser:

But then I'm just like, "Why are you so angry though? What are you so mad about? You told me you inherited all your parents money. You had all their furniture shipped over from another country. This is crazy, what are you mad about? Your life seems pretty good." And so that was hard for me to kind of like, not really at understand that people would just naturally assume that I'd be this super pissed off adoptee about adoption specifically. And so they misinterpret my actions in terms of lawsuits and different things. That I'm automatically this person who's like, "I hate adoption. I think it has no play and we needed this and that." And it's like, "Hold on."

Adam Crapser:

First of all, I educated myself about some of this stuff. And so I put on the monkey suits and went to the national assembly and went and talked to congressional leaders there and went and talked to social welfare professors and read books that people had a lot of coffee, did a lot of talking. So I have a lot better understanding of the special adoption law. What actually domestic adoption looks like in Korea. A number of different things that intersect too. But I don't believe that you can really have one argument without acknowledging all of the others when it comes, because it's such a vast pit of stuff, it's adoption.

Adam Crapser:

And so I hope people for themselves even will allow themselves to maybe go into learning about adoption or the aspects of adoption with a little bit less feeling like they need to have this responsibility of on whether you love or hate adoption. I think people have this love and hate relationship with that possibly their whole lives. And that's probably okay if it comes out looking kind of healthy or normal or incorporates social awareness and picking up on social cues and all those great things. But if they're absent of that, that's not really for me.

Adam Crapser:

I mean, as a community, I've also, especially in the midst of this last couple weeks of drama, it's occurred to me that my responses have not been my best self at times. And that one of the things that I was missing as I was going into some of these situations, if you will, is that I feel like we are not just a polarized community or these things that are a little bit provoking, I guess. We've been a divided community in terms of our belief systems or, I guess you could say, the way that we were raised. But I also see us as this super fractured, hurting, and desperate community. Because a lot of the adoptees that I know, we're all in our forties, at least, or older. Some a little bit younger, but we're middle aged people. We have a little bit of understanding about the world now and we can gauge 10 years, or 15, or 20, or 25. And we know how quickly time goes by and how fragile our lives are here.

Adam Crapser:

And it obviously raises the importance on others things when we're able to make those kind of understandings. Or to ourselves being able to understand those types of things. And so for myself, this stuff with adoption, sometimes this feels like a never ending saga of so many different things. But for myself, I can say that had my upbringing looked a little different or if I would've been able to have a little bit more stability early on, I want to believe that my life and the trajectory of it, would've, would've looked a little bit different.

Adam Crapser:

That's not to say that I'm not aware of my responsibility in the choices that I've made, and my part and where I am and who I am today. And I hope that some of the way that I've dealt with the challenges that have been presented to me in the choices that I've made in dealing with those are a reflection of who it is that I truly am. I believe in accountability and I believe in owning. Your choices and your mistakes and stuff, and that doesn't mean that you automatically are a great guy or doesn't mean you have to be this horrible person for the rest of your life. I think that we all have choices to make. And we can make good ones so that our children have a better shot maybe than some of us did when it comes to some of these issues.

Adam Crapser:

But for a person who's had their ethnicity used against them. And I feel like an American. And I dealt with all the "wish I was a white guy stuff" when I was younger, like a lot of us have. I've dealt with a lot of those issues and I've put them to rest. And I'm just trying to just be a better human being every day. I'm trying to be more understanding. I'm trying to be a better listener. I'm trying to educate myself more about the issues going on in the world that don't affect just me. And be able to make better choices.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

It's ironic that you said that sometimes people had called you undocumented, and that's not an accurate characterization. But it's ironic because your story is one of the most documented now for Korean adoptees in general, and then also the face of deported adoptees. And I think people, because there's that documentation out there, I would like listeners to go and do your research. We're not going to go into leading up to your deportation and the reasons, we won't get into that, it's documented at many places, so people can go educate themselves.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

But I would like to ask you that it sounds very much like you're thrust into this situation. You are trying to advocate for yourself. But at some point you realized it was, whether you liked it or not, you were linked to the larger politics of adoption, immigration, law loopholes in the system and injustice in general, so that has to have been really a lot to take on.

Adam Crapser:

It was, and I honestly didn't know. I was pretty naive actually going into anything. Early on, I was flailing, I just wanted to stay in America. I just wanted to stay in The United States with my kids. And it just didn't seem real, it didn't seem real for a few years actually. I was in shock, I believe. But when I did realize at some point that in a lot of different stories that I've read and a lot of different narratives, I guess...

PART 1 OF 5 ENDS [00:29:04]

Adam Crapser:

... that I've read and a lot of different narratives, I guess, for different... and I had to look at it this way when I was in immigration detention. Different ethnic groups. The different extremes that would happen to their people, good and bad. I wasn't aware that I... it had never been on my radar before about Korean adoptees and something like this, this visceral, volatile being, happening to anybody that's a Korean adoptee, but I also didn't know there was so many of us. When I did get over there and then unfortunately, I was out front, I had a front row seat to a few funerals back to back.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Of adoptees.

Adam Crapser:

Yeah. I hadn't been to a real funeral before in my life of any kind. This affected me in a number of different ways, but a lot of them were not good and it made me obsess over a lot of things I didn't want to be obsessing over, because it was the opposite, it felt like the opposite of developing some kind of emotional strength or building some kind of a wall to cope with some of this stuff so I can get through some time, so I can get this time done, which in comparison to now, where I'm just on the cusp of the halfway mark and the way for me after having done a lot of time in institutions and stuff is like, after you get past that halfway mark, it's like the saying is it's all downhill.

Adam Crapser:

In a way, it's true. Your mind, it does this weird thing. And 10 years is a long time so to get half way there and to still have all my fingers and toes and be alive, I'm super grateful, let alone to be able to have a beautiful wife on my side and my dogs, and to be able to not have to be exiled in Korea, or feel exiled in Korea and trapped there the way that I have at times is amazing for me.

Adam Crapser:

But I also, I've had a lot of help and I've had some really just amazing people come into my life because of this whole situation. But it goes without saying that people weren't just bringing me stuff. I had to get up and I had to go I had to bring it all together. I had to advocate for myself, I had to try hard and I have. While some people might think it looks easy, I can promise them it's not. I know what it's like to have 19000 won in the bank account and be worried about, they got some direct withdrawal stuff going on all the time and I'm getting taxed right and left, all the time. I'm getting worked in Korea. I don't know all these little extra charges and all this stuff. It's like, you got to get smart and you got to get smart quick or else you can get left behind over there real easily.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

What year did you land in Korea?

Adam Crapser:

I landed November 17th, Korea time, 2016.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

I guess what was that like for you? I mean...

Adam Crapser:

Well, there was some drama leading up to that because of some media outlets that came and saw me the day, the night before I was going to fly out the next day. While my brain is super scrambled, trying to just, you know cannot turn off because I'm freaking out. I'm about to go back. I haven't flown anywhere in my life, really. Vegas once, Chicago once, but I'd had never been anywhere really, let alone Korea, which just seems like this, I don't know, fantasy land type of thing for all these 10 and a half months of dreaming about what is this like, what's that like reading these little tourist books, looking at circles and sticks, trying to make out, it's in there somewhere, it's in there somewhere, come on.

Adam Crapser:

Realizing that I can't pronounce any of this. Any of the Korean things I thought I knew anything about, totally wrong pronunciation. No wonder nobody knows what you're talking about, Adam. There was a Korean [inaudible 00:33:19] that came in there, was able to talk to him, talked about a lot of stuff Korean. He was able to give me a cheat sheet about a lot of stuff.

Adam Crapser:

But it still wasn't real to me yet until finally I made it to international airport and literally these two undercover, plain clothes fed, FBI dudes, whatever, who were sitting on either side of me, the whole plane ride and getting up to go with me to the bathroom and all that. No handcuffs, but I'm just like, "Where am I going to go, man? You know you've been watching too many movies. Calm down."

Adam Crapser:

I was super sick. I had gained a lot of weight when I was in detention. I was super unhealthy. I had collapsed in there. I had a really bad vitamin deficiency. I had never been that sick before. There was other things too that I had had experienced and that had happened while I was in there. You can't imagine having an Adam and being in a place where everybody has a foreign sounding name except for you. When they're calling your name, everybody is like, where it's just like, it's weird to them, let alone at the very end where you're popping up on the TV in the middle of the Trump election. The Seattle news, there's a Korean American talking about a Korean American that just got... it doesn't make any sense. Everything starts kind of-

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Surreal, surreal.

Adam Crapser:

Yeah, it's really surreal. You're terrified too. You're terrified the whole time, but you can't show anybody that. You can't cry on the phone. You can't... I'm lucky I got to be on the phone, but I mean you can't cry. There's no place for you to go put your head down and have a good cry and get it out. Your life in America just died, but you can't even let it out.

Adam Crapser:

You're in a big box with a hundred other dudes who are stressing. Some of these people are seriously afraid for their lives for when they touch down. They got nothing. They got less than nothing. So to be side by side in there with them, breaking bread with them, trying to learn about their stories, trying to put an arm around somebody and just telling them, it's going to be okay, like trying to support them in there as much as you can. I've kept in touch with some of them. Some that are here in Mexico.

Adam Crapser:

It's not the same as doing time in the criminal justice system where you know you're getting out, you know you're going to go back to an area that's familiar. You're going to hit the streets. You're going to... you know people. You can get something going.

Adam Crapser:

But this Korean stuff, and then all the hype up until there. It was super stupid. They took me to KoRoot that night. That was not the agreement. I was supposed to have my cell phone, I was supposed to go to a hotel, I was supposed to get some bath robe action and like a bubble tub after 10 and a half months and try and just relax and decompress.

Adam Crapser:

But these Korean TV people, they tricked me. Bait and switch while they're fighting with the other cast people and other adoptees about who's going to drive me to wherever. That was stupid. I was like, "This is not a movie. This is not a TV show. This is my real life."

Adam Crapser:

They want to go to KoRoot wake up to Danish dude who can't speak English, but wake him up while he's sleeping so that they can film stuff. I'm like, "I just got done spending 10 and a half months sleeping in a big box with a bunch of other dudes. I don't want to sleep with more dudes at KoRoot." That wasn't the deal.

Adam Crapser:

I didn't get any sleep that night, even though I was super jet lagged and tired. Then the next day, it was off to, you're going to meet your mom stuff. It's like, how can you be grateful to people who assisted in this, but you didn't ask for it. You didn't ask for them to help you find your birth family. That wasn't a spoken agreement, but then they find them. You want to feel grateful, but you're also terrified because it's going to bring up a bunch of stuff, but then they also want to exploit it and make it super public.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

The media?

Adam Crapser:

Yeah. When it's like, I don't got my adopted, sensible American mom or dad that I can call and say, "Hey what do you think about this one? What do you think about this? Something funny's going on? I need your opinion." Like, "Dad 911. What can you tell me? How should I proceed?"

Adam Crapser:

It's just me. I'm happy to just go with what I think is okay, feels okay, whatever, but I'm also super shook because I just came out of hell. I just came out of hell and I'm feeling insecure. I don't feel healthy. They want me to get at a bowl cut. I'm like, I need to, I'm trying to get a fade.

Adam Crapser:

Like all these things that are happening so fast. It was crazy. The places that I was living, the places and it's like, had I had time to arrange some things I probably could have found different accommodations and stuff. But they were making this all into this televised, indigent dude program and stuff. I'm like, "Yeah okay it kind of is, but it kind of isn't. What are you guys doing?" Then helping me to go get put on welfare and get my ID and stuff like that, which I appreciated, I guess except for that, I didn't know that there wasn't going to be any help to go find a job or get a job. There wasn't, there's no kind of like intake risk assessment. What are you good at? What are you not good at? What do you know how to do? Who can we put you in touch with?

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Was this MBC or was it just a variety of-

Adam Crapser:

Yeah, that was the MBC. That those were the MBC people. Which is crazy, it's just, there's a whole bunch of stuff that's been crazy as far as, I can't even believe that over the last five years, all these things happened or took place. I mean, I got stories on stories on stories and some of them people wouldn't even believe if I didn't have proof that it actually happened, but Korea's a crazy place, especially if you don't go over there insulated with U.S. Citizenship and a credit card and-

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Money.

Adam Crapser:

Emergency, red eyes out if I need to, consulates that speak your language. Stuff like that. Yeah, you can go over there and survive. I'm not here to tell anybody what their survival should look like, but it takes a while. It takes a while to get your bearings. If you don't have degrees and you don't have a job waiting for you, or you don't have a big social network of people who are the same like you, prepare to be treated differently. Prepare to have people use what's happened to them in their life and how they've been treated. Get ready for that to run over to you because you're kind of low hanging fruit. Be prepared for some of these weird behaviors to come out where somebody finally is somebody that you don't, you can't ever get to be, and they want to make sure you know that. So okay.

Adam Crapser:

I've met a lot of academics, a lot of people who have all this schooling and that's great and stuff, but that's not how I lead off conversations or how I get to know people. I don't just have run up on somebody, "Hey man. I heard you're an adoptee. Where'd you go to undergrad?" I don't start off my introduction. That's not how I meet people. That's not how I find commonalities and stuff like that.

Adam Crapser:

It's kind of weird, kind of weird, but maybe that's, maybe in the college world and all that stuff, maybe that's how everybody is with each other. But I don't think so, because I know some pretty smart and pretty well situated people who have a lot of education and that's not how they really interacted with me.

Adam Crapser:

I got to believe that we all have the ability, I guess, to do better, no matter what circumstances are thrown at us. I mean that. Life is not easy for everybody or anybody. It's easy to sit and feel like, "Oh the sky is falling on me alone." Or, "I'm alone in this forever." And all that stuff. But I think the biggest, our biggest disservice to ourselves is the Korean adoptee community, is that we had the numbers, we have the numbers to do so much, so much good. We could have elected officials. We could have people really taking us seriously.

Adam Crapser:

It's just, I don't know why, but progress there is slow, is really slow. I have my own personal opinions like anybody, but it sucks because already coming from these very underrepresented and underpowered communities, that to see this stuff just play out on and on and on and for us to never be able to be like, "Look man, we have something so cool and so special and so important."

Adam Crapser:

We definitely have our feet in two different places, in two different countries, in two different cultures. There's so much that we could do with that together. That's the thing, that's the challenge. I wish that people, we could all just admit that, yeah man, we're desperate and we're hurt and we're desperate for relief from this hurt and how do we feel better about this? How do we collectively feel better? Because it's like, adoptee's got this own extra kind of han you know what I mean? It's like wasabi han that you get and it's like, you carry it around with you and you're already supposed to have this Korean han, but you feel this other kind of... you know, we get a lot of extra, extra or everything else.

Adam Crapser:

Sometimes that's celebrated and sometimes it's questioned or it's kind of confusing, for myself, for sure. But like I said, back to the self-awareness stuff, we all have choices and the ability to challenge our version of self-awareness with I don't know, real life. Yeah, there's a lot of info out there and a lot of modeling, I guess that for me, has been healthy. Has been healthy and helpful as I've been able to try and become a better and more patient and kinder and more sensible person throughout this journey, that nothing was going to stop it unless I was going to make one of those decisions that I thought about all the time. That off switch is always right there.

Adam Crapser:

Just thinking about it sometimes is comforting. But it's very easy to go down this fucked up rabbit hole. I can't do that adoptee memorial page stuff and all this kind of collecting of people I never knew, but I share common, similar things with. It haunts me. It just was, it would just destroy me, reading some of these stories. I'm like, there's too many similarities, so I have to separate myself from that and I have to find the reasons that are worth celebrating to live and the things that really matter because it's too easy as adoptees.

Adam Crapser:

I even had a close friend that we were fairly close and we actually met at Phillip Clay's funeral. I'm not going to say her name or anything, but she was adopted to a different country and we got to know each other well, but she committed suicide about a year and a half ago. I've never had a relationship or had been in a relationship with somebody who I found out later had struggled with some of these things so much. Out of all the topics that we shared or that we talked about together surrounding adoption, that would be the one topic that we never addressed, but that we both had had personal feelings about and all the way to her passing.

Adam Crapser:

These things are messed up and they keep on. They keep on affecting you throughout life and it's hard. As we get older and trying to have to understand our life cycles and what the importance is of them, what it is we're capable of doing during these very precious, short years that we have in front of us to do something that's worthwhile and that'll be recorded meaningful and correctly.

Adam Crapser:

As Korean adoptees, I hope that we're able to leave in our wake something awesome. I don't want our legacy to be that we're just, we're a misunderstood group of people, or that we were lucky because. I hope that the narrative never stays in this extra gratitude thing. I think everybody understands what gratitude looks like or they should like and the thing about gratitude is that it's supposed to be free. It's not a currency and it's personal.

Adam Crapser:

I don't want the narrative to be that we didn't have enough extra gratitude, just for the lives that we were given, which brings up these really, for me, personal and funny kind of feelings I have about privilege and our ability... because even for myself, I have all the way through my deportation, had privilege that for instance, my Cambodian friends have not been afforded, whereas some of my Latino and Southeast Asian friends have not had the same opportunities or options or let alone a soap box to even be heard about how they feel about something.

Adam Crapser:

Irrespective or irregardless of adoption, there's so many similarities and crossovers to all these other impacted communities. It's hard to not be embarrassed sometimes as an adoptee and be like, "Here we are, we're just getting extra again. There's a lot of extra going on right now." Like we're sitting here arguing over a movie. Other people are living said movie. Where the ridiculousness stops and where the seriousness starts, I don't really know all the time. It sucks because I want to take myself serious. I want be able to take myself serious and be like, "God I mean, don't go to on those real corny avenues of nothingness and keep it centered and stick to the point."

Adam Crapser:

A lot of people, I think misinterpret my, yes I'm in this position when it comes to this argument about this movie stuff, but the bigger picture is what everybody should be focused on. I don't know if you want to talk more about that, but that to me is more important than my own personal story on how what's happened over... not to discount your questions or anything like that. I'm just saying to me personally, the whole premise behind why people are even talking about me or why they're even talking about this issue or any of that stuff is what's important.

Adam Crapser:

This legislation, the nuance that people cannot wrap their head around, even the language of the bill at this moment, people don't understand. They go and sign this bill into whatever. They don't snap fingers and we get on planes and go back to the United States as U.S. Citizens. That's not what's happening. People need to get involved and understand what the wording of that bill means. But for the people that need a cheat sheet, here's one specific.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

This is the Adoptee Citizen Act of 2022 now.

Adam Crapser:

Yeah, it'll be, if we go off to the previous one, which would probably be the exact same language, but the different circuits within the United States all have different interpretations of criminal codes from state to state. So somebody who commits a robbery in a first degree in New York, that robbery might be considered a theft in another state. So where you're positioned in terms of removal or eligibility to be removed-

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Depends on the state you're in.

Adam Crapser:

Totally different. The laws in terms of felony probation, misdemeanor probation, felony parole, felony post prison supervision, misdemeanor community custody, felony community custody. The list goes on and on. These things are not the same across the board from county to county, state to state. There's not just this federal mandate or statute that covers every single state and it never has to do with... intersects with their state laws.

Adam Crapser:

There's so much to this. People to talk about, "Oh I talked to an immigration lawyer." Oh yeah. Well they're actually called criminal immigration attorneys, but it's kind of a joke because the intersection for criminal defense attorneys and immigration attorneys is very, very small throughout the United States. Like for each state, there's only a handful of people who specialize in these fields and that's for fighting removal cases.

Adam Crapser:

This is not for issuing or requesting filing for a student visa or an immigration visa or an alien relative petition. This is for serious fighting of immigration cases. When people throw around that this person was consulted, that person was consulted, blah, blah, blah. Okay, what is it that you know, and what's your specialty? What's your back ground? What is it that you actually know about?

Adam Crapser:

Because I know quite a bit about the immigration system, because I've paid very close attention and I've had long, long, long conversations with an attorney. My attorney who is a qualified professional criminal immigration attorney. Me having a first person, vested interest in this, like I've paid attention. I have books and books of notes. I understand things maybe a little bit differently and very specific, more specifically than some other people do, because I'm directly impacted. For instance, like if it hadn't of been for one 9th circuit ruling, appeal ruling, I would have a lifetime ban in Korea. That happened, that decision came out while I was... shortly after my first immigration court hearing. But that ruling that was entered into that judgment, that was entered into the federal statutes for immigration removal, is void for vagueness. I can never be, I can't be charged with it. It can be brought back up.

Adam Crapser:

Then they tried to come after me for a firearm charge. A firearm charge is not removable. It didn't fall under the category as a removable offense. It wasn't a crime involving moral turpitude. There was a number of different things.

Adam Crapser:

A lot of people who think that they understand criminal immigration law or immigration law period, they're the same people who'd be like, "Can't you just marry American?" Then what? Then what? Then you go down to the DMV and fill out a form. That's not what happens. This isn't how life works.

Adam Crapser:

Everybody who was born in another country should have an interest in this stuff. Not only for information in case their kids or people that they know and care about ever become a part of this, or have to educate themselves about it, but it's no secret that there are Arab Americans or members of the Arab community, which, whether people like it or not, are Asian that have been denaturalized. They have their very specific reasons as to why they were denaturalized, which is neither here nor there in proximity to us as adoptees, I guess you'd say. The bigger takeaway here that anybody who was born in another country, who immigrated any kind of way, needs to wake up and realizes that for what we think is fair and what we think is just, and what we think is rights, all that stuff's getting a little bit murky over there in the United States. It's getting a little bit ambiguous.

Adam Crapser:

Everybody who's ever immigrated any kind of way in the United States should be paying attention to anything immigration or deportation related because who's to stop anybody from just thinking, I hate to make these examples, but I mean, if this Roe v. Wade stuff can be going on for this long like this you're telling me the interpretation of the 1996 INA Act can't be open for interpretation if somebody's feeling some kind of way about immigrants from month to month?

Adam Crapser:

I mean these are things that are, that to some people might seem like a stretch, but when I've seen American citizens inside of an immigration detention facility and it took them 30 days to prove that they're a United States citizen and be released with no reparations, period.

Adam Crapser:

This really happens. It's not the first time. There's been plenty of times. I mean, let alone that my criminal prosecutor or chief counsel in my case is sitting in federal prison right now, for four years for stealing deported people's information and opening credit cards and all kind of fraud that he got busted for. Raphael Sanchez.

Adam Crapser:

I mean, anybody who looks at that and then looks at my removal case and all that and puts all these things together and knows all these details, they're like "This thing, this doesn't make any sense from the get go, let alone where we are now with it." Which is, people who want to make movies about stuff that's politically charged learn about politics. People who want to use Facebook learn how to not get locked out of them for four years. That being people's excuses for being ignorant or for not doing ethical or even adequate research. We don't want to hear this stuff anymore. These are childish responses to grown ass questions about thing that impact and affect other people. I don't get it. I don't honestly, some of this stuff, I don't understand. It sucks that there is this infighting within the adoptee community and not only the adoptee committee, it's now has worked its way into other adoptee groups who are arguing about who the movie's about or what the message is or what the takeaways are.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Well, let's talk about that a little bit. Blue Bayou, Justin Chon's new Indie film that's out. You talked about the experiences you've had with media, with adoptee advocacy, with groups that may have had their own agenda as well, trying to align with your case. To me, you've had, I could understand if you've felt exploited in the process at various junctures.

Adam Crapser:

Absolutely.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Maybe having your narrative, your story told by others and not fully had agency in your own story. I'm wondering, is that part of the issue with Blue Bayou as well? That you saw your story, your story on the big screen and feeling a bit exploitive, exploitative.

Adam Crapser:

Yeah I mean, it's a combination of things. I mean, first and foremost, it is exploitation and other people feel the exploitation. It's like, even if I didn't, other people would. If I had died before Blue Bayou aired, people would've been like, "Dude, I think that that's... " The reality is, it is exploitative. If Justin Chon had never contacted me in 2017, this would probably be moot. We wouldn't even be really talking about this. But he did contact me. Then last year his producer contacted me. I've provided the receipts for all that. None of this is about like shame on Justin Chon. This is about, "Hey dude, do better. Educate yourself. Don't come with these weird stories after the fact. Don't try to insert information after the fact and keep your word." You welched on an agreement that you weren't going to make the movie in my likeness, that you were not going to use any photographs of me which...

PART 2 OF 5 ENDS [00:58:04]

Adam Crapser:

I'm going to use any photographs of me which they kept their word to, but he also agreed with Adoptees4Justice, that would be your lion moment because that's how the producer came at me is they wanted to make a lion esque movie. I said I'm familiar with that movie and I know what you mean, but that's not happening with me. I guess I should give some context here and that is that in 2019 or the end of 2018, anyways, it was around that time some kind of outfit that makes plays on a professional level in Korea. I don't know what you call it got in touch with me when we were doing some social justice outreach work in [inaudible 00:58:50] one day, and they wanted me to come and talk to them.

Adam Crapser:

So I believe Ben [inaudible 00:58:55] and I went talk to these people and so we got to talking to them. They wanted to shoot some video of us talking and this and that and they told me about this play that they're working on. They told me that they had been working on this play for two years. So I'm doing the math and I'm thinking, well, that would've been before I arrived in Korea. To my calculations and they said, it's called [inaudible 00:59:19] is the name of the play. So I'm thinking it's about adoptees or it's about adoption. Their English wasn't great. They didn't have somebody who was trying to translate. So they weren't able to give me a complete rundown of the whole thing. They just say, Hey, it's about you. I'm thinking, okay, whatever.

Adam Crapser:

So they invite us to this screening of this play and about 10 plus adoptees and a bunch of other Korean people show up to this thing and within 10 minutes, I'm busting lines off of the hood of a car and all this stuff. It's super weird. It's just really weird to see somebody's interpretation of me. That they're having play me. Then we get to the climactic scene where the person playing me is getting bent over by a parental figure and that was it. By then my heart is in my throat. I want to punch somebody. I'm pissed. I'm like who in the F do you guys think you are, my life is not a drama. I don't know what you guys are just, is it creative liberties that you're just taking inserting whatever wherever.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

No consultation with you.

Adam Crapser:

No. With some specifics they just wanted the person who could speak English, was some kind of semi-famous, whatever that played in whatever role in there. People who know me know that I don't care about proximity to famous people. We all believe the same. I've met famous people. I got friends who party with Matthew McConaughey whenever they want. I got friends who know famous people. I'm not impressed by that kind of stuff. I'm not impressed by money. I'm not impressed by the cars. I've had some nice stuff. I never been rich. I never had a ton of money, but my hustle's up there. So I've been in proximity to good stuff. My wife comes from good stuff. I've been around to understand the difference between attempted leather and leather type of thing. So I'm not impressed by all the glittery stuff. So when people think it's about money or it's about trying to make a name for yourself or something like that, no that ain't me. I'm into promoting the truth and I'm into promoting the bill. I'm not into promoting myself.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

So you felt this play took liberties with your story and did not include you?

Adam Crapser:

A lot of people yeah. Them and after them, there was other people who did too and there's been other adoptees who've done the same thing. Even recently. People who think that, that their journalism is just, Hey, I'm going to do whatever I want type of stuff. That's their approach to ethical reporting or journalism, with somebody you say, I'll just put that out there. Listen John Perry, you suck, you're not a reporter. You lied last time you were in journalism school. You're not a good ethical reporter. You're garbage. I had already told her don't ever contact me again. I mean, she just used sound bites and clips from 2015 with my daughter that have nothing to do with Blue Bayou. She's a joke. I told her prior to her doing that interview, prior to her writing something about Blue Bayou, I said, I got nothing to say and you don't need to say anything about.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Oh, this is recent. She did a recent piece.

Adam Crapser:

Yeah. She just did all things considered or whatever with, with NPR. So anybody, who's my friend call into NPR tell them, hey, she's don't need to be reporting about people. That's for sure, go report about dolphins or something. Don't report about people. She's for real, like that's super disrespectful and I have all the messages in the same message she's saying, well, I'm sorry you feel that way. I'm going to go ahead and finish this story, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. So my point is, the takeaway from this is that, listen, adoptees, don't get it twisted. Adoptees will screw you over if they can get the chance. Just because we're all adoptees doesn't mean that people care about each other or that they got each other's back or they won't step on you to not get their shoes wet.

Adam Crapser:

They will, they will use you. They will hurt you. They will exploit you the same way. Other adoptees in Korea have done similar things. Speaking for me, saying that I agree with this or that trying to get me into these stupid little arenas, telling me, oh, we've been waiting for a case like yours for 10 years or something. I don't care. What does that have to do with me? Or getting back home or my daughters, or what does it have to do? What does it have to do with me having a roof over my head or a job, or being able to eat or take a solid? What does it have to do with? So there's all kinds of these things that I don't think people really think about when it comes to what adoption deportation looks like and straight up for a lot of the other adoptees that have been in Korea, because this has been brought up too, because there's one running his mouth now.

Adam Crapser:

Stop ripping off people in the adoptee communities. You know Quit making bad names for yourself. Commit to something and stick with it. I'm sorry. I've tried to help some of these people I've even told them, Hey man, I got lawyers that want to talk to you about trying to help you with post-conviction relief, but they can't put the Xbox down. They're not invested in their own even if they have an opportunity, an avenue back to the United States, they don't even want to check, look into it.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Can you give us the history of what has been your contact with Justin Chon?

Adam Crapser:

Oh, the only contact I had with him was she contacted me in 2017. I believe it was in March and sent me a text message. It was a pretty heart to heart, bond over a couple of things we have in common type of a message, which was just like, he was at a hamburger joint and I was crying, reading my story. He watched Vice and read two New York Times articles and then he felt like everybody needed to know about my story. He can't imagine being separated from my kids because he's a father to be and that he can't imagine being deported for things he did so long ago because he had been in and out of juvie as a kid. That's the long and the short of his message to me.

Adam Crapser:

At the time like I said, Daniel Dae Kim and two Korean guys had been in talks with me about making a movie, book thing and that's another story. At the time Daniel Dae Kim came over to Korea and we met for whiskey one night, talked about ideas, about him playing me and all this kind of stuff. The Korean guys were talking about how the money was going to be raised for this movie. I wanted to get into what's the synopsis of the movie and that's another story. The high point is, one, nobody would've even put in the effort for what they were offering as well as they wanted to make my life story into a Disney. They even used the word Disney family reunions story.

Adam Crapser:

That I could tell my truth in the book and have a hundred percent control over how my story is thought of, told in the book and that I would receive royalties for life and all this blah, blah, blah. I'm like, look, man, I've never written a book or received royalties for life, but I know enough about literature to know that, that's not a great offer. I don't care about that and my life is not a Disney movie, so I'm going to have to politely decline. That was fine. That was the end of it. There was no bad feeling. It was no anything. I got receipts from all that too. So when Justin got ahold of me, I was still in talks with these Korean finance guys.

Adam Crapser:

Basically Daniel Dae Kim role in it was just that he would be playing me and he would be providing the production because he owns a production company. Right after this is when we started filming the Good Doctor or something in Canada. So how he explained it is that he would recover his production costs and whatever he would get paid to do the role and the backend of the movie. They're explaining all this stuff to me and I'm like, it doesn't really matter to me. I'm just like are you going to tell the truth? Is it going to be an actual, by this time I had already dealt with NBC, I had already had a number of issues with Vice TV and other people who contacted me. I had already learned how to say yes to no, by this point.

Adam Crapser:

So when Justin's producer contacted me last year, the lady by the name of [inaudible 01:08:25] McCoy from the Stalker Production outfit, sends me these messages and I'm offended immediately, I can't even type a message back really, I'm typing, Hey, let's jump on a call. Let's jump on a call, right. I'm trying to type some of these messages. So we did have some communications through text about it all, and then on the telephone, and even within my text communications, I made it clear, you haven't done any research about my life, or you would not ask me those questions, you would to ask for that of me. If you knew anything about my life, you'd know that I don't have high resolution glossies just lying around, of me and my adoptive families for you.

Adam Crapser:

So this was super sloppy. I always got real emotional about it and I told her very clearly. I said, I hope I make myself clear, but I don't want you to use my likeness or anything about me in this. If you want to go on and change your whole script and your synopsis, which they had changed twice anyway, because the original one, he has a Vietnamese wife and I'm like, imagine that, cause my ex-wife is Vietnamese and this isn't about now. It isn't as much about, Hey Justin, you bit off my life and you welshed and you didn't contact me back and you went and decided to just run rogue and do it the way you wanted to. That's a small part of it.

Adam Crapser:

The bigger issue is that they had a standing agreement with my friends at Adoptees4Justice and with [inaudible 01:09:54], and I was a part of this organization at this time, that this would be in writing and that the movie would not proceed unless there was a guarantee that the Adoptee Citizenship Act would be mentioned in reference at the end was a call to action so that people knew how to get involved, where to get the correct information about this issue. That's what his whole take was on, why he was making the movie in the first place. It's suspect and it's suspect for a number of different reasons that people can come up with on their own. I would challenge people to just take a couple of them and that is that, the amount of time he said that he researched the film is exactly in time with when he learned about my case.

Adam Crapser:

There's another adoptee that probably none of you guys know who knows Justin Chon personally and this guy's in the Hollywood realm as well. I have messages that go back all the way to 2017 too, even with, at the time that I guess another movie Justin was appropriating from somebody called Miss Purple that we recently found out a lot of info about who knows specifics about the contact and about what Justin's intentions were from the beginning. So some of that is neither here nor there. Some of it is kind of important to note as we are setting the stage for why would Justin do things the way he did? I think it's really as simple as when you throw around the word deportation or deported, there's some finality sounding stuff with that. Maybe it's the shin part of the deported part, but I don't think to him, he really was able to understand what a 10 year bar looks like versus a lifetime ban.

Adam Crapser:

Like those things sound different. Even though later on in interviews or something, he references the 10 year bar, but there's so much inaccuracies from what I understand that have been included with the film that he totally missed his shot at relaying correct and concise information and being able to use his platform to inspire other people, to get involved and support the bill. That would've been a demonstration or an exercise in how we, as Asians, can use our numbers or our privilege or our whatever to come together about something that can be rectified, with that kind of a presence, or that kind of a collective voice. Like I said, you removed me from the equation and like he screwed a lot of us over as just humans and as people, as Koreans, as adoptees because if we say we believe in this all for one, one for all things, when it comes to citizenship, then they should be able to understand why something is so important.

Speaker 1:

Now there we go. I ain't going nowhere.

Speaker 1:

You know I'd cover the moon with you, right? I ain't scared.

Speaker 1:

You can depart voluntarily or you can stay and appear. But if the judge don't rule in your favor, you can never come back.

Adam Crapser:

Where's the line drawn on where we appropriate stories, especially adoptee stories and how those stories are told and how we are represented as adoptees. How do we feel about people who have not been adopted or cannot understand what feeling like it worth or having to own what that means to us as humans, as we get older and how we explain that to our children, how we share these types of information, which becomes generational. How do we feel about people who will never, ever even come into proximity with some of those very unique experiences? How do we feel collectively about those people who, what we do know about them is that they have been exposed to tremendous amounts of privilege from very, very early on. I hate to use the example, but we know how that worked out for Kim Jung-un, don't we.

Adam Crapser:

So this level of privilege, I guess that rolls right into these groups of having been in Korea and seeing how some Korean people, or even Korean young men, or even middle age men are treated because of the patriarchal standards and allowances within the Korean culture. It's embarrassing to me as a father, as a Korean, as a male, as anything that these people really buy into this, like little prince syndrome, they really think that they're special and they're that important, or that it's okay for your kid to just throw fits right in the middle of anywhere because they want a Choco pie, these types of crazy weird behaviors. Then I catch wind of other things and I see people like David Chang, who's like this baby Huey spoiled kid went to this super prestigious boarding schools and stuff. Then he goes and makes fun of us for having been raised by white people and how that, and how, what that has to do with authenticity as it pertains to cooking. I don't know, but it's concerning to me when so many adoptees are in the same breath.

Speaker 1:

[inaudible 01:15:21] chain's awesome.

Adam Crapser:

Right. Why? Because he's on Netflix, because of his proximity to Anthony Bourdain or because you know him personally, he's a good guy. Right.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Can we for the record just explain what it is that you saw a clip of with David Chang?

Adam Crapser:

So in Ugly Delicious, a series on Netflix, there's a scene in season one. I can't remember exactly which episode it's like six or seven and he's sitting around with, and unfortunately Steven Yeun is standing there and he doesn't really say anything. He kind of chuckles along with David Choe, the weirdo artist guy out there, Choy or whatever his name is, the real eccentric guy in the bathrobe and they're talking about authenticity and they're throwing around kind of some jokes about authenticity and in the same context, it's like self loathing and it finally comes to David Chang.

David Chang:

Like I'm a Korean Vanilla Ice. I am. I take Korean self-loathing to a whole nother level, Korean Vanilla Ice though. Just do the rest of the show in Korean. Let's hear how good your Korean, no, I'm like a Korean that was adopted by white parents that has like an Asian woman fetish.

Adam Crapser:

So his references or his analogies are that's how authentic.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

I suppose that we're not authentic Asians.

Adam Crapser:

Exactly. So it's very easy to hear it and understand it and to be offended by it, what's even more offensive to me at this point is that, that came out a long time ago and nobody was saying anything. Nobody's been like, Hey, drag this dude on the internet, because you don't get to talk to us that way. You don't get to talk about us that way. You sure as hell not going to say it to my face. You say it behind a movie lens. You don't go down to certain areas and just start spouting off stuff like that. No.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Initially Adam, would you have been open to, let's say someone like Justin Chon doing a film?

Adam Crapser:

Yeah. I think that it isn't about telling my story. I would've been fine if he would've just told the truth, if he would've just like kept his word and told the truth, right. Changed the whole synopsis. Which he did change some things, but it's like remove some of these other things, man, and make it less about the cinematography. Make it a little bit more about the message. I know enough about cinema and watching that movies to be like, look, dude, I see what's going on, Justin. It's cool. I'm being sarcastic or for fictitious at times when I make minority references and stuff like that. The reality is that dude, if you're going to take on a topic that is this important to me or this important to other impacted people or this important to the history of Korean adoptees, which is a part of Korean American history and you're this ethical and responsible storyteller who does an appropriate or is not an opportunistic filmmaker like you've accused other Asians of right within Hollywood in the same breath.

Adam Crapser:

If you're going to go and stand by all these things that you said, which to me is pretty much drivel because you're not backing any of it up, but if you're going to go and say that you are this person, you're going to develop movies this way, why would you not want to do it with, with authenticity? Is it really come down to the bottom dollar? Are you really that cheap? Are you really that poor? That you can't budget between 300 grand and 250 grand or whatever you made the movie at really like that 50,000 is the precursor to whether or not you actually do the research because maybe you have to pay somebody for some of the time or something like involvement. I don't get it. Or is it something more simple than that?

Adam Crapser:

Is it that you're just a really lazy person who you just like to take pieces of different things, throw it, into this pot and try to be this edgy provocative on the cutting edge of storytelling. I don't believe that because he's emphasized how he really wants to tell Korean American stories, through his lens and as a Korean American and he wants to talk about what being an American means and stuff like that, which is easy to do when you were born a US citizen. When you were born into your privilege that you have right now. So I'm not saying Justin's a bad person. I'm not saying that he had these ulterior motives and nefarious ideas about everything. I don't think that, that's what happened. I think that he's just remiss and he's culturally and as a reflection of his life experience or his lived experiences, I think that he just doesn't understand how things work.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

And it's maybe an example of just sort of unfortunately members of our own Korean diaspora sort of romanticizing or thinking they know the adoptee experience when it just emphasizes how far they are from actually understanding us.

Adam Crapser:

It's a weird intersection. The more I think about it, the more weird it becomes to me because, yes, Korean Americans have rose to this level of personifying this model minority and some got there by hard work, some got there by their birth rights. Some guy got there by adoption and the opportunities or the circles that they would then run in. It's actually very similar to like the country of Korea and how it's developed. Which is way too fast. It's the same thing. The proximity to white Hollywood has become available to some Asians and the majority being Koreans and that's in any area of entertainment and Koreans got a whiff of this and they see it, they've seen other Koreans get on TV. They've seen them be able to do these things and interact with white Hollywood.

Adam Crapser:

So of course the American dream for a lot of Koreans is to be able to get into proximity with these people who hold the majority of the wealth. So much so that they become like super conservative or super Republicans and have these super narrow minded views about immigration and about all things, that has to do with race and gender and everything else, which is really unfortunate. It's also not surprising. It's the [inaudible 01:22:08], you guys, the white power, Hank, you, the native Korean guys that come out as like white supremacists, those guys are weird. It's not as much of a surprise for me when I meet adoptees that are from Wisconsin or Minnesota that I catch and dropped in the N-word and I'm like, whoa, because first I want to drop them.

Adam Crapser:

But then I'm also genuinely intrigued. Where'd you learn to talk like that? You didn't use an a on the end of that buddy, because of where you grew up, you used an R an E R and I heard it very clearly. So first of all, don't ever talk like that in front of me again and two, where did you actually acquire said jargon, who taught you how to talk like this? Or do you only talk like this when the TV's up and the doors are closed and there's nobody with any Melatonin around or melanin around you? Who are you saying this for. You trying to impress me? I've seen people get turned inside out for saying that, like what are you talking about? Then I realized that this is not actually that surprising because it's the same as

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Appropriation.

Adam Crapser:

Yeah, it is. It's also almost like my adoptive parents, my second adoptive set of parents were extremely racist. Now that I'm older, I'm more aware and stuff. Even some of the little jabs or little things that would be said here and there that I didn't pick up on as a 13, 14 year old boy. Now that I'm old enough, I got enough miles on me that I can understand what the implication was or what that meant. I also saw this really cowardly modeling. That I didn't realize back then that like, oh, you're such a tough guy. Actually you're doing all this inside of a car. You're saying all this inside of a car, not to that person's face. I have yet to see you go beat up a black guy. So what's going on? As a kid cause this guy's beat my ass too. So I'm thinking you could beat up anybody as a kid, but then you give up and you go through prison and you live some life on the streets and you interact with people and you get to know people that are regardless of what you look like, like that isn't even close to being why or how you're a decent human being.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Well, Let me just add, let me just pose this to you, Adam, what do you say to, you've heard some of the responses that, artistic license or that, even if you can point at things that where this movie gets it wrong, that the larger issue is that gets it in front of audiences that may know nothing about this issue of a deportation. What would you say to that kind of response?

Adam Crapser:

I would say that's probably farfetched, wishful thinking because they already know that the movie's not doing good, so does it reach its target, it's viewer, is its viewership the intended target. My guess is that the majority of the people who go out to support the movie, aren't really going to take away any impactful information that's going to motivate or spur them to even go do more Googling. I think even with the bit of controversy around it, I don't think people are interested enough in that to where they're going to go learn themselves or educate themselves about the actual issue, which is non adoptee citizenship. So citizenship of non adoptees, it's non-existent for some, so how we came to be there, I've even heard, people they go and even Justin, they go on, they misinterpret or they don't explain the details of the differences between the childhood citizenship act or the lot of times the way when these two acronyms are used in the same sentence, people get it all wrong and they're not able to specifically explain these very pertinent details of the bill or very important details.

Adam Crapser:

You could ask them to difference between IR3 and IR4 visas. Which is what almost every one of us went on, during a specific amount of time. They can't tell you any difference other than it's a three and a four. They can't tell you any of these things because one they're lazy and they want to speak out, turn about things that they think are important, but they are not going to go take the time to actually learn about. For me with that is a demonstration of it's just that, if you're not directly impacted by it, or unfortunately you're the way you're situated in proximity to immigration or to the negative aspects of immigration, because I've asked a lot of people, I'm in Mexico and I've asked a lot of people, Hey, do you have any met.

PART 3 OF 5 ENDS [01:27:04]

Adam Crapser:

... a lot of people. I'm in Mexico and I've asked a lot of people, "Hey, do you have any Mexican friends?" And some people, "Well, I knew a couple growing up" or something. You know what I mean? But I haven't heard any of these real good stories of, "Yeah. It's funny you mentioned that, we actually have people of Latino descent in my family." And so there's been a big emphasis on this or that, which Anna could contribute to because she has proximity to that.

Adam Crapser:

But it's so weird to me because, me, I grew up around a lot of Chicanos, Mexican Americans, right? So I've had a very unique and special involvement with them, at least for me in my life. They were very acceptant of me for a lot of reasons that had nothing to do with my ethnicity. And those were obviously very important details of life for me, because I can remember being hung up on by Korean churches that a few times I did try and just spontaneously call somebody in a Korean church, thinking that they could help me somehow. And this is way later on, I was older to get hung up on. Felt not very good. When [Holt 01:28:17] and [Eugene Morgan 01:28:18] was pretty not interested in being very helpful. It's basically, and I think a lot of people know this, that just if you went through [inaudible 01:28:27] Korea, they'll just be like, "Oh, that's [inaudible 01:28:29] Korea, you need to get ahold of them." Not a lot of other options, So for me, all I can do is tell my truth.

Adam Crapser:

All I can do is share my story and how it pertains to the bigger picture and the bigger issue here and the bigger solution. I wish that people could decenter or remove me from some of the conversations that have to do with this very important issue. And the movie's out. We're not trying to think of it like it's going to stop the movie being shown or any of this. We have asked that they somehow digitally splice in at the end the call of action. You know what I mean? And a reminder or at least a conversation, because I've already put it out there. And I'm going to make this clear again, is that I invite Justin to come and have a real conversation with me. Be a real man, be a real human, you know what I mean?

Adam Crapser:

I'll pay for your accommodations and your airfare, come down here and meet me in Mexico city and we can have a conversation about it. There's no threats, no drama, nothing like that. We don't have to have cameras, none of that. And my hope is that after we have that conversation in our meeting is that he would leave more informed, and actually own a part of this movie that he's made with an understanding. He'd own the understanding of what the real issue is and what it really looks like not just for me, but for others. And that way, that when down the road, years from now when he's talking about this, he won't be talking in circles, he'll be talking about something he actually knows something about.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

And what has his response been?

Adam Crapser:

We haven't heard back yet. We haven't heard anything back yet from him about that, about the extent of that offer to him. It sucks because the only example I can make is like in the criminal justice system or in prison, two people of the same ethnicity fighting each other, unless you're known opposite gang members, isn't a good look. For Asians And Pacific Islanders to fight among yourselves is a no-no because there's not that many of us. So we need to stay united no matter what.

Adam Crapser:

We handle our drama internally, clean up our own backyard, so to speak. And so this stuff with Justin is really sad because it does makes us as a community look like we don't have enough respect for each other, we don't have enough communication with each other.

Adam Crapser:

We don't have enough understanding of each other, irregardless of your economic bracket or what neighborhood you grew up in. We don't have enough understanding and empathy for each other as human beings. And how that coincides with being Korean, I don't really know. I have my own ideas, but either way, I just think that we as people can do better. Justin, in his life, I think he could be a better storyteller and a better human being if he could just... Because I don't think what we're asking is unrealistic. I don't think that the premise behind this is unrealistic, and I also don't think that anybody would be having these conversations if there wasn't some validity to the argument or to the gripe.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

And to me, if he had done more work, he would've understood that consulting with 13 adoptees, I've seen reports of him saying that 13 adoptees were consulted on script changes, that he would've known that that wouldn't have been adequate in terms of fully collaboration and inclusiveness. And so that also rings hollow to me as well, that he could've assumed that that would've been, enough homework or-

Adam Crapser:

[crosstalk 01:32:14] to the irresponsibility factor of his research, absolutely. In my world, I look at it like he is just adding lies on top of lies, because originally it started out with six and then it went to seven, and then now we're up into 13th and 14th. Now, the part where I say that some of this is totally not truthful, is that one, all these consultants and all these people with the exception of one person, none of them have been fact checked. Nobody even knows who these people are. And when you include people's name at the end of something, and you just say that their name is Frank from Saint Kitts, I challenge anybody without getting on Google, tell me where Saint Kitts is. You know what I mean? Most people couldn't tell you let alone what their specific laws are around adoption.

Adam Crapser:

Every country sending and receiving has different laws. Just like us going to European countries or Scandinavian countries, the laws are different. So is it responsible to include alleged unknown adoptees. So I know who these people are because I've raised money for them. So I know who these people are, but if you want to stand up and be heard, and your voice counted, but you tell everybody your name is Frank [Knitty 01:33:28] from Saint Kitts, dude, you don't need to have a huge background in theater or cinema to know the reference, but that's not your real name.

Adam Crapser:

And so we're just going to use pseudonyms, we're not going to fact check anybody. We're going to allow organizations that just started a week before any of this information came out, and then we're going to get down to the nitty gritty and that is that. And this is where legalities and stuff are just going to start litigation and stuff's going to start happening. And that is that when you allow people like [Christopher Larson 01:34:04] to get involved and do a lot of really crazy manipulation tactics to friends of mine. People whose legacies are the social justice and the organizing work that they've done for 20 plus years. And you go in, and you manipulate them for money and position, and then you go and leave that organization and you try and use your proximity to that organization that you no longer are representative of. And you go and use that disingenuously to try and get yourself into these arenas to sound like an authority about the issue. See, and that's what's happening right now, is after the fact people who are fairly intelligent are connecting the dots in reverse.

Adam Crapser:

And they're like, "These people aren't even a 501(c). What are they? Are they a Facebook group? And who are they? And how do we know that they're adoptees? And how do we know they were actually deported? Do they have any paperwork? Do they go to a merits hearing? Do they have a removal order? Do they know that they have a lifetime bar? What were their removable offenses? What got them removed back to these countries?" Real questions because this is America, and people want facts. People want to fact check stuff. So while we're doing that, and while we're telling the truth and we're being honest about stuff, why don't we vet people the correct way too, when we're talking about such responsibility?

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Well, Adam, I have seen Korean American filmmakers and others in the AAPI community, question Justin, and calling to question his ethics. And so there are people listening from our community and from also other filmmakers. And do you think that this has brought up a needed conversation about representation within our own community?

Adam Crapser:

Absolutely. I mean, there's the pessimists who are going to be, "Oh, everybody's wants to police everybody." But that's not what's going on, otherwise this would've happened already many times. It's that we are at a day and age where information is so important and it moves so fast, but we're also at a point where people are aware that people fabricate and manufacture information and people control narratives, and they invent dialogue to sensationalize or to hype, or these different things. And when something as serious as this, the movement to try and obtain automatic citizenship for people who are legally adopted, especially us as Koreans who legislation was passed for us to be adopted to United States. When an issue is so important like this, we need to cross all of our t's and dot all of our i's.

Adam Crapser:

And it doesn't matter what a part of the story we're telling. When it comes to our beginnings as young helpless children or orphans, all the way to our success or failures within the system that adoption has created. Or the parameters that adoption has at least contributed to. And again, this is not about me. And I hope that your listeners, I hope that people, when they walk away from this, that they understand that, listen, I have friends who are adoptees now, who in the very beginning of this, they hated me. They didn't ever want to know me just because of what they heard or just because they thought that I would belong to this contingent of people who believe this way or that way.

Adam Crapser:

It's the people who've gotten to know me personally, over the last five years, and have seen me stay consistent, have seen me stay consistent with advocating for myself and for others who put in the time. I've never owned a video game console in my life, I don't have time to do that. That's for children or people who are very privileged. I don't, that's not me. So I'm not saying that to put people down, I'm saying that for me, when it comes to Adam, do you want to get involved and learn about what your options are to try and get back to the United States and to learn about the position that you were situated in, that isn't going to go away, or do you want to go crawl back under the covers and act like nothing's happening?

Adam Crapser:

Because I did that for a long time. I was in denial, I thought it was a bad dream, and then I kept playing with this lineman about the off switch. Because it's easy to paint yourself into a corner like that and think that there's no other options, there's no other way to make things better. But I disagree, and I feel like I'm qualified to say some of those things because I've lived it. I lived through it and people who know me know what some of those challenges were.

Adam Crapser:

So this is a personal detail or personal thing about me that I haven't ever shared before, and I feel like it's important to share, and I hope people will understand me when I say it. There's always been two people inside of me. Now, that sounds weird, right? "Yeah, we know, Adam. Personalities?" No. Maybe. That's not what I mean. I mean, that I've been on my own since I was 16 years old and I'm 46 years old now. So for the better part of 30 years, I have been taking care of myself top to bottom, start to finish. And that comes with a lot of hard times, a lot of bad memories, a lot of scary terrifying memories.

Adam Crapser:

So there's this grown man who's had to learn from all his mistakes and bad choices and all the beatings and all the consequence, and all this stuff and has to keep up with the goings on in the world and the expectations of people as an adult. And then there's this little boy who's scared of everything, who's still flinches at every loud noise, who's still afraid of having to interact with people when it comes to acquiring housing or things that I was delighted, delayed in my development with. Having to deal with contracts, having to understand things that I haven't ever had the modeling or training for, and yet let alone to want those things or to want better, not only for my life, but for my children and for my wife and the family that we've created.

Adam Crapser:

Come on, I never even had credit, but my adopted dad had a credit card in my name before I was even old enough to have one. People don't understand some of the things that were not there. I never had anybody sign on a piece of paper for me to get anything in my life, let alone be handed the keys to a car because I turned 16 and got a driver's license. There wasn't no driver's ed, there wasn't extracurricular sports. There wasn't all these things. I could go on and on and on about the differences, but that's not what I'm here to talk about. The issue that everybody's talking about or the issue that everybody is divided about, or has an opinion about, is a movie versus, did this guy appropriate Adam's life story, or did this guy screw us over because he promised that he would use his platform to talk about this very serious issue and bring a call to action and try to get this information out to the masses.

Adam Crapser:

And did he welch on that? Did he do us dirty like a lot of people have? Does he really have this mentality that he is the little prince of Korea, and we are just nothing? That we are really in this real life cast system where he's a prince and we're the peasants. Is this really [inaudible 01:42:24] his mentality? Is this really the way he feels about us as adoptees culturally? Is this how his family's thinks about adopted people? Because one thing I noticed in Korea with just strangers who I would meet, if they couldn't understand why I didn't speak Korean very good, and a little bit, I was able to explain to them that I was born in Korea, adopted to United States, and I was adopted. The immediate, as soon as they heard the word [inaudible 01:42:54] was to look down.

Adam Crapser:

They could not hold my gaze. They would not meet my eyes. They would look down and the rest of the conversation would be them averting my gaze, because I'm looking for some kind of acknowledgement or some kind of light switch to go on or something that makes that interaction human for me. And it was almost always the same. I couldn't get them to look me in the eye and acknowledge that I'm an adopted person and you know that I'm coming back to this country because you watched a documentary or something, but you're seeing a real life human being in front of you that bleeds like you do, and you say you care and all this.

Adam Crapser:

Your behavior is showing me that you care somehow, like you want to hug me and you're getting dramatic, but what is it you really feel about us as adopted people in your world? Who are we in your world? Because you know how many times I've heard people me, their Korean girlfriend told them one day just, "Matter of fact, [inaudible 01:43:57], my parents will never accept you because you're adopted."

Adam Crapser:

And the punishment that that person takes, having to deal with that, however they do, let alone... I mean, there's millions of examples that have happened, and that I've been around or have happened to me during my life in Korea and the things that continue happening. But I mean, I think for all of us, none of us want to be told that you're garbage because your parents didn't want you or something. You know what I mean? Ain't nobody trying to hear that. Nobody's trying to listen to that. And anybody's who's got any kind of self respect and dignity is going to tell somebody, "Hey man, you're going to stop talking like that or we're going to have a problem. You don't get to treat me that way." So that's where we're at with all this.

Adam Crapser:

And I've got the time, you know what I mean? I got the time, I got five more years to do. This isn't about money, this isn't about getting famous, or attention online or any of that. This is about Justin, just do the right thing, man. You have the ability to do the right thing. Don't be like a lot of other disingenuous people. Just admit that shit and move on, man. You know what I mean? Let's keep it moving and tell a better story next time. And there's a million stories you could have told that unfolded during the last five years that I'm aware of, that he could have talked about as it pertains to Koreans, Americans, America, Korea. I mean, there's so many other stories and things he could have talked about. And if he really cared about immigration and these hard to tell stories, you're not talking about child separation at the border.

Adam Crapser:

You're not talking about migrant crisis at the border, you're not talking about migrant caravans. You're not talking about starving Yemenis, you're not talking about displaced Afghans. You're not talking about any of that, dude. You're talking about Korean privileged stuff. Even that the adoption being thrown into that same thing, you're throwing an appendage of privilege into a very, very complicated political discussion. And so for him to say, "I just tell stories, but I don't know anything about politics." Hey dude, nobody asked you to be a political scientist, they asked you to go get on Google. Is that a lot to ask, dude? Set down the controller and pick up the Google. It's simple. He doesn't even want to do that.

Adam Crapser:

And I can sit and berate him all day long, whatever. And trust me there's conversations that are going to be had with people he doesn't want to see in his life. He doesn't want to have to interact with in his life, but you don't get to tell these stories that affect AAPI people and Native Americans, because we're all in the same car when it comes to that. And that's in immigration and that's in regular criminal justice system. So he's not from those places, he shouldn't speak out on turn about those places. I'm not going to sit and talk about things like that, that I don't know anything about. That's for sure [inaudible 01:46:44].

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

What would you like listeners to do?

Adam Crapser:

I mean, I think everybody has... It sounds messed up, but as adoptees who have had some opinion on the matter, or we've commented on something, we have a responsibility, and that responsibility is to bring the truths out of the dark. The things that don't seem right, have discussion about them. Have respectful dialogue. Bring suggestions that make sense. Build equity into this conversation. Add things that actually are believable, practical, pragmatic, things that can actually happen instead of turning this stuff into... Not everything is a Marvel film. Not everything has these super crazy reasons behind them. We're human beings and we're fallible. But I think where we grow from this as people, is everything's not about being right or wrong, man.

Adam Crapser:

And how we're remembered to me is just as important or more important to how we'll live, because that's how much I love my kids. Is I want them to know of me as somebody who fought hard to get back to them. Somebody who loved them and somebody who thought of them every single day. That's important for me that they know that I have documentation of that. When they want to access that they need to know what I was thinking during this period of time in life, and for them to understand that that to me is what being a father is about. To me, that's what being an American is about. That being accountable to people that you love, that is your family. And maybe that's counterintuitive, to some ways that Koreans think about things. And that in itself is really alarming and disturbing to me, but it doesn't miss me that my birth mom's life and mine are... They are connected, but there's some very similar details.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

You know, Adam, it's just so profound listening to you because from the perspective of being an adoptee and all you've went through and how hard you're fighting to get back to your kids and to be there for your kids. And so I'm really touched by that, and I think people can-

Adam Crapser:

Thank you for acknowledging that. I could have never, ever imagined as a younger person... All I ever wanted was a family. And a lot of my awkwardness or my weird behaviors that people maybe have seen, or my inability to communicate better. All I wanted was a family, man. I swear to God, that's all I wanted. And I took a lot of risks and I put myself in a lot of bad situations that I didn't know would be so detrimental to my future, or to my life long term, let alone my children's life. I had no idea as a younger person that, "Adam, you don't even know this yet, but you're going to end up victimizing your own children the same way that your mom had to do that to you and to your brother and your sister."

Adam Crapser:

You're going to be in a very similar situation historically, not economically. My kids aren't starving is what I mean. But again, to be an aware person and to understand what's happening in my life, of course, I've had to make that measure, and it sucks. It sucks because that's a whole nother part of all of this that's hard for me to deal with because it's not like everybody's birth family searches, birth family reunions, birth family acknowledgement, reconciliation. All these things are different for everybody. And we have common denominators, but the way that a lot of things happen for all of us is different and it's very private and it's very personal and sometimes, it's heartbreaking, sometimes it's beautiful. But again if we're making comparisons, those are our very deepest personal stories that are ours to talk about if we want to talk about. So yeah, I'm sorry about all that, it's a little bit long-winded.

Adam Crapser:

These are personal things and thoughts that I have thought about every day for a long time. So I'm not going off a script or I don't have all these talking points to address super specifically. I just, I've never been on your platform where you're-

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Oh, you've covered a lot. So thank you so much.

Adam Crapser:

Yeah. I've listened to it, and I've learned from listening to other people and I do have a genuine interest in our community. I wish people could understand that too, because I've had people approach me and be like, "Oh, you're the Adam Crapser." It's like, I never wanted to be the Adam Crapser. I've had people come up and just do weirdest behaviors, like [Ben Lee 01:51:49], hugging me and all this stuff, the first time I ever met you just being weird.

Adam Crapser:

It's like, I don't need any of that. I just want to be a normal human, and I want to be able to be involved with the adoptee communities and then not be all this... I'm just a human, man, just like all of us. We're all the same, man. We're all trying to figure our way out and get through this life and be happy, right? That's the measurement of success. I mean, it is happiness. How happy can we become? How much happiness can we put in between these dark hard times that we're confusing as children, and the challenges, be able to separate that from the challenges that we don't have a choice, but to show up for as adults. Where do we find this balance or this fluidity in there to be okay as human beings, accept our shortcomings and the shortcomings that were provided for us, thank you, unbeknownst to us.

Adam Crapser:

And realize that yes, in the whole conversation about adoption, is it perfect? No. Does it fix some things? Absolutely. Is there a one size fits all, fix all gorilla tape for all this? No. There's not. These are very complex situations that we got to find ways to bring them together in a positive way and have real discourse confronting on each other, quit competing with each other, be vulnerable, be raw, be real. Man, put it out there because we're running out of time. And through every generation after us, our stories are going to get watered down even more. We need to take that out of the playbook of indigenous people. Of other people who have survived through these periods historically of strife and of separation and all these things.

Adam Crapser:

And we need to use those as little cheat sheets for ourselves so that we can know. I mean, the modeling is there, how we can record our history, how we can tell it. We don't have to be so mutually exclusive to where only one aspect of adoption is worth talking about. No. All aspects of adoption are worth talking about, it's how do we have these complete conversations and be honest and open, and also willing to learn, willing to listen actively and challenge ourselves to, "Hey, I want to learn and take something away from this conversation."

Adam Crapser:

Not, "Hey, I'm a know-it-all because I have this much time in school or this field or whatever." We all can learn something from each other. And again, because of the numbers, because of our exposure to various different cultures, languages, and everything. That's what's the beauty of our cultures, if you will, adoptee culture, is that by virtue of being adopted, removes some of these social to cultural mandates. That's something that I've learned or become empowered with. Like, for instance, in Mexico, down here, there is a very small Korean presence in one area and stuff, and people like to talk about the access or proximity of Korean or Japanese stuff. Mexican people don't have an expectation of me and Anna to speak fluent Spanish with them. So a lot of times they'll ask us if we speak English and we're like, "Ding, ding, funny you asked. That would be us." And so we're able to have those conversations. Now, the flip side of that is that in Korea, I could be standing there arguing with [inaudible 01:55:25] for 15 minutes and we are not going to get anywhere.

Adam Crapser:

He just wants me to know that there's no way that I can park in this one spot because some other truck has to be able to back... He's trying to tell me something very specific, which I can't understand. So my go to is to get loud, get mad and get all dramatic with him about the parking, and then she bow this and that to me. And then I'm just like, "Yeah. I'm not playing that I have to bow to you [inaudible 01:55:57] stuff. And if you touch me, I'm going to beat you up. So Korea was very hard because there's expectations of-

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Adam Crapser:

Beat you up. So, it's like Korea was very hard, because there was expectations of us of looking Korean. Right?

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Right, right.

Adam Crapser:

And then when you're not able to communicate, or you're not able to fulfill their expectations of you as a Korean person...

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

It's putting you in a box. Yeah.

Adam Crapser:

Yeah.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Yeah.

Adam Crapser:

And when that doesn't happen, there's this level of attrition and all feel this veracity, this like what happens in this moment. And I've watched it, I've watched it, and right in front of me with stuff way more personal, like super disrespectful to friends to where I'm like, "You're not going to do that. Mm-mm (negative). You're not treating my friend like that." Because they're so used to thinking that it's okay to do that, or that as a Korean, you're supposed to. So, I could go on and on for hours about the differences and the nuance between Korean culture and American culture.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

I'm just so glad you got out.

Adam Crapser:

[crosstalk 01:56:56] kind of deal. We had to. I had to Korea because I was literally suffocating.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

I lasted a year and I was suffocating. I was like, "I don't..." I was starting to have mental health issues living in Korea. And I'm like, "Yeah, it's fun, the Soju, whatever, but it's not worth my mental health." It's not worth people looking at me funny because I'm an ajumma eating alone at a restaurant, because I don't have a man with me. It's all this weird...

Adam Crapser:

And you don't have a manual either telling you, "Hey, watch out for this. You need to make sure you do this." There's no playbook for us.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Yeah, I couldn't wear this. I couldn't wear a shift like this because they stare. I'm like, "I can tell." Yeah, so I totally understand. So, I just wanted to ask, so with your order, it was a 10 year ban, but you can come back in five years? Is that...

Adam Crapser:

Well, what happens in five years is that... And actually a year prior, I will submit all the paperwork, but I have to file. Basically, I'm going to be filing to reenter the United States like any Korean who had never went to the United States. So, of course, I will apply to enter on probably a tourist visa originally, or a family resident visa, but I will also have to get two different waivers and all this will to be done through USCIS.

Adam Crapser:

So, it doesn't go in front of an immigration judge, or immigration court, or anything like that. This is all done through... It's basically just bureaucracy. There's nothing else attached to it. And a lot of people don't always get accepted on their first time. There's a lot of evidence and evidentiary stuff you got to include in every request and packet.

Adam Crapser:

And then there's all these big fees and stuff I have to pay, which I'm already used to because I already have been through part of it in the very beginning as part of filing for every form of relief that I was eligible for. So, I'm already aware of some of that. And then my immigration lawyer, she'll be assisting with that as well when it's time to try and go back.

Adam Crapser:

So, there's that. And I think one good takeaway too from having conversations about adoptee citizenship, or adoptee deportation, is that, for instance, we worked with a guy over in Korea and I don't exploit people, so I don't talk about people specifically. But they're eligible to go back to United States and we did all the research, the profiles, and documents, all this stuff. Anyways. Even though they've had a very hard time in Korea, they don't really want to go back to America, which is their choice. Right?

Adam Crapser:

So, you can't make them. But I would encourage other people who are friends with other deported Korean adoptees, or other adoptees, is to get involved and find out what the actual rules are, meaning do you even know if you have a ban? I've asked other deported adoptees, "Do you know if you have a ban? How long is it?" They're like, "Oh, I don't know." I'm like, "What do you mean you don't know? Did you get any paperwork before they sent you to Korea?" and they're like, "Oh, I don't know."

Adam Crapser:

And I'm just thinking, I'm just like, "Okay, this is going to be hard. Do you know what county, what court you fell out of so that we can find out what the actual charges were that put you into immigration detention, or interim removal proceedings?" And again, I haven't found anybody who's been very forthcoming in terms of wanting to actually follow through to find out what their options would be. Usually doesn't go very far, even when we have the financial end already covered for them.

Adam Crapser:

And in the meantime, here's the kicker. And I won't get into this too much either. But while we've had all these discussions about Blue Bayou and all these half ass or haphazard discussions about adoptee citizenship and/or deportation, another Korean adoptee has been deported, which most people don't even know. And I'm not going to put that guy's business out there. But to suffice to say, that's how much the Korean adoptee... That's how much we are really in the know about stuff, because we're in the know about the drama. We all know about the drama, whatever, that goes down.

Adam Crapser:

But about the specifics and about being interconnected with each other and stuff, it's a tough, tough thing to constantly feel like you're talking about the same things over and over with people. The principles of why adoptees not getting citizenship, or not having retroactive citizenship, is important. We can go to the extreme of United Nations calls it a human rights violation to repatriate somebody this way. Other people will say, "Oh, it's a screw up in paperwork."

Adam Crapser:

I like the ones that continue to make the excuses to try and say it's because the adoptive parents didn't fill out the paper. Right? That's how simple it is. That's the whole reason that any of this stuff has ever happened is, well, there's some bad apples. And usually it's in like a Bush voice where it's just, "That's too bad. But you know what? Some of them got to die. It's just too bad, man. I can live with 1% of..." That kind of stuff. It's gross negligence, but it's stupid. It's a stupid argument, because as a child like three and a half years old, even if you would've been able to give me notice, what am I going to do at three and a half years old?

Adam Crapser:

None of us are going to do anything at three. None of us are going to do anything at 10. So, people who have these very unrealistic solutions to things, or even answers for why they think something happened, that's conjecture at the end of the day. Right? People need to understand what the foster care system looked like in the eighties. Come on, that's all you need to understand, what that looked like, and that'll give you the exact reason for why people weren't going to spend money to go get an immigration order to go and figure out your immigration status, let alone history and how it is we can make this little guy a US citizen.

Adam Crapser:

When you're in the indigent American foster care system, when your clothes are being bought by the pound at not Goodwill, at the Goodwill surplus. Bet you guys ain't even been to that one. That one's like... So, people don't understand, man, because unless you've lived it, or you can get a real clear window or lens to it, it's pretty hard to understand for some people. And what gives me hope though and what makes me proud sometimes is to know that I come from nothing, man. My whole life I've been nothing. I'm very well aware of that. I've survived. Yay. You know?

Adam Crapser:

But what's funny to me, and I would've never known this, and I have chuckles about this when I think of people like Justin is like if indeed that's how you feel about us culturally, or how you feel about us situationally, that adoptees are nothing, or walking abortions, or something, that you allowed to be born, or something. Some weird mental stuff. Right? But I have jokes, because then I laugh, because I'm like, "Dude, jokes on you, man." Because some of my best friends are like the 12th wealthiest person of their state and they're adopted.

Adam Crapser:

And it's like, "Dude, you can't even get close to these type of people's wealth." It's like you think you are whoever you think you are today, but calm down, Justin [Lynn 02:04:43]. You know what I mean? You're not whoever you think you are. I didn't even know who he was after he messaged me until I was asking people and they're like, "Oh, he was the little kid from Twilight." And I was like, "Well, I never watched Twilight." I didn't have time to sit down and get into... I've never watched the Hobbit, or those type of fantasy type of Lord of the Rings stuff.

Adam Crapser:

I read the books when I was in prison, but I don't have time for this fantastical, make believe life stuff. So, again, it's complicated. A lot of it's complicated. It's personal. It sucks, because I have a conscience and I hate feeling like I let down people, like my community, or something, when somebody doesn't like the fact that I'm doing this, or I'm doing that. And it sucks, but we can't make everybody happy. And five years ago, I would really hurt myself to try and make everybody happy. Or be the guy that wanted to always...

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

And you just can't. You can't.

Adam Crapser:

No, you can't, you can't. And just like you can't... Yeah, there's a lot of things you can't when it comes to that, but...

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Well, I just want to say that even though you came from nothing, that's not your situation now. You have something.

Adam Crapser:

Oh, I'm doing well.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Yeah, you have things in your life and your beautiful wife, Anna, for one. I'm just so happy for you. Anything else you want to say as we close out? I'm sorry. We didn't really have a chance, Anna, to go on, but we're going on two and a half hours. So, I just want to give you guys a break.

Adam Crapser:

Sure.

Anna Simonse (Adam's wife):

Okay.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

But anything about your life now, or any reflections?

Adam Crapser:

All I can really say is I have... Because I try thinking real quickly about the different interactions I've had with many different adoptees. Right? And the many different stories that have been shared and the good times, even some of the bad times. And I think to myself how normal in a way all of that is in terms of really looking at how life is lived. Right?

Adam Crapser:

And when you get to a point in life where you can appreciate the good and bad, because it's taught you so much. You've been able to become a better person, a better partner, a better friend, a better parent, whatever. And I think for all of us, those are our goals, whether we believe in that at the time or not. I'm doing well.

Adam Crapser:

Somebody told me something super simple a long time ago. They said, "Adam, you only need three things in life." And I'm sure this is while I'm crying my eyes out, or being a baby about, "I just want a family." Right? And I think somebody told me, "Listen, Adam, we know that you're a little... That ship has sailed. You're a little old for all that. Come on. I'm not saying you shouldn't feel bad about it, but let's be realistic, dude. You got to make your own family. Right? That's what you got to do."

Adam Crapser:

And ever since then, I've been trying to do that and I've screwed up here and screwed up there, or the forces of white parents were against me sometimes. I feel like I can say that honestly, because I believe part of that is true. But mostly I just think that if we can really take the time to try and understand each other better, we can remove the pretenses and all the facades of what and who we think each other are. For me, I invite people. Get to know me, man. You want a nice quick vacation? Come down to Mexico City, man. I promise you, you'll fall in love with this area. Let me buy you lunch. Get to know us.

Adam Crapser:

We're really human beings. Before you're so quick to jump on feeling like you got to pick sides about something, or feeling like loyalties are tested and all that... Because a lot of that, I'm not playing those games with people either. People who disagree about certain things, I'll have some exchanges with them and just let them know that like, "Hey, imagine if this was you. Imagine if somebody was telling some stuff about your very personal life. How would you feel?"

Adam Crapser:

Other people I've gotten a hold of privately have been like, "Yo, man, I never shared this with you four and a half years ago, because I don't really feel like gossiping about other people's adopted parents, contacted me six weeks after I'm deported to talk about their adopted son." So, these types of things, if we can communicate with each other better and we can have these hard discussions, or these honest discussions, with each other without feeling like it's ammunition, or stored vengeance, if somebody does as bad, or going to catalog this and put you into a category that you're incorrigible. You know what I mean? And you're just crazy.

Adam Crapser:

It's so easy to do that, right? To just be like, "Oh, this person acted out this way, or that way. They're crazy." Right? And that's just the blanket whatever and that means they're disposable. I don't believe that and I don't live that way. And I hope people don't treat me that way. I believe we all have value and we all have something to contribute to the conversation, but I think intent and also application are really important to go together. Like how it is, what our delivery really looks like, how we bring that information to the conversation. And this applies to me for sure, because my delivery a lot of times, actually if Adam's getting a little out there, it's no good. It's no good. It takes me a long time to sit down and come back down to Earth and be like, "Adam, there's a better way of communicating."

Adam Crapser:

There's a lot of different things that I want to do and a lot of things that I have to do. A lot of things that I've realized that my parameters in life... A lot of people don't know this about me. They'll be like, "Oh, Adam..." People don't know this career that I've had. They don't assign this career with Adam's whole life. But a lot of people don't understand that I was involved in... I had a very normal job, I guess, you'd say, being involved in the automotive collision insurance industry for probably almost 20 years.

Adam Crapser:

So, when it comes to cars, when it comes to insurance, when it comes to that intersection, as well as like having a barber shop and learning everything I can about hair, and having completed vocational beauty school, and all these things a lot of people don't know about me, that anything and everything that I could learn how to do from the time I was 14 years old, okay, I've done. I've had so many different jobs. There's so many different things that I've applied myself to and learned.

Adam Crapser:

And people who know me will well know this about me too and that's why I don't beg people for that. I don't have my hand out thinking people need to take care of me. I believe in hard work. I believe in having a good work ethic. I believe in... There's some days where that's all I could do is just go work hard, because if you're tired and you're hungry, you ain't got the time to sit around and feel sorry for yourself. You know what I mean? About things that you actually can't change.

Adam Crapser:

And so that was a big cycle in my life for a long time and I learned that, unfortunately, from my adopted dad. Like, "Oh, you got a cold? You don't feel good? Get outside in the rain and get the slave dog in it. Get to work. Don't sit around crying about being sick. Get out there and get better." So, in this case, for sure, I realized when I left and when I arrived in Korea that my biological family couldn't help me. I realized that the Korean government wasn't going to help me and that I also had, unfortunately, a very stark realization in that this big Korean adoptee community that I was told would envelop me with this just super adoptee hug and show me the ropes, I'm sorry to say, but that's not true. That's not true.

Adam Crapser:

People who have lived there and people who have experienced it, people who have been in the intersections of privilege and these different things... Somebody told me once, they said, "Adam, there's a reason." It's kind of cryptic. "There's a reason why adoptees come back to Korea." And they meant that in the sense of why they come back and they live for long periods of time. And without saying anything, she said something and she's somebody who's lived there long time, tons of people know who she is, so I took this as like, I don't know, some wisdom. Like some, "Hey, here's some food for thought, Adam."

Adam Crapser:

In terms of personalizing everything that didn't feel correct, in terms of engaging or engagement with adoptees. And that's not to say, "Hey, everybody, you shouldn't go there and try to make friendships with adoptees, or you shouldn't try and be part of a community over there." No. But I think that when... Like I've been around long enough and I know that if people aren't going to have the conversations about adoptees going to adoptee events in Korea and sexually assaulting other adoptees, people aren't going to have those conversations and those things aren't going to be exposed. Right?

Adam Crapser:

And that adoptees think it's better to cover them up, or that adoptees are going to go there and assault somebody, or they're going to go and do funny styled behaviors. And nobody's going to have those kind of conversations. It's just like adoptees don't want to talk about genetic sexual attraction in the same conversation as they do birth family search, our birth family reunion.

Adam Crapser:

But again, we, as adoptees and as humans, how are we going to grow if we don't further along the conversations with the hard stuff too? The stuff that's embarrassing, the stuff that's hard to communicate. But I believe in one thing and that's telling the truth, whatever it looks like, so people can... They can go play that I know something you don't know game, but that's not going to work.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

I really appreciate what you're saying, because people who have gone through a lot of hard stuff like you, I have as well, we can't turn from it. We see it. And it takes a lot of courage to actually talk about it. And it helps people, because not talking about it leaves us all in the dark.

Adam Crapser:

It's how do we do it responsibly and how do we do it where everybody has this assurance that the places that we talk about, things that are hard to hear, that are hard to discuss are private. You know what I mean? And that they won't be used against somebody in some petty form down the road.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Right, right.

Adam Crapser:

How do we establish develop that level of trust with each other, coupled with action, with actionable...

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

And we don't have trust anyway, adoptees. It's hard to trust on face value each other. So, it's a challenge. But Adam, do you want people to be able to reach out to you if...

Adam Crapser:

I want to say this. I don't think I've ever said this to people. But yeah, I'm at a point in my life where I have a pretty good understanding of about a lot of things as they pertain to myself. So, people who have constructive and respectful feedback, I'm all ears. I've had one adoptee in five and a half years get ahold of me almost two weeks ago and tried to help me out with a job. And it was really endearing to me.

Adam Crapser:

I was like, "That's so cool, man." Because in all five and a half years, or whatever, since this stuff started, this fear, this worry, this whatever that I could never get people to understand that like, dude, you know how scary it is to be told you're going to have your ethnicity used against you? And then you're going to be sent back to this foreign place, but all the skills and all the hustle you developed in the States isn't going to cross over.

Adam Crapser:

You know how scary of a feeling that is? And then all the people you meet that look like you, that are adopted, this and that, nobody's like, "Hey, dude, what are you doing for work? Hey, man, I know somebody who maybe can help you get a job teaching English under the table." Right? Or anything like that. But no, when you meet people who I guess don't want to help you, so they want to make sure you know that they'll help somebody else.

Adam Crapser:

But when it comes to a job, they won't to help you. Why is that? Why? Because I'm not worth as much as this person, or because I don't have my TEFL, or what is it really? Or because they're female and I'm male? What's the real deal? So, not that I need people's help. I'm just saying that it was really endearing to me because this person is a really good guy. And he didn't need to take any interest in my life, but he had a friend who had some business in Puebla and he didn't know what the laws are for working down here, or whatever. And I told him I super appreciate it, but at this point in our life, we're good. We're citizens.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

People with the constructive feedback and want to have honest discussions, how can they do it, or how can they contact you if they...

Adam Crapser:

Yeah, they can reach out on Facebook. Anna has been posting. They can reach out to Anna. They can get ahold of us on Instagram, on Facebook, whatever. We have one called Tails From Seoul. It's really easy.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Tails From Seoul. Okay.

Adam Crapser:

Tails From Seoul, like Seoul.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Is that T-A-I-L-S? Tails?

Adam Crapser:

Yeah.

Anna Simonse (Adam's wife):

It's a dog.

Adam Crapser:

It's a dog.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Okay.

Adam Crapser:

I have another one.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Okay.

Adam Crapser:

@adam\_crapser, a legit real one where I post all that information. Honestly, I've never had an Instagram up until recently with the dog stuff. So, I'm a little late to the whole social media you need to have everything thing, but I'm learning and I'm trying to grow some of that a little bit for some of my other things I'm trying to do. But yeah, I welcome the constructive criticism, or ideas, or if people just want to share friendship, which I've had a lot of really great people contact me, and just extend friendship and support, and "Hey, man, I'm rooting for you and I believe in what you're saying. I believe in your truth, man, and keep fighting and keep pushing." And I hope that people will go away if they don't... Don't believe anything I say.

Adam Crapser:

Contact Adoptees4Justice, contact NAKASEC, talk to these people who have dedicated huge portions of their life to this work, ask them about these things, hear their stories. You know what I mean? Look on their websites and see the work that they've been doing. People who want to question my resume in it, go right ahead. And you could ask those people what it was I've been doing too. But the people who know me know that I haven't just been sitting down.

Adam Crapser:

And so I just hope that people get a better understanding. I hope people see me more as a human being, understanding that we're humans. We're decent people, man. And if people want to get to know us, reach out, man. I want to be a good supportive friend too for people who are going through tough times. Tell me how I can help. And even if it's just to listen. And I have. There's a lot of adoptees who have contacted me and I don't know why, but maybe there's some commonalities in our stories somewhere and they felt safe to reach out to me, and talk about hard to discuss stuff.

Adam Crapser:

And I'm honored that people would trust me enough, some stranger, to talk to me about these very personal things that I do understand, that I do understand. And I hope that all of us, as a community, can come to some of these or arrive at some of these conclusions ourselves independently too and start having these conversations. And lift each other up, practice kindness, all that stuff. Try to.

Adam Crapser:

I'm not saying that I do every day, or I'm good at it. I'm saying she helps me a lot and I'm working on it and being better. And there is help out there. There are resources, there's information. We all got to be the hero in our own stories. So, just try hard, try hard, whatever that looks like.

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

Thank you, Adam. Thank you, Anna. I really appreciate the time you spent. And it's just amazing to me for all the... You're still continuing to give back to the community by even just talking today and being on the podcast. That's giving back. So, thank you so much.

Speaker 2:

(Singing).

Kaomi Lee (interviewer):

If you want to help pass the Adoptee Citizenship Act of 2021, look for more information at adopteesforjustice.org. You can also take action by going to the link alliance for adopteecitizenship.org/getinvolved. If you'd like to help financially support the podcast, you can do so by going to patreon.com/adaptedpodcast. That's patreon.com/adaptedpodcast. Thank you to all our continuing supporters and also to all of our listeners. We couldn't do this without you. Until next time, be well.

Speaker 2:

(Singing).

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