Kristen ([00:00:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=yhVXPiU9rSkyXm9smkOLr-4H3JO6ocSFhDJ8C0UKnqjqp6uTE0kamCt9ul2z0tVGZvkTmLFTvwXiCacPZFif44PL_HY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4.49)):

So my name is Kristen. Uh, Kristen Choi. Yeah. So I have a Korean name that was given to me by my adoptive parents. It's Choi Woo Kyung. And then the name I had at the time of my adoption was Choi Bo-Mi. So it's still Cho or Che either way. Um, and my age, I am 33 years old.

Adapted ([00:00:27](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=XxDo6hNmI8UWoMmYWmvNBz8eO71zQKbAVPnV2xKd_NpXtPZSQxy5PUnqaJhz6FUpwk7uwfu-ostOWnJrUEN7yO0QaKc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=27.37)):

Okay. And where are you?

Kristen ([00:00:28](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=FSp0A2JCzaW_HwBEBt-X1vuUyBCKCjEm0FRhYw9s6efnAeW5flMUYvQ_KiGTBP_0zfahfCp9Xlj5uRu0hy2cCEZ0Z8s&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=28.84)):

I'm currently in San Francisco, but home is New York city, but, um, I'm here at school. I'm at the university of San Francisco trying to get my degree in marriage and family therapy.

Adapted ([00:00:41](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=9_ByPsHsg2zjFQCWd3o9Z8m1S3aLdYJHZmaJGgvviW6_Isci2wAr5nfS2cgrycmBNkHPuw1Tfb619m1x4W9wXUaqewo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=41.6)):

Okay. It's so interesting. So many adoptees go into, um, Therapy, counseling, healing, that type of thing. So it's interesting, not that you knew, you know, I don't know when you decided to go in this career, but

Kristen ([00:00:59](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=7BPyNpN-cVzXouC-oATaV_7KwuLnju5CY-hMB6BPWc9SVMva1Ba2ZNIzD6ySiJ0KA1yTqLmd2dF7PgobH2_0dRY2hQM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=59.3)):

It all, it all coincided actually. So it is pretty, um, yeah, it was a crazy year, last year, for sure.

Adapted ([00:01:08](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=msB4K4ZfXTEWttrj0yun_oy9mK1GfGxhYhKJmuTrpT19t6myyKpFPZn1yDE_aDordlyEaq8ZLwNzqmEiHiVFnQy89nM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=68.72)):

So why don't you just go ahead and tell us, um, so you didn't always know you were adopted.

Kristen ([00:01:14](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=NzGr9xmkgCP4dWWlAev8ERegpQe3YePr7EH2Yilf_sdPJjf3iMOrGGYhfEq-sXNEq88xgVpu-o4ueRYfHRp-ev-_vco&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=74.63)):

Yeah, no, I didn't. Um, yeah, I found out February of 20, 21. So last year, um, I kind of, it's a, I don't really know how to tell this part, I guess, but I think it's always something I've had a question about just because I was born in Korea and I knew that that was not something my parents had kept from me, but I think there was always a question of my parents having immigrated to the United States in 1970s, like maybe 1970, they got married in 1974. So sometime after that, um, so it was always weird. Like I was born in 1989, like why was I born in Korea? Most of my family was already here. They had already all immigrated as well. And so it was always a question of, um, that's so strange, but okay. And you just accept it. Right. Mm-hmm <affirmative> um, and then, so there was that question of when I was getting my driver's license, you know, how you have to show like the six points of ID, there was always something about a birth certificate and I'd never seen my birth certificate. So I was curious about that. I was like, oh, where was I born? You know, I was born in Korea, but like where? Right. Do you have a birth certificate? You can show me. And my parents never showed me any sort of proof of that. And so there was always this weird, I think like pulsing question of like, why this, why that,

Kristen ([00:02:40](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=CJeFRh6sAVnG5rtLMl2K59selJ8nio-6KS8zx0LFLB1vVQuIPihXalSyg2grqIvDAp-256uKxo2RdCMZBoaDhLrlzBk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=160.59)):

Um, and then I did confront them sometime in like 2015, um, asking them if I was adopted and there was just a look on their face. I'll never forget it. There was immediate silence and questioning. And my dad asked me, you know, why are you asking us that? Like, do you not want us to be your parents? And so I think in that moment when I was swallowing, like, okay, what's going on? I'm not really sure. And I didn't want to dive in further. Um, yeah, I, I didn't, I think everything stopped at that point until the pandemic hit. I was spending a lot of time <laugh> um, at home with myself. Actually, the funny thing is I was watching that show, um, bling empire, I think it was on Netflix or one of the shows, but that, um, character, Kevin, Kevin,

Adapted ([00:03:33](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=tzCfmZ8gHqD7vV5y1DtYCdM-ijccfptTz8dee_HCB6mTjlxBvw7-NyrjvFc0Frnj3xHHGunqiB4KWbj_XQpwkFxYrt0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=213.56)):

Kevin, yeah,

Kristen ([00:03:35](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=gwLT3eLJwGR4P_aXoIPIzBHouAo8Rje8dRkr-GBeMoljks0XvbEPX_tLO4GOpXAF4j8JT_mflF9EntAC5_8OhZ5mh6E&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=215.5)):

He's a real person. He's not a character, but, um, he was the, he was a Korean adoptee on the program. And again, I don't know what kind of made me wanna question this or open this can of warms up, but I had gotten a 23 and Me test or is it 23? Me. Yeah, 23. And me test for me a while back. And then I had actually purchased that for my parents too. But what I realized is I never opened up the ancestry portion of that app where, um, that's when you can actually like try to sync up with your parents. And so I tried to do that in December of 2020, and I noticed that I did not share any DNA with my parents. And so that's kind of the, kind of when everything sank in and there was no more like fighting this, there was no more, I really was like, okay, this is real.

Kristen ([00:04:25](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=DhEmAeEwPPOBuirllll26XXbYPTpgW2Jeene2GC-tpDi23EqHT0CsfEDmBgStY3ho1gWRRBASGsuJwnuzKfS5hLdusE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=265.79)):

This is happening. Um, this is no longer just like a fun little question that I had. Where's my birth certificate. Um, and, uh, another, another portion of that is that when I opened up my dad's 23 and me specifically that portion of the app, one of my cousin's sons, um, came up as sharing 15% DNA with him, which was obviously more than mine. So once again, there was no like, oh, there's no mix up of the tubes, 23 of me, like, you know, screwed this all up. <laugh> um, this is all a farce. Um, so yeah, I think I spent about a month not going home. My parents live in New Jersey. I was still living in New York city at the time and I pretty much ignored them and wouldn't talk to them because I was afraid of what might come out. And at the time I was really just focusing on trying to get the real story and I didn't want them lying to me anymore.

Kristen ([00:05:19](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Mj6oHPZMEZv5BFhExslOZr2bB64Ee5JDSoPV5qko-rSO3p9leL_sjyFAs2ogLdlIA24cQUbO16sjYVNXtDbinxrbCe0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=319.85)):

I thought that was really important. Um, I needed to know the truth and because of what had happened years ago when I had confronted them and they gave me that, you know, gaslighting, um, kind of questioning me back being like, you know, you don't want us to be your parents. I really focused on, okay, how do I get the truth out of them this time? So in my head, I was trying to find my own papers, you know, with the, with no information other than the fact that I didn't share DNA with my parents. Um, and it became clear that in a month, like I couldn't do this by myself and I, what I really needed was them on my side and my parents to give me the truth, give me, give me their, what I should know, what I should have always known. So I, um, I confronted my mom in February and this was actually the weekend after I had my interviews for my grad school program.

Kristen ([00:06:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=gnsXi4xIQRX1ff0q1OdMn0caNwiar2VkPfKdpY4oocDO7X0cWjNAJmEhd483VbOosU57yncmJ5vyNrrjGZoH0_9G9AY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=372.38)):

And, um, she came over and I asked her in a way that..., Like I was once again, strategizing how to get the, the real answer from her. And I said, you know, nothing changes. You're still my mom, but I really need to know my truth. And am I adopted? And that's when the can of worms burst and all of it came out. So yeah. Um, it was pretty nuts <laugh> it was a lot of emotion in that moment. I, um, I went back home with my mom that night to New Jersey because I wanted to also talk to my dad. And, um, that's when I saw my papers for the first time they had saved everything. Uh, I had asked, you know, who else knew, you know, was it, you know, and found out that most of my family, the ones who were around when the adoption happened. So I got adopted at six months. Um, they all knew. And so those family that I've grown up with and all of my cousins are a lot older than I am. Um, their kids didn't know. So the kids who were actually closer to age with me, didn't had no idea, but, um, yeah, there's a lot of, uh, there's a lot of reckoning that night <laugh> um,

Adapted ([00:07:26](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=dNG6a-ywtIKGoCcZ3hjeyBeX4bLKoBYToJsaggIX5V8uwMKNh7HV_NSZKPIP7l2d83lIVR5Ie8GbfQsKOFkTQ-pc6Ts&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=446.18)):

So, so many questions. Um, <laugh>

Kristen ([00:07:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=IyWPdgQueRkhwBG5Xa2BAJuTIUry5V_Dn_vZxic-f2zuxlwDRhCVn5uM5UZ2_JPJi014E3JaKHhiDWrd5Fs1cF0NdMI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=449.79)):

Yeah. I know.

Adapted ([00:07:31](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=5uZyORx9gbLjR_-2pyx4thOLcFSTMNvQL9uB1Ve3X12i_UFnV3L8YdRsz-qsZUgfxdT6Ny3YTDW4icliS42X0dHpqAE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=451.04)):

First of all, when you asked your parents to take the DNA test, do you think they understood that you would be able to cancel out a biological connection with them with that? Or did they not think it was just, I

Kristen ([00:07:47](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=qjkle126I9Vk3eRhJEoKxzkROY1FG-4f2V-2uNCI9FXk5Wx1IUld_qTxc03qXKN2vzF1KNH_cFLyBB0DA6MVU8BQ88Y&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=467.65)):

Honestly think they had no real idea of what this was. Um, I told them that I had gotten it done years ago. It was from health too. I was curious about the results, but yeah. Ancestry in that you could also see where, like, are you Korean, Japanese, China? I, I don't know. Right. Like I had a pretty good idea. My family was very Korean, but, um, they, so I just kind of sold it that way. I, I don't think they understood that there was a way to genetically connect us. I don't think they thought anything of that.

Adapted ([00:08:16](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=55MumGAkV_BjCS25uxGBIUvurwsWRE8EnM4CQEXjbcIIWA9_Jo4ky1VFE2yE-V2jvPK-mibGP0Yqj4r6pWxoWq8rB2g&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=496.5)):

What do you think they was the, what did it that they finally admitted to you do? Was it that you had come a certain age? Was it that you had proof with the DNA test?

Kristen ([00:08:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=eX12hdk8Lo-tz0k9xjjY9HCU488zNBd106bD10Ynnpds0c9ZQLYIGf5JAGuaAOzb1p3ntq7VEVbmXpOU8tF2xUvzgRA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=509.68)):

It became clear that their intention was never to hold this secret from me. It, it, it, they, that wasn't their intention. And I do believe them on that. Um, I think they were just waiting for a time when it was appropriate to tell me. And so they thought when I was a kid, what's the point? Like, how are we gonna explain this? And then I think as I got older and you know, my teenage years were not easy. I fought a lot with my mom <laugh>. Um, and I rebelled not, I was, I was a pretty good kid, but whatever that, that means in terms of rebelling, like, you know, just going out with my friends and, and doing teenage things, um, I think they felt unsettled and they didn't really, they got scared. Um, I think they had heard a lot of stories about adoptees having found out or known and rebelling against their parents and not listening to them or running away and, um, you know, um, leaving them behind.

Kristen ([00:09:24](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Wqv7c5IV-2Y-a6lkTmv8RHa8SFec5S-l-DPcTYfdfl0KALh8bGNmvyeeqtAMwZFPCdIm1Xa3OZMpcEA8Opf9WwTbkJM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=564.17)):

And I think my parents got really afraid of telling me and what I might do and how I might react. And, um, she said that there, my mom said there were many times when, in my twenties where she did wanna tell me, and we do a lot of like mother daughter trips. And so I think during one of those trips, my mom did wanna say, but she told me that the words were literally stuck in her mouth. Like she just couldn't, it just couldn't come out. And so they, their next plan was to tell me when I got married, which is pretty laughable because what, what a thing to tell me <laugh> at, at the time of marriage or at my, I don't know what they were thinking, but I think maybe they thought they were, they were saying that they wanted me to have a partner, someone to like help me through this. And I was like, you know, like, I mean, regardless, I believe that they did, they had every intention to tell me, but I think once again, for them, it was a mixture of fear. It was a, they just didn't, they just didn't know what to do. Um, so yeah, I, I think for me approaching them, confronting them, asking them myself was probably the only way it would've happened, but who knows, that's all hypothetical at this point.

Adapted ([00:10:46](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=NIyZb8Xuo_pVX_tNkhk3WEaTsgyhINNB7WEZh4Y8afmBPmZkEDW6buzbbrn_Y1FoLyFlnwHgyo3Ne2EZ9HEIDWAw5Eo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=646.96)):

And how did it feel to learn that this whole, your whole family, um, aside from the ones that were, you know, cousins close to you in age that, you know, aunts and uncles, or, you know, extended family, a large portion of them had known all this life in that you had been a secret or you weren't a secret, but yeah, that part, your adoption was kept a secret from everyone else

Kristen ([00:11:14](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=_9RiU41eEgBo1YvaygtEnC4acjgtvc9I0neNk4Lz9OOugiJZTVXsg6lWwPxd-ehQJj0hCwIUwFjIqbb8ksUB3jX6Ies&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=674.37)):

That honestly probably hurt one of the biggest things that hurt the most, um, was that all this family knew and I didn't. And so, you know, it was never theirs to know it was never their information to know, but at the same time, it's definitely not, I guess, their job to have told me. And I'm sure it was hard for them. Right. And, um, yeah, I, I think one of the things that when I first found out, I told my parents, I don't want this to be a secret anymore. I want everyone to know that I know, um, I wanted to kind of take back the control and take back my story, take back everything that was taken from me, um, that was kind of the mindset I was in. So I was like, your, your responsibility right now is to call every single one of our relatives up who know and tell them that I know, um, that is on you.

Kristen ([00:12:09](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=JGoovUK_F0vWi5hAsw-bq6ccHME7m3p7L_ScZsRmYFecKGYbwNEeGqWBwdkW6bq5L5xSM1seJ90LXxZyZOnP0AwOBNc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=729.309)):

Like that is something that I really need you to do. Um, because it's, right now, I'm dealing with so many emotions and the, and the flood of every, all this information and everything I have to, um, process and understand. So yeah, I mean, it really did hurt. And a lot of my relatives, as they slowly found out, they all reached out to me. And at the time they were asking me know, are you okay? We're so sorry. Um, and it was sincere. Like I know that they really cared and they loved me and they just wanted to know that nothing changes, but at the same time, you know, I'm not okay. Like I'm not, and I'm glad that I got to hear from my parents. I'm sure my parents also were very grateful that they got to tell me as well. But I think like, you know, I just felt so betrayed by everyone.

Kristen ([00:13:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=iZRPkIxv6BNfAZ01XSF0ySSPaFRGpnwjF8WwWM5P6lIEanzkyDIZaALVCltwwAZiXtKt9xKajau4RnQfqVOf-iTs7OI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=780.65)):

Um, the people I trusted the most, the people who knew me since I was a baby and I then, you know, all the questions come in of like, was I treated differently ever. Like, I think about all those things, right. You go back into the past, you dig into your memories and you wonder, did they treat me differently? Like, was I ever, like, you know, maybe there were hints of this. Like, could I have picked up on it? Um, nothing I can recall concretely, but you know, it's, it's, those are those things definitely came up.

Adapted ([00:13:31](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ab-HEtHA-G-bmymKkDHtpwesICb9OQz8X9sivdznfVXt6xc9-Zu6BF5IdmBzIr0JR3GSLdnqh4DmowcRLjzEE8OaqvQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=811.42)):

Let me, let me just back up a little bit. Um, so you grew up, did you grow up in New Jersey? Yes. Or, okay. And did you grow up in like a Korean American community, the church and all of that,

Kristen ([00:13:44](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=g7aC-P7N_oKT0ehII1L4fU0IO7vBisnHnmlJdidawNwnsjziJS8oPKXMKv0gQ5MUUpxCMJH2pPbSWlh0skLxnoEgLJU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=824.97)):

You guessed it? Yeah. Um, I went to my parents, my dad was [in Korean] and my mom was [in Korean], which is basically just a hierarchical thing in the, in the Protestant community, I guess. But they, yeah, I went to a Korean American church. Um, I had my, most of my family on my mom's side and my dad's side here, so, and New Jersey is pretty there. There's a pretty vast Korean community there. So

Adapted ([00:14:09](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=MoBJLk6ymPUo0lNqCEU-73rt3l0MwHGi_D7w7RPuxJ4jKSslQfxsiqmNthLbE_g22dxaGPo4VyopS8eWNPotNhuL5aQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=849.89)):

Palisade park, or

Kristen ([00:14:11](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=NB7Hovvsu3JvD9TzB7MHNlHyZIJIIROoUzEVL3mjfMcpMROTeYcSM5vuVBvCL7G14WMLuElrVWrdfjiHENpd3uBtZxw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=851.5)):

There you go. I live, literally I live in Englewood cliffs. It's right next to Fort Lee. So <laugh>

Adapted ([00:14:17](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=DyLv_3bW8AjHdJL_4FoOws5LayZWiE-ldbm6r40M7Z6vVv3SlnOrlzvIzzV-yi1EnW3zWi6C0yYrWkj5_TchgZBDgbc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=857.26)):

Yeah. Fort Lee,

Kristen ([00:14:18](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=dwD8TwM8SWxt88tlK6WqSyToOiIc8wkAWvGtLuKhe-yBnxYNgtPIYr7knTXcoIqZoYagIyCDu4EKeL-J54HT5uZZ9Ac&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=858.059)):

Right? Yep. Yep. Yep. Okay. Um, so yeah, um, you're pretty much, I guess, stereotypical Korean American upbringing, um, at least in terms of a, you know, New Jersey east coast sense. Um, yeah, that was, that was my life.

Adapted ([00:14:34](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=J4sNnBBYRhkHAmlUQmTRYkb0kMZ6qYtKbQAHXouag3C8R5kNO40k7FciHFj_oNu3yu4Se5RHg34Ag8tkTT8XRtn8bVA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=874.75)):

And, um, are you an only child? Yes. Yeah. Okay. And growing up, did you, had you met other either Korean adoptees with, um, uh, with other Korean American parents or other non Korean American parents, any Korean adoptees?

Kristen ([00:14:55](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=3MMggOkKTWGvzNghhX48aOMmoSlIbcNIdoDMr8ihIerunRnnB_5AiqnAoFVowt0Yhtrj41Nx9csXuO2zx0vK4cH2ya8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=895.08)):

Um, not that I'm aware of. I actually didn't meet any Korean adoptees specifically until I got to college. So I went to Boston university. Um, and I do remember meeting Koreans who had non Korean last names. And so I was like, oh, but that's, are you half white? Like, I, I didn't know. Like I was like, oh, maybe you just look more Korean or like, I don't know. But, um, that was, that was, yeah. So in New Jersey or not that I'm aware of, I, I didn't know anyone, um, who was an adoptee.

Adapted ([00:15:26](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=G1EYJFB3if3wWGZzO0wkOjBhSdoSX5E_MKcTRwOh5O1mqRHehpOjANg6LmgrW4YhfN0tSSZWj8gsQ5crRM1Zuu5C-pg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=926.57)):

And so I wonder, I kind of wonder if, um, it's rather unusual that your parents adopted from Korea or whether there may be other families, but culturally it is kept kind of hidden or secret. I don't know if that's, what is your sense of that?

Kristen ([00:15:47](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=c6RezwW5POBkwJzLtjf4PBmX8u0ezjq5LGHtr_-Vv3CpTlGsNZkW8qZJv1xZG3bmaexK75o9DQ2ywz-1N7qEM8_PyVA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=947.34)):

Um, at, um, so I don't know if I, to like, maybe this was something that when I found out I instantly kind of looked towards what I think most people would do once finding out a traumatic or having a traumatic experience is like just others who might relate to me or might understand what this is. Right. And one of my cousins who's actually a, um, psychologist told me like the correct terminology is like late discovery adoptee, so I could possibly find community there. But I think something about that, like I, although I know that my initial response was like, this was shocking. Like I, you know, I spent a good 30 years of my life, not knowing this, um, information. So I, I did though, I immediately went to the Korean adoptee community and I wanted to find someone who might understand, um, this, like cross-cultural intersection of like, you know, literally being taken from your country and put into a family that's not your own.

Kristen ([00:16:49](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=sNOap3AWBQZCEQ78usdKoNNJ1NnMY-rpfAcElENQigXXNDhtsLJVgysTxBpDA4tklRoZ_w22F719tWaNFvts6_oWDWs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1009.12)):

And then I guess for me, yeah, the extra shock of like finding out 30 years later. But, um, yeah, I, I wasn't able, at the moment, I wasn't able to connect with anyone who had a similar story to mine. And I guess, um, I did try like maybe a little while after once things were starting to settle down and I felt comfortable to share some of my story. Um, I posted to some of the Korean adoptee, Facebook groups to, to just, I wanted to be a part of the community. I wanted to, um, connect with others and possibly find someone who might relate to me in some way of like, discovering this information so late in life. And I actually was connected to two other women who found out later in life and who were also adopted by Korean, um, parents here in the us. Um, but yeah. What was the question again? <laugh>, I'm like getting lost in my words,

Adapted ([00:17:49](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=_U2gj5vwi921TyYSavII4I2rzB2trtIP276G1UGBc9CvRMP3JE5Lso2zghC4xLkBOaRm5STUltauIc3ZIAzTaTiS0d8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1069.869)):

Just if, um, I guess I'd add no. Um, if you had a, any sense of, you know, how unusual your case was or your case unusual your life is, you know, within your community or if you think, um, maybe it's more, well more, there are more adoptees that people don't know about within the Korean American community.

Kristen ([00:18:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=qvu-XT3thneGjEwbAz9lUa2AMRxOf6yq7ZC8kDfQpKiuoe6Da0MzeBWJRWYucxwQ76l1WNLkoV0T9Du1O677WW3wIxM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1092.65)):

Um, yeah, I, I think because I'm sure there are more, maybe they just don't know. And, um, is there

Adapted ([00:18:22](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=9JcsmNYN4ND2UISojuM4UktSc0NVp8UJOTRINkm6XEw5Z793qL_G_f24uPoaQFUQaua9iQvJ7LcxO_AZA3tbo_pDP-Q&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1102.44)):

Something, is there something culturally, do you think?

Kristen ([00:18:25](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=nyAbSe7LkJnCFl_FzAawm_Qj6COEjz2C5X2kA2ENLmjzI1EnyDevaXyTdXPqquPpnjHA6C0RIcm3fUokmA9DCJI0RDU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1105.31)):

Yeah, for sure. Um, at least for my parents, I think the thing was that they didn't want me treated any differently. And for my mom, like she's always told me, and this is so funny because I guess this was a clue in and of itself, is that like, I was her child, but I was born out of her heart. Like she would say things like that to me, um, when I was growing up, but I guess I never just like put two and two together. Um, I do think there was probably a secretiveness about it. Um, definitely though, like, I think it's pretty shocking that I was not ver like, because there were other people who knew outside of my family, like there were certain church members who did, who did know, who grew up with me, who their kids grew up with me and we grew up together.

Kristen ([00:19:10](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=n0P1UNqdhXNBbItShr9NFHqYz68I1LKkP3-uwQaE6o0C32kaldojqYKxiaebu5N2bqYIDVAl_C3bq9D_YgMpeY_444Y&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1150.95)):

Um, so they were aware too. And so it's pretty incredible that I never was told by other means that no, none of the kids like would tell me because they didn't know themselves. So I think there's a part of that, that my parents do have a lot of, um, they do have a lot of, you know, good friends who, who, you know, they know how, I guess, fragile this information could be if it were to break out and come from them. I think there is definitely a sense of like, this is not ours to share. Um, and yeah, there is probably that secrecy thing that Koreans have where things are very, very much like, you know, I'm not gonna tell you this, this is not, this is not, this doesn't have to be known. Um, which yeah, that's something I've always struggled with in my own life because I, I hate that shit. <laugh> like, it's really, it's just it's mind boggling to me how, um, it just doesn't seem genuine and authentic and forthright, but maybe that's just my American side coming in being like, what the hell? Um, so yeah. <laugh> yeah.

Adapted ([00:20:19](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=R9KLmfuManQhDIcW5QL7dIAkVO9Xkxy5X3FaP3EbQ_6lPMF-iGeUSONmAtDYqQ8rFMC3ECmb3Y6a0XjYHLzMhAEFLb0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1219.55)):

So your parents immigrated to the U to the us. Yes. Yeah. Um, why did they come?

Kristen ([00:20:27](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Rt1hzF-zeNF9CIwHPlrEBlSgUMWUi0GOa8kZA8AsdXPiKIClO-wOTBCGEnpFy5W-T5nB32ATmzOcOfHVze1c2Ki5fTg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1227.72)):

Um, so at the time, so I'll give you some context. My parents are a little older. Um, my dad was born in 1944. My dad, my mom was born in 1948. So they were born right around the time when, you know, the Korean war still didn't happen. So I think they kind of lived through that. Korea was a really, really poor country as most people know. Um, and the opportunities were few and far between, so my mom was a nurse. And so she had that, um, I guess, desirable occupation that allowed her and my dad because they got married in Korea to immigrate, um, to the us. She had some options. She actually told me that she could have immigrated to like Germany too, like Munich, but she picked New York. Um, and yeah, so they were probably one of the earliest people who came actually and immigrated, which is why I think there's this certain, like reverence held for people in my parents generation who, who came so early and really struggled.

Kristen ([00:21:31](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=2AFEM38gmtWnUaG2_munkKdMYCsc6Sbh4vi-pGv9TmaNopvlrupz2Ms4NiFx2AfhCemhEGhKDQcrNdYfgpu0lgAAsd0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1291.25)):

And it's not to say immigrants who came later in the nineties struggled. Like I'm not trying to take that away from them. But I guess like by the time they came, my parents were also one of the people who kind of like brought those people, settling into America for the first time into the church and were a part of that, like helping people settle into the community. So, um, yeah, they, that's why they immigrated. They, I mean, they were looking for a better life. They were looking for more opportunity and at the time, you know, they, they were young and, um, you know, had a lot of like, I guess, what, what is the word like, I guess, uh, no, no fear, like courage to do that. And so, so they did. Um, but I have, from the stories they've told me it was definitely a struggle.

Kristen ([00:22:20](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=IAI2b1ps8V_aqshrIQ320ibwmw_-XX7o1VOYhA4o90dQQYtTNlqJjgJBiVEL_soVFRSAuqZC9513P4dkWfIptIL2STc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1340.46)):

And, um, there were times where my parents would work different shifts. My mom was working as a nurse. My dad, I think, was like driving trucks and delivering things. And, um, yeah, there were times where they didn't even see each other for months because they were working different shifts. So yeah, they, they struggled a lot. Um, and by the time they settled and were ready to, you know, they weren't able to have children themselves. My mom was not able to get pregnant. She really wanted a child. And so she was the one who brought up with my dad that she wanted to adopt. Why don't we look into that? And I think for them, it was always like, they were always going to adopt a Korean child or try to, and so they got in touch with, um, there was an, it was a connected thing. It was, there was an adoption agency in New York that was connected to, um, why am I for Korean? Like the, the adoption agency? Was it? Yeah, yeah, yeah,

Adapted ([00:23:15](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=w3pDNVW5x_A4lQVO3CSyRh5D9GxiroTgfmVNUeE0XPJWiEtsAcifTvcOmqkb4v-odh-YiAmqK6pLepOByH7yf6FXVTM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1395.93)):

Yeah. It's one of, it's an adoption agency in Korea, like KSS or

Kristen ([00:23:20](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=4HlVAKuTFyjv2bng_1MKprH6gK4fvsPa8BbbCHKoppz86xFXmlJcHfIyHhupvU61yMU67pDgxRAOueK4XQ-DaAYgngg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1400.63)):

Ks.

Adapted ([00:23:21](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=81HZPdvO9kf5LALynTv6Erzi3orwv3amsMBmbd5kl_3yGOLGVaftRG_WSF49suHRORNwYgfzqIoAuXNv97AxFveaKQo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1401.77)):

Oh, S Ws

Kristen ([00:23:22](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=YEvxn6g5Dhan1PaiyphmgmGV1KHXXibjDO_I1gRlEcznOAfDcz1zEpKX-uP0b6U48lOIyjKZylNGY1vVnRMvC84lSIw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1402.97)):

S Ws. Thank you. I think they changed their name recently though. Like, so I've been emailing a different <laugh> woman, but, um, yeah. So, so they connected that way and it took a, it took a bit, but yeah, it, so that's how, that's how I was adopted was

Adapted ([00:23:36](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=sUvMaEMJGFXxxpJ7ZS02ij8T-gobnsTSlRdJhUSTCjHqGXwM5YVIyddupgKCJ9Olshn5tpb9ntxQ33pC1xJ4FM-aE9w&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1416.88)):

Adopted. Yeah. I think, uh, SWS may have, uh, closed, but I think it may be stopped operations. They may a post adoption services weighing still, but it's no longer there's there were four and now there's three. So, and I S Ws might be the one that is no longer, but, um, okay. So you actually came, it wasn't a private adoption. You actually came through the agencies. Okay. Mm-hmm <affirmative>

Kristen ([00:24:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=v_JFLVIUUAUJDz29dt10T5Qve78V4eFf1-b29_7x4qx-Q8PkE5VccsB5llPHS2wqECl0Ua5_ljET1G_dwugjw8VqGD4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1445.31)):

But interestingly, and I don't know if other people have had this experience. My mom, um, actually flew to Korea to meet me before she had, before she finalized the adoption. So my aunt, my dad's older sister was still living in Korea at the time. So my mom came over, I guess, came to the foster home I was at and she met me. And so there were the night that I found out. She actually showed me pictures of her holding me for the first time at the foster home, with my, with my aunt. My aunt was holding me as well. And so all these at that night, too, when I was, you know, I finally saw my papers and everything else. They showed me pictures of the party that they had. Like the, my family, I guess, had a welcome home party for me, um, that, so I saw, you know, photographs of me with my cousins, me with other family members, like kind of, um, welcoming me home to New Jersey. There were pictures of me with my mom and dad, um, at the airport when they picked me up. These were pictures I'd never seen before in my whole life. So, um, yeah, that <laugh>, there was, there was that element.

Adapted ([00:25:13](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=0T68QCuK0unVffcIwfheTXR60pfGZYe_gKTogeebvigaLJe2ioVKI6iyVvgWMe601XTdLGWbm5GMv2kbq9ZjQPZ-FVE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1513.99)):

Yeah. It was just thinking like, at the moment, when your mom brought out those photos, and then you actually got details of them, your mother going, flying over and meeting you, picking you up, like there must have been just so much hurt at the same time, but I mean, I guess validation too, that all along what you had known, it was finally, um, you were validated, but yet at the same time, so much hurt. Like, did you have this feeling like was my whole life a lie, those kinds of feelings?

Kristen ([00:25:45](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=7Nvs2ZjXTFth99Szt4w5TJuUf5pzTPb7RcAE1AkRc94ihrat8Xenl-Vsj6G7v7aCyp9Spgmk9I3i8nURF8246rqtgvM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1545.24)):

Oh, a hundred percent. Yeah. Um, it's funny. And because maybe like one of the positives of finding out later in life as a full grown adult, um, I really did try to come from a place of understanding and compassion when I was confronting my parents, even though I was really upset. I actually think the anger <laugh> came later. Um, a bit later after I confronted them. I think initially I was just coming from a place of like, okay, I'm grateful that I know the truth now. And it really does feel like almost a release of, um, a, a lot of things. So I've been going to therapy pretty regularly since 20, um, 17. And a lot of the things I was examining, like the self work I was doing within therapy itself, like a lot of it was a mystery. And so I think even just finding out this piece of my, my history and my truth, um, really revealed to me like, oh, this makes sense why I am the way I am, like, why I have such, um, anxiety about like, you know, being left or, um, this, this deep seated fear of abandonment, which I never understood where that came from or this or this, uh, insecurity about being not enough or unlovable.

Kristen ([00:27:06](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=QXrhC_wiSoA2gyM8FBFxleYDydYMHpx2pU_kXwj2lU1OEbJ6VTd2DA4o5SNXdi68iNwF2h-xQJtV4Biev-Pq_cdzg8o&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1626.1)):

Like, I, I just, like, all of these things were like, okay, I guess I could try to pick apart certain parts of my life that would validate or justify, like, why I feel these things now and why I'm struggling with them. But the moment that this, this news came out, it almost was like, I finally had a key to a door. I never knew existed. It was like, oh, wow. All right. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. This, this makes a lot more sense to me now. Um, so there was a part of it being a relief, but then yeah, the struggle quickly came of trying to integrate all of this information and still trying to keep the peace. But yeah, so, um, I, I went to Korea last year. I spent actually the good part of last year in Korea. Once I found out this news, um, since I knew I got into school, um, and I knew I was gonna quit my job <laugh> um, I was like, I can't even really focus.

Kristen ([00:28:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=g_SdOpWGBJYwX-ne2A7nUQyLqL7dOYimPxtMyk2WDVhJK8CiA5bQEJmx988M5vXWJSiMllLIhFxV4pPG59YmsmPJQoI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1684.07)):

Like, <laugh> like, I was a shell of a person. Like I was like, how am I even doing work right now? I don't know. And of course the pandemic being still very much a thing. Um, I, I still made the decision of like, I need to get to Korea. Like, I, I need to figure this out. I need to reclaim my story as my own. Um, and it all starts in Korea, so I need to go. And, um, yeah, that my mom actually came with me and that was, that was in, and of it itself, its own <laugh> its own journey. But, um, yeah, there was a lot of anger that happened there, especially between me and my mom during quarantine, um, a lot of explosive fights. Um, and my mom was gracious enough for me to kind of take that like yell and scream and be angry at her. Um, she really did. She really did do her best at like trying to understand and, and take it all in. Um, and I think it was very much necessary for her and my relationship in order to kind of repair some of that damage that was done. Um, so yeah.

Adapted ([00:29:09](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=xajbe6cAwQzD2lB7FrrFskobko-c74oPPWBrZpSqv1c7lzXuAVEWW2e733jgRm0JBCGYps15s9j-5hLyA4Iyd0f_xyo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1749.64)):

Yeah. And it's only been a year, right? Yeah. A little over a year. So, um, there will be, I mean, honestly, don't be hard on yourself cuz you're processing and it will still take years for you to process probably. So, you know, um, did you try to do some searching when you were in Korea? Um, did you do the thing where you're looking at people kind of maybe even subconsciously you're just like looking at other women on the subway and

Kristen ([00:29:42](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=j8Xka8DzSgBKGLMhpzCG8P95_FLflJUUERRVc3xyMpF53CrGRXZhUOBdWmLfKNqVZoKLvddige_TDmE5yTsQcuIhQ4M&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1782.08)):

Yeah, 100%. Yeah I did. Um, so before I went there, my parents, so it's funny because my parents were actually very, very, I don't wanna say pushy, but they were very much like, okay, now you know this information, like we should search for your birth family. And I was like, what? I like, I, I think it just took me a moment of, I didn't even know I had other parents, like I didn't even know that information. So my dad had actually, he had traveled to Korea meant over the years, many times. And I guess one of those times he actually did go to the adoption agency and even spoke to a social worker and said one day when my daughter knows, like, and she's gonna wanna search for her birth family, like, can I help her? Can we get that started now? Like, can you locate them?

Kristen ([00:30:27](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=97JEJCGXISNpXGJ6SmvmQtidQNz2gQ0ZjZLXltpr5DbTCkZ9g8f74o_zIiS05tn_gSSMg_eg9K3mWxqQ0-1bqsgqR0U&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1827.2)):

And of course the social worker and the adoption agency said like, you know, you are not allowed to do that. Like your own daughter has to come here and ask and request that for that to be done. And so he took a business card, I think this was back in the nineties, he took that business card and he kept it and he actually gave it to me that night that I found out all this information and was like, this is the person I spoke with. Like, you should speak to this person if you wanna start a birth family search. And so I think like obviously everything was a little chaotic at that time, but since I was going to Korea, I was like, yeah, sure. I guess this makes sense for me to like put in this request now I did. And it got started and I guess they sent letters, but I will say that nothing came of it.

Kristen ([00:31:09](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Nq0TO7ORVHvO7n8GuVR_7x8IKpcmYS8BKgA7XcjQ_u2TpThrNS--a10JfP8LOgA5Dt48c16TJIWoAAkuPU92TwvVWLo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1869.72)):

I guess the address that my birth mother had registered or was registered at, she actually didn't live there. So there are a lot of questions. Like I didn't really know what that meant. Um, I was like, okay, does that, you know, where did she get her mail then? Like, I, I don't understand what do you mean by that? But having said that, um, I'm kind of relieved that it didn't follow through. I think that would've been too much for me. Um, I think Mo for most adoptees, from what I hear is like they've had years to process before they decide to go on a birth family search. I like was doing this all at once. I think it would've been way too much had I actually been able to meet my birth mother or birth family. Like, I, I don't even know how that I would've even be been able to sit there. Like just being like, hi, I've never thought of you once. Like I didn't even know you existed. I just found this out months ago. Like nice to meet you. Yeah. Like it, it would've been, I think like a, it's a

Adapted ([00:32:09](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Zdlg16vdfsG-6AsqVwZuurUMJvKB3JTCNK8HKpdcOoltAj0sSe3Fj9lcOuUsYHx04xN4avqJlXWPqYrCG9H82_CnTGs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1929.52)):

Bit, a bit it's, it's a lot. I mean, I, I, I, you know, my heart goes out too because it's a lot you're going through in a, in, in just a short amount time. So definitely like, I mean, from a year, you know, within a year, finding out, going to Korea, trying to do the search, um, yeah. Like most of us know our whole lives that we're adopted. Whether or not we wanna go forward, the search may happen much later, but we know. So just that in itself will take some time I think. But yeah, but, but then sometimes, you know, it is what it is. Like you said, you're in Korea, you know, do you take advantage of the fact that you're there, but do you have names and her, um, or like your, your PA your birth parents, um, Korean ID numbers.

Kristen ([00:32:59](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=x0iIoEzqAnmy95pHepY1XHdCHcxOHLOs46stmMPcFrHjWgmVtyi7_cILMu06pwuOFjCfFXwe7sz3grkLbEU-CjrTTZ0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1979.61)):

I don't have their ID numbers, actually. I'm not aware that if that's even information I'm privy to, um, I have her name, although it was Xed out like white whited out. But then when I got to the adoption agency and they gave me the paperwork in its original form. So in Korean, because what my parents had given me was actually the English translation. So I was like, oh, were you even able to understand, understand this? Like, I think that when I read it for the first time, I was like, okay, this is clearly translated from something. So I got the original paperwork copies and that actually even had my birth father's name. Well, technically it's the name that was given by my birth mother. And so I do have that information. I have her birthdate. I knew that she gave birth to me when she was 18 years old. Um, I was born in TEU. Oh, that was another piece of new information for my whole life. I thought I was born in TA, but I'm actually born in TEU. Um, and I was like, okay, okay. I've never, I don't know much about table. I I've never been there before. Okay. Um, so yeah. Um, I, yeah, I don't that's, I do have that information, but I don't really, I guess, know how to use it, um, to, to do anymore of this searching.

Adapted ([00:34:13](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Hz0eiEUkhpyqAelIS_8uurZ38OcwGQVq_nEclggwvG3DGnw_yPj3soQqtLzHXiZBrgbWFjinFo3zTiVYWBzuIZDDLzQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2053.11)):

So, so you've got, and then your mother was with you during the, or did you go alone to the adoption agency?

Kristen ([00:34:20](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=r2T_wmPlr7pf9VgFpxsMrDNcDbdv0Fmd31uwAGDYrES1A5hXIAD_lz8RkuLBPuiR5SF8vfQog6rGwJ8zl4uYK5rvX9k&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2060.44)):

Um, I asked my mom to come with me. I was comfortable with her coming with me and I thought in my mind, like, perhaps it might actually help that she's Korean. Like, my Korean's pretty decent honestly, but I don't know, like she's an elder and the person who I was seeing was definitely gonna be, you know, there's a level of respect there. And I was thinking like, strategically, I was like, this might actually be, It worked, worked my to your benefit,

Adapted ([00:34:46](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=1X8ACmY6ciyEu2XDTYOqFXT0qPGfY1MnnE1bhfsG86jFyONQYMJ01yyoKdjLdPSX-YQ_AL4jWzacSpiMqOAmZGpuTtI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2086.75)):

Right?

Kristen ([00:34:47](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=b_VyEvNORbv9QH5JzECeR51HK6IB71ngn-axpnNND_GS4YB8_oaA2DZ1lcqp0UgHRpRktQcBbVuyAofZfqKfwhPkRUs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2087.15)):

Yes.

Adapted ([00:34:47](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=gt1bsd4nBXRLUkn4dAq1es0qzCpP0jwUal9eUZ9WbJtkSr9SaiNJxNqLRoUniRwUkztWTiv5AL6YgiBpnU3_83Y9ITE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2087.33)):

That's smart.

Kristen ([00:34:48](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=9sZtQu3CiLK8PqygdR1xwgirIPw6aMAK0T4HS892c86BhzVYEHJYgy0CJ2YE2EV_74JaV1qqsxxBpXbdsrGb1591p8g&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2088.63)):

My, my Korean mom who would speak to this woman and like, we we'd, we I'd be there for that. So, um, yeah, that was, that

Adapted ([00:34:57](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=C6Vu1ZTjDLtn26k1E2H7ju6Up4ATw55mAzjOaSi2G7Yry3aCQHrisj6AaHxRvVd50ArLVrjf9t14LpIVhlPuHA6DGHU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2097.38)):

Was, and if they said, no, your Korean mom could just get a little angry or whatever. And then that might,

Kristen ([00:35:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=mUv6PXAjy-oyRG7oIiPhL9sUFwfqtZqBuSDXYpp6AcgZA0Lr0cIvBSQZyucD43LDw_QN5zHVfqb4GJPlHwQbykNcrWk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2102.82)):

Whatever it is, The whole, the whole interaction. When I went to the adoption agency was pretty positive. It seemed like actually the social worker did a little more work than was necessary. Like she supposedly went above and beyond and even like called the landlord of the address that my birth mother's address was registered at and

Adapted ([00:35:30](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=WfD5jzFNMdAvsEe1ayOc-HMLvYq9iM-iGr8RTMXPsajQTyJUXXhegUIZCUvNrlVrTBTbPiY86y0iC6nO5pKO5tqeipU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2130.739)):

Oh yeah, that's extra.

Kristen ([00:35:32](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=AlomtDgP4tBblaJUwKK21udlouTpHR0C1Y435gzJofcHZ2tB3v3KG3K5Vk82iuKhp65gFzE0WHo5e4j0XsbBiolB5k0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2132.26)):

So that information that she doesn't live there anymore. And it's been a, since she's lived there, like, that's how I got that information. Um, because the,

Adapted ([00:35:42](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=KSN5xMNFiq2BN4e-XpyfeFWp2nI0Vku9DItaRW-Wg_8biSM6NFouHdLGWFf7mL4BjuhTqRKnMQx6vtY8St_OQqmkqHs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2142.52)):

But you have, do you have your parents' birth dates?

Kristen ([00:35:46](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=usBs5GahA8mSlIEBiq0QbxUpyGG3GJ5VMlrBrCDI5qXvsxcPcR_yeZXQG5GWg9FmUE3LEXW3Mlro-Ojj3BcZckzp1fE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2146.36)):

Um, I think I have my birth mother's birthday. Yeah, I do. Mm-hmm

Adapted ([00:35:49](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Mwz-k_l_yy3O3FVUh6Ddnaj_YcqEaSsNTjO2-jKiUW_B9VAfgzNNP-FIVB4JWkOkx0BG2-PCW5R8_jui1x3LNkZeyWM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2149.719)):

<affirmative> even though you don't have the ID number, if you have a name and a birth date and you have an old address, I think, I think it's potentially whenever you're ready. Mm-hmm <affirmative> I think it's, I think it's possible even though if she's not no longer living at the address she was at the, the government can find her.

Kristen ([00:36:08](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=iroRelmHAcgSXQ7XqDuOyqd2ksOIe0DN_-j30wckzkEgryFi-Otf-PHDjrOCdU6SWkhr3x2mnWMD4G_PAN8lTBQHv0o&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2168.94)):

Okay. Well, that's good to know. Um, yeah, because my adoption, so, I mean, it's just, yeah, they weren't helpful after that. They kind of just was like, you can

Adapted ([00:36:17](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=NZ4BqYLppScALJM9b2b4bz7o5uoDSmi51IQK_0RvzOzclL9ylgjjoOL1mKzph7wjk18hIs9tgf2t6lGErC3iy5-ZWAc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2177.7)):

Try. Yeah. They're kind of restricted because of the special adoption law on like what they can do. And they really interpret it as the, in the most conservative way in, in terms of what they can do. Um, but there's also, um, NCRC, which is the arm it's like part of the government. Um, and it used to be a Korean adoption services, which was part of the government. And then it got folded into this NCRC, but basically they, you can ask them also to conduct a search. They may not give you like, um, the address, but they can find it and, and send letters. They'll send the it's like the three telegrams mm-hmm <affirmative> mm-hmm <affirmative>. Um, so they may be able to find, because you know, like, you know, everybody's registered. So even if they move, they have to register their new address. So it, it may be possible.

Kristen ([00:37:13](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=yXzBCgHjJhn3L-vqQnKRygnV9MQsh7a_o-p6dzJi7qc13a10-xJZ27cwfN33D119Nz9Y2LHqyJgjGEsaKaBYLHJ0yKA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2233.27)):

Okay. This is good information to know. Yeah, yeah. No, thank you for letting me know. Yeah. I, I, I kind of was all doing this through the adoption agency and I think this is once again, just my ignorance, not knowing like what other, um, things I could do, although I am a member. Yeah. And that's yeah, yeah. Uhhuh

Adapted ([00:37:28](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=SR-xkg2PrUwTuQO1IQTvaS977iDG0QCNv8zey7LiaFpVS1ZloWjU5JdMBTyLa0-cnWTyr4wSnEs5wcsHdft2gLVG9wI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2248.98)):

And that's, and that's definitely the first step through the agency, but, um, there are other avenues and there's only a, there's a limitation of what the agency can do. Mm-hmm <affirmative> um, so there's different and there's, um, I don't know if you know about goal, but there

Kristen ([00:37:44](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=GkY0H5jmV_W3Iuld-O8IKuGYrBU60aOPgBLwkIuEUBJ_OycJKVyDykkOFOB93r8bshL-qqm_Bvtc3266TbNGlwRyH8M&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2264.84)):

I'm a member. Yeah. <laugh> I, that's how I got my visa, my F four visa. Um, yeah, when I went last year.

Adapted ([00:37:53](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ZjECaAX3p-dLhbIX11FchAzfAUV1fdIiA_leSN9TbKgSTaIEYNa0JgFKG_htkJHGShJN1esf5GcjeUh2l-Rw0hm5JQ0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2273.55)):

Oh, you got your F four. Okay. Yeah.

Kristen ([00:37:55](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=PCAqKE6w87Y51Y69ug6WLA2hqCh3P70fRnVvK4soNCnemJLWQAjJ16GcMkCmWF0ZVDRfmHJrpxPQtI5tgG6NctE1SMc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2275.68)):

Yeah. I, I use goal. Um, they, I actually spoke with someone who does the whole birth family search. Um, I forgot his name, but we did have a call again. Like I think I just was doing the most last year. I was just doing too much, but once again, that was my way of coping with all. This is like, I'm a very like proactive need to have a goal in mind and just go for it. Keep my mind busy. It was, it was to avoid feeling my feelings. Um, so I get very, I guess, like proactive and super, super, uh, you know, I get a lot of things done. I get things checked off my list, but at the same time, it doesn't leave me any space to actually feel the things that I'm feeling. And so it's a coping mechanism. It served me pretty well, but, um, yeah, I think I was just doing too much last year. Um, but yeah.

Adapted ([00:38:46](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=qWcjS3jf1SXi_WHrApfI_c2JjjdPpxhkYn-g8vyVaADBdMjKjYLGR9BDXdrxZF85D17h7rNl4a5L533xuLmXnMLacc8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2326.33)):

Could your mom, could you and your mom read the, your adoption papers in Korean?

Kristen ([00:38:51](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=yfmNv6eHnObac_lyVkmnyknNVhPADYI8qBAFsetNspgoKTI8stDhn32H_5aqj-xl31WwX88_mnDoUF-dO6wiZJ-Z8wM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2331.15)):

Yeah. Yeah. Uh, so I still have the copies. Um, they're actually still they're back in New Jersey. I didn't bring them with me to San Francisco, but, um, I did read them through, uh, if there were any words that I didn't understand, I was like, what is the, what is this? Um, so we read everything through, um, the only new information though that I could really see was the fact that I had my birth father's like name, but he didn't have anything to like, I guess they said, just be careful of that. And that's why they had crossed it out in the English translation, because that's the name that was given by my birth mother and it's not verified. So like, just know that and take that for what it is. But I guess, like I'm thinking, and maybe this is just me, like doing extra, but like, why would there be any reason for an 18 year old to lie? <laugh> like, it's already scary enough giving birth and being pregnant and not having money or the funds to take care of the child and deciding to give her away. Um, I don't. So I, I do believe that that is probably my birth father's name. That's on that Korean document, but yeah.

Adapted ([00:39:56](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=7jdghpOhIyq3eVY_mxQoZXr2F62bB3_ujPiqbiGSD8Pii5uuFrKvfwGecvD9Aeaj1uen_xYzcndKUjqLEfpKYzn9BJk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2396.38)):

Did you get on Facebook and start looking for names? <laugh> I

Kristen ([00:40:01](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=DJZFLDKGF3vEfjwfCQgCeLHs6TNTasIBCkPWxlZaZ9wirCxW6YS98rOcF_AWoZBvqLose6HFJuolcJ-i_VJT4LRqOMA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2401.62)):

Should probably do that. I did not even think to do that. Like that's though it would make a lot of sense. <laugh> I did not think to do that

Adapted ([00:40:10](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=LcZsuDo50BPSgnlvNlKtTR2Km5OsAnX_6WS0Hz2AoyUXGagwbUJ0u2bj8nOFgRF8neZGPAX4FhXHARHCApqynIVU9Z0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2410.48)):

Well, especially because it's not soul. So, you know, Dego, I mean, it's still is, it's still a city, but now that you have an actual, you know, place outside of soul, it might be, it might help, it might help in your search mm-hmm <affirmative> yeah. In your search. Yeah. So, so I take it. Oh, go ahead.

Kristen ([00:40:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=qRXH6k0lDCp-CtWOuUOptjDCZbmyuYjRC3S4JFaUhArISr9j76wmuKYdoQX0DjnG_RDZ1BvP8HBWIrmJPjZTSUpn9n8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2429.62)):

No, no, I just, I was saying that she's actually not in Tigua anymore. That's where I was born. Supposedly she's in <inaudible> province. That information they did give me, so, yeah. Anyway, but yes, I do have a location and a name <laugh>

Adapted ([00:40:42](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=HIyui009kwz_9D1YuV7KsFLssGfIocWqf5yRuwMHpMquLOuse_eZ2dIiioW-w1WL4s0rVbTZ1XQm_Uesmbj4paz5BLw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2442.75)):

Okay. Okay. Um, so I take it, your, your parents are, are helpful. Do you, maybe some of it comes from a little guilt too, like they wanna help you now?

Kristen ([00:40:54](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=QPciE0sx5HQnmNAYnLPXUv5KHgIANiSYjwMfGzxt4G47Mv56aLgsKE8chblI28YWrRF9XVIuzZG25JgQ1Uzvx7761Ag&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2454.79)):

Mm, for sure. They they're very open. I think they give me a lot of space to talk about it and bringing it up and bring it up and, um, just have a conversation about it. I think for them, they feel like a weight's been lifted. Right. They've been holding onto this secret for so long that finally, now that we're just able to be honest about it. I do feel that for them, this is what they've always wanted all along. Um, so I told them though the relief for them came, but for me it's just beginning. So like, it's almost like, okay, they were carrying a weight for 30 years and now they're just handing it over to me and I'm like, okay, what the hell do I do with this? And so <laugh>, um, they are helpful. Um, they're very supportive. Um, I don't, I'm sure some of it might come from guilt, but I do honestly think they just want to make sure that I adjust to this well and they want to be there for it. Um, so I feel that I, I don't, I, yeah, I don't distrust any of that intention,

Adapted ([00:41:57](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=EJ3gj2WFPkZ47dodunqyzxMRrXi1WK_J1KAyBXmy8xRxFUmD5IjZAUnE1s4ntHuV9YIThuXgvSyxk1jYVX7sZ5TAPsM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2517.51)):

Uh, you know, over the years, did it, do, did you have other clues, like, did you not look like your parents or your family, or there are your per is your personality really different from them?

Kristen ([00:42:09](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=YvEbyI5_wVuZbUgrqhf-16ZOoEXilr1PrbrEMGXsWV_vS307R--SnkO_tU3KxkoLyCQyBvxB27TbZrkvyWVaobfLv6E&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2529.39)):

<laugh> yeah. <laugh> so honestly with my parents, because maybe I'm an only child. I never really was like, I guess if those two have a baby, it looks like me. Like, I didn't question it. I do think there's slightly a chance. I kind of look like my mom. I always thought I have the height of my dad. Like, this is weird to say, but my mom would even say like, your toes, like are like your dads. Like they would say things like that. And so I, I guess for me, I just never really thought that adding to what I had told you before about like the birth certificate and all those things. I did realize my parents kept a quite like, they would take a lot of pictures, especially of me as a baby. And I did realize that there were no pictures of my mother pregnant and there were no pictures of me before a certain age or before a certain time. And that was always questionable to me, like, okay, like, where am I? Where am I as a newborn? Like where's moms pregnant

Adapted ([00:43:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Tix6Do1AUeV2ciMFjG0Q5PlmRPMaa3FlVjFpsm8CYLCkmFfwEWIvWh59ylZzphmPcwZVpTgKRJiLk7zm5o0NsLXQzQw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2584.2)):

That not folding me in the hospital.

Kristen ([00:43:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=AjnGouE0jM5d90k6Tmbbkv45lwfGMfBKTJbYmbnhs4gX1Pf1vr3kdA71gVHzb73KxfHW0H1oAeq3hSmdEA973Mb5yC4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2585.68)):

Where is all of that? Right? Um, that was, that was always, yeah. In my, in my mind for sure. <laugh>

Adapted ([00:43:11](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ofBMJxNLUV13AHOiJnjnnkiPTbCmIGFzrzQUXf7Taxb-R2Gvvc_tLyGtT9ksNd0kfnORCx3GI0lLkDtJy5qM0NbnUrg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2591.78)):

Yeah. What did, what did they say when you asked?

Kristen ([00:43:15](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=6TKzaxXISc_752KMa9x2yLM1Da0X0eFN2GoHegtvpz2S43y62lQeioq-Pt15nMgF84dUeAO9nvIuuJlO7Kz9hpexBhI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2595.83)):

He just said they didn't have a camera <laugh> they didn't have a camera that time. Okay. <laugh> like, I just accepted that answer.

Adapted ([00:43:31](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=E8euEpkDk62EXyBiDwDxV6__qHu-ohWnjcE-k87JtknfBoR8bYuttAXJ5eXrLeLc8RF3sxLh_enNZdHc8hvBAIiHzD0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2611.8)):

And you were, um, how old, when you were adopted, do you think?

Kristen ([00:43:35](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=SqJ42-qH0xf6NJ9QqyCDd9oXZHTpGQNi7n6pI3gw1iKxyhYVvQoOSERctE9U4xuKsDTkCOgFESVaZKpoOAgBLAu5BGM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2615.64)):

Six months? I believe so. I came to the us in August of 1989. I was born in March of 1989. So yeah, six months.

Adapted ([00:43:45](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ePzOnrSYLy7sMQQVGbZWlO6io0EcQZbPn9Y8OOotWHzxnr_tWlnEA-JROqCjx6VsqnUKE5z9snViGlc5BcW793qbbqU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2625.37)):

Okay. You know, for a lot of adoptees, they talk about a part of their story is, you know, being disconnected from Korean culture, the food, definitely the language, like not being able to speak Korean and just how difficult it is. And as an adult to learn your heritage language, when it's also like laced with adoption and relinquishment, you know, on top of it, those issues. But, um, I guess that wasn't, um, an issue for you. You grew up in Korean family. I mean, did your parents, you just speak Korean at home?

Kristen ([00:44:19](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=IMkPvfXTaL30WlmQ4JrCH2eJSZ4gOux_5WBSutTq5hYX81rPKg96sQJROXR5PlnljV0S9ey_S5WCaT9hwdhMBKqxkZY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2659.32)):

Yeah. Um, because my parents are kind of from an older generation, um, yeah. We only speak Korean at home. I've only Korean food at home breakfast, lunch dinner. <laugh> like, my dad is very much like, must eat just Korean food. Like we don't, you don't. So

Adapted ([00:44:37](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ZKvCgu8zcGApPs641hs7015a4DwogVrARxYodomJyE4d1zMS62Pvhgfz_U07cSsW09a7D4gGuRT0za3ckCuP98ITFoc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2677.16)):

They're not like we're in America now. We want you to be as American as possible. They didn't.

Kristen ([00:44:42](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=gWG8jR15GUeWhhOvKky5xFlxnXjYqdPy9PdHf6yBKIaWtLbeoM0NogXGAMgmPWDe2qAtnJtQeedInfRkfzbWjSg8Y78&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2682.42)):

No. Yeah. I think if anything, they're probably more traditional than most <laugh>. Um, yeah. Very, very much that. Yeah.

Adapted ([00:44:53](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=91TqVRaSLUoQqYX4OGi0jYzF4Ilrv3N90AonO57vyPpw8iq2p01RbG0SVgvzvWq_xdPcYdRseEbVjKkD_V7E7Q0d2Uw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2693.5)):

Okay. Okay. What did your or your friends, what were their reactions when you told them

Kristen ([00:44:59](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=v7tYmO90mpuWb8YTFPtmvC5svnx3Y61AJnbjy3kOLiLcIGy-baQGXPx5NiWUMF6iyhjoPhmQHrgdWdm_IUWO3-pT9No&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2699.51)):

<laugh>? Um, yeah, I mean, most of them were shocked and very surprised. I think a lot of them really felt like they wanted to be there for me. They just didn't know how, um, I will say that while I was going through this, I pretty much shunned every single person that knew me or I knew, um, because people, I knew felt very unsafe because I thought they might judge me. They might judge my parents. They might feel bad for me. Like all these things that I was just like, I barely have, I have to, I have to hold space right now for myself. Like, I cannot be there for you guys. And I can't lie and say I'm okay. Not that I think they were expecting me to be okay. But I, I just didn't know how to act around people that knew me and knew what was going on and knew my family.

Kristen ([00:45:52](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=HA5hazZNPy1cgtTXwdceUZeT8HVk0BOCLM-th5zgiYE3WY8rWibGhXzV-A69XMm2NX7kBTHhK7x8bz5zySASlZ7pAgs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2752.38)):

And so to most of my close friends, I did have like one on one conversations to them saying that I'm going to Korea. I'm figuring this out. I really need time for myself. Like, I'm sorry that I, I like can't be there for you guys right now. Um, and most of them were understanding of that. There were, there was some re work after I got back from Korea. But at the time, last year, like strangers felt very, very safe to me because none of them knew me. None of them knew my story. None of them knew what was happening. And it was not like I was going to lie about what was going on in my life. But even with the news of, I just found out I was adopted. That's why I'm here in Korea. That to them is just, okay, that's a piece of this person.

Kristen ([00:46:34](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=NGvygSG4heE3o8SYTV6AWu_InJx_CM4wGoniMKxb7jm_jn-RJJgT8z-MTbH3Jj_kp5CUOAjwrURf1lJatQzjpL1Gu4o&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2794.82)):

I just met. That's her story, but that's it right. They don't know my mom, they don't know my dad, they don't know my whole life. They don't have that narrative. So for them, they're just meeting me and saying like, whoa, that's a lot. I'm like, yeah, it's a lot. And then we just move on. Right. And go get on with our, like, let's get to know each other. So, um, yeah, I, I got back from Korea in August and let's just say I had a lot of, um, heart to hearts with my friends because I knew they, all they were trying to do was really be there. And I really, um, I rejected all that, um, at the time. And I knew, I knew I, I had to, um, do my own apologies and at the same time, uh, just, you know, just be like, I, I appreciate that you guys gave me that space and that we can, we can still, you know, I guess like move on from here. Like let's move forward. But yeah.

Adapted ([00:47:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=J4dtdikvRcoatOSnbChZDULHoI75saPH5tdiJtobLFNIu0f2ujYZgsEI7-js5IQXyhEzW7CzMMjuaiAcsP-EtY-POBE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2849.82)):

Do you feel like people, your friends or acquaintances, do you think that people do sense that people treat you differently knowing you're adopted now?

Kristen ([00:47:39](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=bz9IT0K0rc5_qWyLUjGAc0IPtd8TYs4bnv6m5R584rk44tSxG_6SuDc25sMYz3Pc4Fwq5hAS0SH49O3pQGAvVNG1NHo&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2859.82)):

Not at all. No. They definitely still treat me the same. Um, I think if anything, they're just more they're open for me when I bring it up. Like I, I, because I think that's important for me that I feel safe to just, if a topic of conversation comes to mind, you know, you never wanna feel like, is this something I'm allowed to bring up or is this something that I feel like, are they gonna judge me on it? So, no, like, I don't think they treat me any differently. I'm still me. Um, it's just that now with my friends, like, I am definitely able to like, you know, just put it into conversation casually and just be like, yeah, oh, by the way, like, this is happening with my life. Like, I'm going back to Korea, this, you know, I actually went back to Korea in July and, you know, there's stuff, things like that. So they know. Um, and that's what feels nice. Everything is still just as it is just now with this, I guess, new lens on things. Um, mm-hmm

Adapted ([00:48:32](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=oQe-0YFZr_wsx8CNuOGp_2HTJsUcErUWpY8U3rZfJIGa1w_C75xf81YGoZoeO696ti-GRMXXlNd2KL7awNcFwLh83-Q&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2912.57)):

<affirmative>. Yeah. And I mean, I, I, I spent, I lived a year in Korea and, you know, I think, I mean, things are changing. Things kind of changed very slowly, but there is this taboo about adoption in Korea. Um, mm-hmm <affirmative> and a lot of times people don't wanna talk about it or they think it's impolite to talk about it, or they don't know, like if you bring up, you're adopted in my, you know, um, in my case, and I've heard of others, like people will just stop talking cause they don't know what to say, you know, whereas, but maybe, you know, in Korean American communities, you know, it's more, it's less taboo to talk about adoption.

Kristen ([00:49:10](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=dA1pnpAT5-Y_oIQ5tHdpk5kOkvrSOMrIymlKBubAboSJ4AU7HZqJRj_Zs55ADB0iHuDX1LYSmP_IuJKntjCOxbK-Amw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2950.44)):

I would say that it's still, it's still very taboo. I think, I think it's just, I think for me though, when I speak about my friends, I mean, it's a mix. It's not to say, like I don't have Korean American friends. Um, I, it's funny because I listened to a bunch of episodes from adapted and just listening to other people's stories, um, about how they grew up in a very like predominantly white community. That was also my story too. I would say there was a time where I really shunned my Korean identity and the Korean community itself. I didn't like the judgment. I didn't like the comparison. I didn't like, you know, there were a lot of things that I fought against that I was just like, I hate being Korean. Like I don't want anything to do with <laugh> the Korean culture and people.

Kristen ([00:49:55](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=0wnmQG9HJGh3u0VBIu9s7QVbWE6UCV-jD3ONigqbIcZair9jWRNvL-Q7fkFABZ-2i2sGeIbpEjoCUMubIsiwvKU4uLc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=2995.18)):

Um, uh, I would say that I have a pretty diverse group of friends from all different cultures and ethnicities and backgrounds. Um, so yeah, I do think it's still taboo in that. I don't know if a lot of my Korean American friends don't know any other adoptees, maybe they do. Um, I don't, I'm probably one of their first, if not like, um, so I don't, yeah, I don't, I think it is taboo in that you probably just don't like hear about it and when you do, you don't know how to react. You're like, oh shoot. Okay. <laugh> like that kind of, that kind of thing.

Adapted ([00:50:32](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=42OpMvex-zDlj3K-L630G9v1BT3OMgGw6cI8d3cQlcrmPf5PryDXwXPFNkphHr7S0LN77OUFQuJWWFpcqH1UaJa1Tcs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3032.18)):

Oh yeah. So like growing up, like, did you, like, not like the fact that you had Kim junior lunch or did your mom send you with

Kristen ([00:50:39](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=UFqAslpAinovrtZjUkN0OGk7s8Vx9IRE9F6Ghca_65DGbHAozuvDwYDEkdvcJQxwrmsEqPicnm37rasrkz1ZdU79dA0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3039.7)):

Oh yeah. Um, yeah, in elementary school definitely have memories of her. Like literally packing me a very nice, like it's called doshirak. Right. So like, just like bringing that to school with like the chopsticks, the banchan, the rice, everything. And when I would open it up, the smell would just fill the room and people would look over at me, be like, what is that? You're eating, they'd see little anchovies and be like, Ew, what is that? And I'd feel the judgment and I'd feel the shame and I'd feel like, and I'd go home and I'd be like, do not ever pack me that lunch ever again at the time when I was in elementary school, the big thing was like Lunchables. So I asked my mom, like, I recall me going to the grocery store with her and being like, I am not like we are only buying lunch bowls now. Like I do not want anything to do. Yeah. So I definitely, I, I went through that when I was a kid, um, feeling a lot of shame about that. Um, yeah, a lot of, a lot of that racial reckoning actually happened and like kind of looking at my internalized racism, especially against my own culture, um, happened actually during the pandemic. Um, I, in March of 2020, I actually got attacked twice. Um, once on the subway and once on the street,

Kristen ([00:51:58](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=xM1jguLYm7Z5X8_31suQevuhJYQwjx6IWJT-w3pz-aEoNi_GpV1pODAu-G6_l7aDQW5q85XbWrH7pDH7F2Y3gkaFvS8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3118.04)):

I never reported it. I think at the time it was just so shocking to me that something like that could even occur in my own city. Um, and I think that's when something switched for me, like a light went off and I like, it sounds really cliche, but I, like, I woke up. I was like, wow. And I really examined a lot of my own internalized racism. The, you know, what happened to me as I was growing up, like how I looked down upon certain things, like I didn't wanna be associated with being Korean or being different. I just wanted to fit in. So whatever the whitest possible, most acceptable possible version of me, whatever that was, that's what I leaned into. Um, but now that I'm looking back on it, yeah. I do feel like a new renewed sense of shame of how I responded and how like, yeah.

Kristen ([00:52:55](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=FFsj3Plp-gB-lQyLuvEHjF13sQkZqgBxafuiCRdapvEt4rj5jZyVD9k1tknd7NoY2wuEK-N1mQIQnU34YoYxlxGpcEY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3175.32)):

Um, so I, I went through a lot of that actually over the last two years kind of questioning that, um, and wanting to really connect more with my Korean community, Korean American community and just the Asian American community overall. I really, I think be I became a very strong advocate. Um, but it took a while. It took a long time for me to even like, look into that and see, you know, my actions and my, I guess how I grew up in the environment I grew up in and how that affected me in the way that I think. Um, and so, yeah, no, it's, it's still a process it's still happening now. Um, I'm still a work in progress when it comes to that.

Adapted ([00:53:43](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=fHO9EZh3UjF6Ph3Ik1Fnb5EKjGfZt0xZ-xPIolzpVX7f9DlsfZzhzdIWh_CAwJpsVRCPcZ0OHeyFediYsjLKr4OOv6M&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3223.92)):

Yeah. That's interesting. So even if you had Korean parents, even though you weren't transracially adopted that you still had feelings of like self hate mm-hmm

Kristen ([00:53:53](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=3Tz7udlxY0c13WIQpQJTQeLxE4dvtmqfIXOURctA7a1ylMgtC0ETcNUCSvDuus5zLCFyjFX6WGxlNz51edFvSN6wvxw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3233.67)):

<affirmative> mm-hmm <affirmative> mm-hmm <affirmative> yeah. And the Korean community too. And I'm not sure if other Korean Americans feel this way, so I'll just speak to my experience. But I think like, it was really hard for me to, I never saw myself as like the typical or stereotypical like Korean girl. I was not very girly. I like what I was kind of a tomboy if that's even an appropriate like word to use now when I was a kid and I was running around a lot. And I think like, people always wanted to put me in a box or that's what it felt like I always was trying, everybody was trying to put me into this box and I, I refused to fit into that box. And so in the Korean community, especially in the church, I would always hear a lot of judgment. And like, I really didn't like that.

Kristen ([00:54:39](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=FOqYwz4tLhcBRW7LUbfXLnjCteOY6eQXVs-nCS3KsVPd3mQWJA3lpJmJSM0AxqWAijzSHkFKpZvh382H3O-DZ1wlNek&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3279.9)):

And I, I kind of felt like my parents should have stood up for me more. I was like, why? You know, you're hearing this person talk about me in that way. Like, where's, where's the security here. Like, aren't you supposed to be? My mom and dad, like, aren't you supposed to protect me from this. Like, why aren't you, but Queens's just kind of let that happen. And they, you know, I guess we're just supposed to grow a thick skin and just accept it and just like push it aside. Right. It doesn't matter, but I'm, I was a pretty sensitive kid. So I think the moment I would hear those things that I didn't like to hear, I would be compared to someone else. Like I really fought against it. Um, I, so that's for me was that association of like, I don't want anything to do with this. Like I want out <laugh> like, this is not me. And I don't wanna fin to your little neatly packed box. I refuse. So yeah. I found my own community then.

Adapted ([00:55:33](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=NipaaJXLRU9qzWZl4bxQErghig3ghUf0BuPCOHRCn-aQ7jIyl-Aznb7OG2Wlhi5SVZpBGmSED2-r4doTL8PekveFKyA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3333.56)):

And then the attacks that happened to you, you think there, they were hate crimes.

Kristen ([00:55:39](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=rx-N5Tt6PCFVDylf85IhbaDqXKuYsE6cvX_jDJCdLbTlsHq6_zCEe7mmYPndXj-YjZlBddx54J4aQuVbK-7sIWklFi4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3339)):

Oh, for sure. Yeah. Um, the slurs that were yelled, the fact that, so one of the times was a guy throwing hot coffee at me on the street. Um, I saw it from the corner of my eye. I was walking back to my apartment and out of nowhere, this guy just throws hot coffee at me. So it, it got kind of onto the side of me and just yelled, like, you know, you brought this here, like, this is, this shit is going on because of you. And I was, I, I think in the moment I was just like, okay, I'm gonna get away from this person and just run home. Um, but immediately when I got home, I had to like sign on to work. Um, uh, we were all on zoom at that time. And then I called my parents and I was just like, this just happened to me. And I, I remember just crying, just being like, why is this happening? Like, what did I do? Like, you know? Um, yeah, so it's a lot of shock

Adapted ([00:56:31](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=2LNWu2yCfxQvwLP5a739xVvw5yhtuLffrl1j9NR9rvQ7hYJNR9C24nbJwnTSsKuqASGwpWeZANe3YdKNAbVADt3JVyE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3391.34)):

And your parents are much older. Do you have anxiety about their safety?

Kristen ([00:56:37](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Vd-1m6sGNS7zki9k7VIq8OjHZZCfLuH63ZSqaar34wNNQUa45_Ftubrzfb5KaEMBpdQgLufrlS_198kKsfecFJWjG6A&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3397.62)):

100%. Yeah. I mean, I honestly rather those attacks, I'd rather be attacked a hundred times rather than my parents get attacked, even once I think about them all the time. Um, and they have a business in New York city, so it's on the upper west side, which is a pretty safe neighborhood all around, but still I think about them. I tell my mom to watch her back. I literally say, do not take the subway, especially now. Like I didn't even take the subway. I went home to New York like last month and I, I didn't go on the subway because I felt very unsafe. And again, like maybe it's from that traumatic incident of those two attacks, but I'm always constantly watching my back now. Like, I, I don't even listen to music <laugh> when I'm walking the street anymore, for fear that, you know, I won't be able to hear something or I won't be able to, you know, have all my senses about me when I'm. And this is specifically in New York, I feel a little safer in San Francisco actually.

Adapted ([00:57:34](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=j0JLw4zugQXeIOYS7zKVqG740Td6DqMZbpfe-lDZ0ucRAamp7w_iKR7O9curci02vti9d-ixuZTPtCjVhvtqvpVElC0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3454.92)):

Yeah. I was gonna ask, do you and your other Asian American friends, do you feel like everybody's kind of more kind of watching their back or taking different precautions?

Kristen ([00:57:44](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=VUrLLrCZf72jt479CYGpBPQi2kzLlR_MV-8u53vV8xQ1pJo2RS9wwZCJIP56HKtk41ul89aHxJ6NsTSP2WT-t4Ty12M&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3464.67)):

Yeah, I would say so. I met with, um, two friends of mine who carry like mace now, like Sprite, pepper spray on them, um, at all times. And yeah, I've heard, I've heard the same thing, especially over the last, like in 2022, um, with Michelle go and then Christina unli that happened in New York. So I think it's just like, what can you do? It's it's just random acts of violence. <laugh> at all. So her so horrible. Yeah. You definitely still lived your life, but I guess there are extra precautions to take.

Adapted ([00:58:19](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Xiwpd9ik1ZSy2YI56ITqbOnYKEGKM9vfvTqPt8k6n-R0P4vkH7QDz2qtC39w9kzZ-_gZ9h3GQPA9mAbMSKZvY6msXbY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3499.48)):

So when this was happening, you know, in the, during the pandemic, um, and you said you suddenly like realized like that you want this racial reckoning and that you wanted to feel, you know, your, your strength or your power being Asian, being Korean. What did that look like for you? Like what did you do or how did it feel?

Kristen ([00:58:42](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=1-O7HEywUN23SSVxiZ6FUVlApDSAXTmkLEmyu0sJ1Xq2h2grNYrKDx-SVAKo81tYHeuXK8jcriSs_xW0IOErf2VThXc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3522.02)):

I initially, um, I, again, I like reached out to, for a community. And so at the time, I guess that was pretty, it was difficult in that it was during the pandemic. It was during the lockdown when I was really looking for more connection, um, just to like, feel like I had a community that I could talk to about these things, because anytime I tried to talk to some of my white friends or non Korean friends, I don't think they could really understand. They tried, they tried to listen, but I could just see it falling a little flat. The, I would listen to podcasts that would actually be really helpful. Um, ESP, like, you know, most of the podcasts I listen to were very like Asian American centric and like the hosts were Asian.

Adapted ([00:59:26](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=a31_BchzAsXBX3eRxlSzEfZdxSoQAoglmXnNZT3xfjqgLqXGez-GMBT5x1YhYja5EUm84MSE8PHuv8fdR_U7DEUnLok&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3566.75)):

What do you listen to? What do you listen to?

Kristen ([00:59:28](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=uoGDm_rQW8QEq1OJckT9f1pb8LzP8dgUyfb6nx4AOdbjH_BTwUr_p6Fob1VCJ99NrfBRzjkTJO_zkjRGhuUYQAnxkIU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3568.56)):

Um, one of my favorites is feeling Asian. So that's by like Brian Park and Youngmi Mayer. They're, they're like two New York comedians, but they, they host that podcast. But a lot of the guests, they have, they're all Asian and they speak to their own, you know, just their own experiences. It doesn't always have to be serious. It's a lot of, you know, there's like some humor there and I don't know, it just made me feel more connected. And at least I was listening to conversations that stimulated me, that I was interested in, um, that just helped me even like get out some of those emotions or feelings that I was feeling. Um, but yeah, I think in general, like I would reach out to my Korean friends as well, trying to have those conversations. My best friend is, um, Ghanaian American. So she's someone who at least understands, what's like to be a part of a minority community.

Kristen ([01:00:17](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=xbF-21_pvchCj1B0XQ10ylkNd2Cu1sO0c4wxl4FfFbXkf44JYkEhBtZd40c_jPJj5QRQD9og-cQA6L1ZBbbTgWvfA0c&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3617.23)):

And of course, because she's black growing up where we grew up like that in and of itself is its own experience. So I'm not trying to like compare the microaggressions I, I faced and the things that I, I lived through, um, to what she experienced, but at least she's someone that I know understands and, and would give me very sound advice, because I remember even asking her, I was like, you know, I'm just so angry all the time. Like, how do, where do you put this anger? Like, how are you not angry every day? And she's like, Kristen, like, it's not that I'm not angry, but like, I can't go through life. <laugh> like, you know, being this way, like she she's also, you know, been on her own journey. So anyway, she has been such a strong resource for me in a lot of ways, um, while I was going through most of the, uh,

Adapted ([01:01:07](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=dTHNb2302svANNOWRL9j7GcTaEhUOrVU5NEBtKryeCKVEXm6ITwi0AEFcIMR0mIa3IKRjsVCRBl32mzXtNXJF4lxmw4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3667.9)):

Discovery. Yeah, right. Just, just the stages of, of processing,

Kristen ([01:01:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=LIy7R54-PSIBMHXq8KPtsC1hh5hW8tyHY39moHyoG3YqL-arZeglMN1etU4Ye5RO2SfUUCJ3Hs0XzNuSoEIFy4WgD8k&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3672.49)):

Like how I came to be

Adapted ([01:01:14](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=LriG2WbDCWMxJVk1VYbCVqWk4SfdTigUfAD8qcoJ9s8cZb9TxQ0Y2t7oR6jcsOuVn2zcSBq7CQDnOYVEePrx5czB9FI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3674.4)):

And like, um, yeah. Yeah. I know it's crazy. Like a lot of, I mean, so yeah, like I didn't grow up, you know, around Korean culture at all, and it's been so great that, you know, as I've been, you know, just this Korean pride, it's so much easier now too, because like the restaurants, food is cool. Everybody wants to go to Korean, barbecue and Soju and, um, you know, Korea is just cool now. So I has that also like, been something new for you to discover, like, or not to discover, but like this Korean pride it's kind of, um, rediscovery

Kristen ([01:01:52](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=B01gyowTIUYx1hU6cPailfnTRpt3KlosyAvVFhNJ-U06wxy91kVd2pSqYchlgidcU_zHXqnyAs4e1GFnC_IQqBH5_zE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3712.43)):

For. Yeah. Yeah. Um, <laugh> yeah, because I, you know, growing up, I, I knew about like H O T and Kpop. I actually love Korean dramas. My that's something that my mom and I do together, we watch all the, so anything from like stairway, like Changa ggeran like stairway to heaven, winter Sonata, all those things I grew up with. Right. <laugh> um, I just think that was a different part of my life that I didn't really talk about with most people <laugh> like, it was, it was like with my white friends and my Americanized friends who were, you know, I just, I just didn't share that part of my life with them, but it's always something that I've, I really enjoyed. But now, yeah, now that there's this like lens on Korean pop culture, dramas movies, like all the media coming out of there.

Kristen ([01:02:38](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=H7axMf9fw-X-J3pXyad9rn4rPCprWhPlsJB9NgA9-A76VGyGL71SLGXlWHupSx38at00RNIc_toZmk8TtxaNSkxdSgQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3758.11)):

And like you said, food people, literally some of my friends have like, like gochugaru, like in their, in their kitchens. I, I don't even know they, if they know how to use it, but like they have it, it's like, it's a, it's a spice they now have, um, which I find really cool. And, um, yeah, no, they, there definitely is this renewed sense of pride that I never had. Like I said, like, I really shunned a lot of that, um, in a lot in, you know, some of the, I guess, elements in a lot of ways. So now yeah. I'm full on like all the way let's go Korea <laugh>, um, which, which feels awesome. It's, it's definitely been a long time coming, I think, but,

Adapted ([01:03:17](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=S90UGqwypVCXX3HzTmhwbRgKu7PgZ9S4QdERT8NYAGvob2R42XcCAGXb0t_TrNf30Xujn9Kvw4iTsR4-uYLOQnvgR-U&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3797.99)):

But yeah. And they're, so I, I feel like there's just like now, just out of coming outta the woodwork, I mean, there's like Korean, Korean, American chefs, Korean, you know, like, um, Korean American rappers. And there's just more, I would say more visibility mm-hmm <affirmative> artists and which is really great to see, not to, I'm not saying like they've never existed, but I just feel like the profile has been really raised and, um, there's this whole new level of, yeah, definitely in the food scene. Um, music scene, um, <affirmative> 16, um, celebrity scene. Yeah. Mm-hmm <affirmative> mm-hmm <affirmative> yeah. When you, so you were really into, um, dramas, uh, you and your mom would watch, like, what do you think about the storylines regarding adoptees? And do you feel like that's been changing?

Kristen ([01:04:07](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=BX0cbu16bTN2dMKge78PpNGzGM7HSQEve8u0aGBcEMd9ytqoSZM0CLFaJoZbjXUotX4CYpz2sS3bDu7AM-0yiwUwpcU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3847.31)):

Oh yeah. Um, so it's funny ever since finding out I kind of view movies, like anytime there's a storyline of like the main character being an orphan or like been abandoned, like it's very strange. I realize now, like how many characters and TV shows movies that, that caricature is used of like trying to, I guess, build empathy and being like, this person came from a really like tough situation. Like, you know, you, you should feel sympathy or empathy for this person. And so I think seeing now realizing like, oh, this is just used all the time. Um, I think specifically in Korean dramas, I watched, uh, Vincenzo

Adapted ([01:04:57](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=fz42hjsSH1EVDhxUgBF2d5o4QTyK7VHMNyqm0qNRRT9cpFsdxQp794skaqHE_qmhxOmagsIOam1PyWpMdGrTjJo_YcM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3897.22)):

Vincenzo. Right, right.

Kristen ([01:04:59](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=we3VMHq76Um6FdSJ1z1ar8hIEKMF21aBZynbfXoUTm8otwpFSbXGf92WkfUz9SEvI8XoDnsj0W0ClLReYVh3DdzJjUw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3899.68)):

Um, <laugh> that was

Adapted ([01:05:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=eac-VwY6-1uoEzhRYJJIxpQxHvIlAOk2oEKGqf4A3TiJszDg4tclIsnhMq4oMCaV41KAZQ2WUZUcsamB6ukYhB66fm0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3902.48)):

Something always dark about him. Yeah. Yeah,

Kristen ([01:05:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=g4_mbvfBPHyFscMfvohQF-4RMnG-AumZ0gC_-gdgGJhIQFtibbOMXPPLDsqr6rGxgfI6Jqs6tqgGt3XcFLy_H-Hsq1k&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3904.6)):

Exactly. But the fact that he can like, anyway, like that was probably the,

Adapted ([01:05:09](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=WyIjNAuCIbkWM2YWDRRY9MTlOChIgz9ttqqsAFeG4OSKkxvsWZGCJNpnx39E847zmGCmS0GDaHLiVn1ji3lebcNrL2Y&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3909.65)):

No, I know like, no, like for a lot of like me and my adoptee friends were like, yeah, right. Like he's adopted in Italy. He comes back like fully Korean, Korean, you know, like that's not, and

Kristen ([01:05:22](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Feh23Us13em2V1JFq2wIbMtedtls26X0tdQBXYFd3feATGpfaKgiWb-erVmZYrbgjuc0sea6hvBeXQ130hDJu7LfwsQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3922.32)):

Like I grew up in a Korean family and I can't even speak Korean that well, but okay. Um, uh, but yeah, I don't, I think I'm still formulating like how I feel, I guess now it just feels like I have some, there is some representation and I guess that's supposed to be something that I really like. I, I don't know. I think I I'm still wrapping my head around how I'm supposed to feel about that sort of representation. Um, it's this is why I'm trying to educate myself and like listen to other people's stories and listen to other people's like opinions on the matter. Um, because I'm still, yeah. That's the thing, like, I think I'm still for lack of a better word, trying to adopt my own story into and integrate it into my life, because for so long, I had thought of my life differently. And now that there's this, you know, it's not that I'm, it it's something that I'm still trying to process and try to be like, oh right. That that's still that's my that's mine too. That's me too. Um,

Adapted ([01:06:26](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=-f1zmXxJzSyxTmHUPTY_uk_oC1U0ypCkGeAxtVK8uH6mjCqWTo836IPuNNlNHddNu7so56SivyTkW7rZH30YUqmAt5o&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3986.68)):

Yeah, like kind of like, you're learning to sort of ownership of this new identity you have

Kristen ([01:06:34](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=3di3QGqj92CHxtp8BXb0VPtvTXq4kql42GZv3Ijzkc6SE6sbI4_frg2aMwfCveV4fnLVyJxD4ZWWub8H9zJriRwI1bU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=3994.88)):

Mm-hmm <affirmative> and in the reverse. Right. Because I, it's not that it completely takes away from the life I've lived. I'm still me, but it's like now this like additional foundational element has been added. Like I've already had a pretty firm foundation and now it's like an extra leg and it's like, all right, you're new. Or I didn't realize that you were there. What does that all mean? So I'm having all these like existential questions too, of like, now that I have this information, what is it supposed to mean? Does it affect my future? What changes? I have no freaking idea. <laugh> and these are things I'm examining in therapy as well. And I'm really trying to like, you know, and I don't think there is a, an answer necessarily, but, um,

Adapted ([01:07:22](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=jqpn2Dugfs1xRLacKiCK3hd67yldxQXux6hoZ_RCrxJY9JYQ4TNXTYRy6AKnkTJl0JWTKTbHMEfejWlGEIVHgc7VTQ8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4042.18)):

Uh, but now you have, I was just gonna say, now you have another reason you have extra ha you know, you have another <laugh> and you have more reason to be angry, you know, <laugh>,

Speaker 3 ([01:07:32](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=9LoEeE6H99DnV-dMnV1fRxalulHUKi11JwZrt8MNqdv3yClzcnFeA8itUXq1q2GUs5905CCuIO4cfAtLRbcU5v4g14o&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4052.36)):

It's true. I feel like, yeah, that ha just like, got super powered up from this, like,

Kristen ([01:07:37](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=FSzOZwgtTXy-DGJ9WaMdJyfMV-EjpffafrutY8-sJUgWaTZghAaCzHJe6QOwEriG1noO8KTTImQWrhCVHPfO9CH8y8A&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4057.77)):

Oh, oh, I've already had it, but now it's really, really there. I feel it. I feel it. Oh, God funny. So

Adapted ([01:07:46](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ycH4qOVbOXf0BlQv_gRmOScCGud36rOlgAzvr6dM8_yBESz2cC5stRxV2zhtf0m6qiiuWvSQzljPlKQ5PVfb0qaThsk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4066.47)):

When you listen to other stories about, you know, adoptees, what has resonated with you and then what has seemed really different?

Kristen ([01:07:56](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=NK5-AkChoKu3sQrc3Z4Gu0VmckPLHIfwbk3o6A6xsAJ9qWKnEx-LuFtfgRUszgGAwh2EgkozEiL8y3aMP70u6RDHWyU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4076.24)):

Hmm. I think for me, what's really resonated is a lot of just like, like finding ourselves. And I don't know if that's necessarily an adoptee specific search or if it's just the human search of just trying to understand ourselves and understand like, you know, and this is probably why I'm in psych, in, in a field that focuses on like, why humans are the way they are, what motivates us, what drives us, how we came to be. Um, those are all things that I'm genuinely curious about just because I'm a person and I'm, you know, you know, interacting with other human beings too. Um, and I guess though, from the stories that I've heard, especially even on adapted that search for identity, that search for community, that search for understanding, I really re that really resonates with me. That's something that I feel wholeheartedly is just a journey I'm gonna be on for my whole life.

Kristen ([01:08:56](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=lCN2XtCenu8f_TrQG3zunerXg0f3ZtTQcG94fnrm-UOJAHkgtXa2xqv8vTWomcIRhfCw-Zxn5Jp40XdnSO_nzGhBJso&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4136.979)):

I, I don't wanna, I think each story is so unique and it's like, I try not to do that whole comparison thing of like, but my stories like this or there stories like, you know, um, I do think it, it probably just highlights more just how diverse everyone's story is and like we're all different. And we, and yet there is something that binds us all together and I think that's, what's really beautiful. And so for me, maybe I focus on the things that actually not what makes us different. It, it's what it's, what brings us together. And just like for me, I just, it's nice to know that, like, I don't have to be alone in this and not only do I have the support of my family and friends, but like, wow, look at this new community I I'm building, um, which is really special. And I feel really grateful for

Adapted ([01:09:45](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ZqPdcB-AxI9-qi5d5lGUA10RQ-vD8R4kWJtbphV5TY5tjX1HKGy77j3z6-CDwy9W-M1mIWeFK-PLrWPU8mIedW81PHQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4185.439)):

That. You know, you were talking about one thing I wanted to touch back on, you're talking about like, oh, you know, I've always had these feelings of abandonment and, and, um, what did that look like? Like where, you know, mm-hmm <affirmative> and maybe like things with relationships or trust, or I don't know.

Kristen ([01:10:01](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=_045l-zfBIinS6QjKE_UFW-lTA4jaHGBHrcWO9TKkT6R773HNxv4VHtwkxmzcNwyePit_8n02rEFxNGvdq6FSO3QrxE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4201.99)):

Yeah. Um, definitely I think my triggers show up most in romantic relationships in terms of this feeling of does this person really love me, does this person really, really, really like accept me for, as I am. It's always, it, it feels like a testing almost. And I don't know if others can relate to this, but it's like now when you know, you've been abandoned or there is this trauma that is in existence. And even though it's, Preem pre-verbal ability, it really makes a mark on you. Right. It has a ripple effect on your life and it will, it stays. Um, so for me, it's almost, I always, I now wonder if it's like me trying to recreate the trauma of being left and abandoned by my birth mother to try to not only understand it, of like how a person could do that, but also like conquer it, if that makes sense.

Kristen ([01:11:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=RZotW5WKt_g3FgwlTJ6RuxaqnjndqQ4_z6rggbwCx5btmbJsCyJB4MVcXeDM-hMjx-v_SJMWhqCr8MXm2KpBmyV-OW0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4263.189)):

Um, it's like, I don't want that to ever happen to me again. And so like, but at the same time, I'm just trying to understand why it even happened in the first place. And so, yeah, that, I think even when I was growing up, I, I probably tested my parents. Actually. I tested my, my mom. Um, she's someone, I feel very like bonded connection with. I have a pretty complicated relationship with my dad actually, but, um, my mom has proven through and through that, she's there for me and not, not going to, it's not going anywhere, but yeah, even now I, I have a partner. Um, he's Korean. He actually, we actually met in Korea last year. Um, he

Adapted ([01:11:47](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=n1QP3IHBvf_ztiNjeq57xJXnx-UoCEwTKDahTuKv6A42JJ-f84ohRfv8lm4SeKJUUkoH8fG5MQ6XKSjVHeABvwveB-E&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4307.41)):

She's Korean, Korean Uhhuh.

Kristen ([01:11:48](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=HzUQdF9a4wCed9BJOi4Tnl-BzPYtPGVhbJwAgjCvb8ghH7SRHKmC2jdHMTnh3PptpW_09L7UCV2VxpkoJ3_ixnlWmtU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4308.64)):

<affirmative> yeah. <laugh>

Kristen ([01:11:51](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=FiD7uzWDOlQ-f1y4dAPdaA0MuqMnFMoFQBW6HyuhPinowIsMU8ZJ3-x7pdyOqozznkv4n9kZRbQlQanVLjVhJ4ZAR0Y&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4311.83)):

Okay. I went from being very single to now being in a long distance relationship with a guy who's halfway around the world. <laugh>. Um, but, um, he, yeah, I'm, I mean, even now, um, he's such a secure human. He, it almost annoys me at how secure he is as a person. Um, and then I kind of see my insecurities, like get reenacted within our own relationship and he's been very understanding and he does really, um, he is there for me at the same time, being able to kind of push back and be like, Hey, like, I don't think this is right. Um, and I respect that, but I, I see, I like, I have this like deep sense of shame of when I guess he points out like what I'm doing and how I'm testing out the, um, trust,

Adapted ([01:12:43](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=104xnXtbb72rRGK3oZOr6WKdX810JcB5d6PFjaJMgSBont7YXKxTCRAzMOtO7qUkYMeiPfG8P1H-jFG8LqyWi8bqQZ0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4363.25)):

Trust you're testing, you're testing out and he points and he can recognize, oh

Kristen ([01:12:46](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=oIjQLRAkBVH4IPCKdrYjq1F4az4PkrLwnupTo0IX2pYVUGSw6ptAMNBEum298ObaBmB61C4ZguwEW9ZETLd2OxfM3X8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4366.6)):

Yeah, he sees it. And he says like, Hey, like, you know, your feelings are valid if you are feeling these things, but I just want you to know that, like, you're making me out into this bad person, which I'm not. And like, I really respect that. But at the same time, the moment he says it, I recognize it immediately. And I'm like, yep, <laugh> there it is. There's my

Adapted ([01:13:07](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=M53jKbTxCXMtbvFaUFRJhQqeMaGctTbUw4Eprzz7ZtPGcmLD7MREHxwCHBLX1jRg-GoRGHuU_m5yWCWgrc0N6lPvZXk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4387.62)):

Wait, Kristen, is it the saboteur thing? Like you think they're gonna leave you? So,

Kristen ([01:13:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ft9TwJLgPW3MBZbkOrnehBBNAKZlOmM9Gz6B0Z7DQ1MxVm7M-2z8iq65kdGy7PrD3BWPbT3N9JRZRlQIRgAVPhf4dt0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4392.38)):

Yeah. Yeah.

Adapted ([01:13:13](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=x6hXttxvWvlRwiFGB8y0OxZYzOwjlG4zbaLrq0HeIQ5h4do7ajIz2KsKcpnZMpllpkKTJQl09RziM5bzqsgdX7n17U0&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4393.95)):

I think that's classic adoptee stuff.

Kristen ([01:13:16](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=O4-nugnkoaC2zEbIn2mzjM8SpHjXlurqAeBOKKU5eZsp70zpczWBOPtXpEGgeO-DrKPs592T2xDEz2qavRUjgZ1bH0Q&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4396.57)):

So that's crazy. Right? Because like, once again, I didn't know this until last year, but that's definitely been something I do in my relationships. The only time that I think that hasn't happened is when I've dated a person even more insecure than I was. And that made me feel safe because I, that made me feel like that person needed me. So I did.

Adapted ([01:13:37](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ZW8zUeNfxI_ifFK_v2InpjlipZ9lvpqJk-RcCBVtkJaYA6v8E40yBBOUs96Ig89ZZ3W4RosiTwRbS4xny_M-UAHUw7E&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4417.78)):

And you had the power and you had the power in,

Kristen ([01:13:40](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=N90tboSrmE9dmtCQuiDpzy8jyeZI7FIfiBMc8gSUT--0hK0-KSV8XsabY4XwJyvjX6fvVIAzOD6cH4a3k0ceHj-HZIg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4420.06)):

In that precisely. Right. But then anytime I'm dating or with someone who is very secure in themselves, which is healthy, right. Um, I have some earned security, especially in the work that I've done in therapy, but at the same time, it's just so hard. Um, I really find it difficult to remain that way and stay that way. Especially when those triggers come, when I'm feeling like, does this person really love me or am I, am I enough for this person? Or, you know, so that cycle start gets, so that's, that's actually a lot of the work I'm doing now. <laugh>, um, within my own personal therapy journey, um, is okay. I recognize that I'm aware of it. Great. But like, how do, how do I change that? Like how do I really, really stop myself from reacting and instead pause and respond in a healthier, more true to myself way. Um, it's hard though.

Adapted ([01:14:38](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=IU9nFt3X3E3-RaeEuiiyfWaAhAIaJHv73FXYbhmEoBVgakQA55ybrjSJfZ5uiieQReGjwFqO7V8VaHhyNqwuTIsKKy4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4478.75)):

It's really, yeah, it's so fascinating. All the, the, the work being, um, the studies and, uh, work being done now in the preverbal and with adoption and just, you know, the trauma in the body, mm-hmm, <affirmative> just from being relinquished and, um, you know, um, have you done much reading on that?

Kristen ([01:15:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=vJpAfE8IfSO_7U98rNrkeTVeGfGL0P1dPvvz0nAYssMRjD7lRdwaB7DRUirWF42Q1NYD8j1zLvjYw8TSX1k8I_Y-2E8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4500.31)):

Oh yeah, I am. Um, <laugh> I read the primal wound. I also read coming home. Um, I read, I've been reading other people's stories though, even like Nicole Chung, her book. Um, I think in general, for me, I think it's, I, I think it brought to light a lot of the things that I already knew to be true in my own, in my own life. And so now it's just like, I have the words to describe that experience. And I have, I have this additional information and the layers to like, build out like, oh, this is why, or this is where it's coming from. Like, and so it makes a lot of sense, but it's like, okay, you have all this information, but now what <laugh>, that's where I'm, I'm getting stuck is like, all right, like, it's great that I, I have all this, but how do I truly make that change if, and because I want to too, and that's, what's important too. Some people don't wanna, that's fine. But for me, like, I do see me being held back and I don't wanna be held back anymore. And so now I, that I have this whole narrative and I have my history and I have this information. It's like, okay, how do I really put into practice? What I've been saying that I want, um, for, for myself,

Adapted ([01:16:13](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=LUrc9HuDiuFo59VKWsfSXbHo0Y0Af0vai-GSFd-aW2wCuQLtomlpPxfmiuDN1Ip85LdyoQFKd54cKHTJ9tcpJ2s9IvA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4573.83)):

It sounds like part of this, like healing too, is when you say you test people and to see if they're still gonna love you, if they're still gonna be there, um, even when you show your worst, um, and it sounds like your, your mother has, has proven that.

Kristen ([01:16:32](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Gl5ajRsXlQ62oEb_EBV_uKCZhKGX20Xx-AFatj9yD-FfeomdnWf-U63Rj7EbSNZFeOQ1nY-fhUySVfodEdgaiC9ADSw&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4592.229)):

Yeah, yeah. 100. Yeah. The, I think my mom is, um, through and through the person that has shown me that, um, she's, she is the only person that I know, at least in the trajectory of my life and these 33 years who's been there for me through and through. Um, and so I am really, yeah. Grateful to have her as that example. And to know that, you know, I am lovable as I am.

Adapted ([01:17:07](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=2DZ9WGZyaQPKbY2OjY-gWZ6KGVtAx3W6NBoOqUOfFgB8oa4DrXU1v5FGZ2TKaeg2go3M_4ieZC4ucxlLDanZW7iIcRQ&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4627.72)):

You are, you are <laugh> Um, do you think of, I mean, probably right, but what, what thoughts do you have about your, your birth mother now?

Kristen ([01:17:22](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Pr_zjW6Dn2OtjucQCUXZfk8rX9Pg4h6heHC1D7EtZSZFWZcaucvPASPGJUXHpwXkx1Uvq6bR87aE-m1XTAegu-X9JCs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4642.01)):

Yeah, I'm, I think a lot of my thoughts when it comes to her, as I do think how tough it must have been. Um, as I, as from the paperwork, I know she was 18 years old, so she also seemed from what I read, she only had a middle school education, whatever that means. So she came from a very poor family. I think she was the middle child. She had an older brother and like a younger sister. Um, and so by the time she met my birth father and got pregnant, she was working at like a factory in TEU and I think he was an iron worker. And so of course, like, I can't imagine what that must have been like I've, you know, and with the lack of support for single mothers, even, even now in Korea, um, I, I think I just put myself in that place of like, if I ever were to meet her, like, I just want there to be like a, a moment of like, I understand the decision you made.

Kristen ([01:18:24](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=IM0Tr-Ne5lqXTLAzoIZ_UkcHOW0Eg1sXZUP7pjNV0AyQ-J9a4uI-BjVHEHMQdJ1zRUfGNa7zofnljI5hAqZuTtFqB-U&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4704.93)):

Like, I don't wanna put that, put that against her. Like, I really do have a lot of, um, understanding and compassion for, for how difficult that situation must have been. Um, and I think I'm coming at it from a lens of like, maybe she didn't wanna relinquish me. Maybe that was not like, that was the last option that she wanted to do. Uh, who knows. Right. But, um, I mean, she went through the pregnancy, I guess. I don't know if there was even like an option for something like an abortion at the time, but, um, yeah, no, I'm, I'm very grateful that I was born and I had the life I had. Um, and so I think if that, if I ever did have a chance to meet her, I would just say, thank you. Um, for, for giving me my life, I am really grateful for it.

Adapted ([01:19:23](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=2D8J9EXYUeioa3akjqVaSd34g1sWhe2CJIGD0Jb24R2SMrWvW-rZC_PPpJJunqoDd3lfkPkU2m6Vo6NH9HHqKKVnmRs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4763.68)):

Thank you so much for sharing your story. Even this is going to help so many people, I think, and, and also like, um, you may find some others, um, other like yourselves, you know, so maybe some, um, people who discover later in life or adopted by Korean Americans that mm-hmm <affirmative> may find you because of this. So,

Speaker 3 ([01:19:47](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=6ukWf00FH-QXRL9ScJZ8Svq27KPIoxb_EbR2slIHn1KFvHX_1Y2cCvxCdyZdxzbS-zYuT774jYQLMx0OB3yoywjhH6U&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4787.65)):

Yeah. And I would love that I would, you know, anyone who wants to connect, um, yes, please. Let's, let's be friends <laugh> I I'm so down if anyone's in San Francisco and wants to meet up, I'm, I'm really, I'm really open to it, so,

Adapted ([01:20:01](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=iEtEeEa8WkYb-RK9kd8FASlk7pxgEo1j5irtztW-Ttrqe5L7NwwMg3-5g2lv4gitpd6fjtUVaNoqDUDpEUOTLDCqsfY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4801.53)):

Yeah. Awesome. How can they reach you? Um,

Kristen ([01:20:03](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=xKrEffT9IFB0ts8LkMCk5C8gp_SDQG4QbbxsgbgbtOH546htGGl_OrieBg2L7UPOFvys8DGT-6X_vnqZNrjTK5Wly84&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=4803.68)):

Yeah, you can add me on Facebook. I think I'm actually, I just took away my last name because I'm now I'm about to start my traineeship later this year. So I, you know, just trying to have some privacy there, but you can add me there. It's Kristen Woo Kyung. So, uh, you know, my first name, K R I S T E N. And the Woo Kyung is w O O space, K Y U N G. Or you can find me on, um, Instagram at Ksten Choi. So K S T E N-CHOI.